

Item 10.1

Wildfires and Community Emergency Planning

Brief notes on the meeting held at Great Waldingfield Parish Hall on 14th November 2023

Present: Phil Baker (Chair) Edwardstone PC, Roland Cheeseman, Groton PC, Mark Freeman, Great Waldingfield PC, Clare Kiely, Great Waldingfield PC, Theresa Munson, Boxford PC, Piers Roberts, Groton PC.

Apologies: Chris White, Little Waldingfield PC, Tristan Wood, Edwardstone PC

1. *Outline Community Emergency Plan*

Piers Roberts had previously circulated an outline Plan for Groton Parish Council. He emphasised that this was a pared down version of the guidance issued by Freddie Gulliver at Suffolk County Council's CEP team. He felt that it should be possible to post the plan on Parish noticeboard and that it should not therefore be very long. Key points emerging from the discussion were as follows:

- Risks listed: there was concern that it would be difficult to run a rest centre if there was a power outage, and that the availability of a back-up power supply or generator would need to be part of the plan.
- Consideration should be given to including a future pandemic on the list of risks, in the light of the Covid lockdown experience.
- Inclusion of a sewer / drainage map would be useful, and Mark Freeman agreed to contact Freddie Gulliver about this. He would also ask him about where to get sandbags (it was understood that SCC no longer supplies them).
- Phil Baker reported that no-one had contacted him to express an interest following the BRN article.
- Identifying individuals prepared to act as Community Co-ordinator, Rest Centre Co-ordinator, Information Co-ordinator and Winter Gritting Co-ordinator would be key. An explanation of each role was given on page 16 of Freddie Gulliver's guidance document. It was agreed that each role should include a deputy, in case the main person was on holiday when an emergency occurred.
- These eight people would form the core of the emergency planning team for each Parish.
- It was agreed that the plans produced should not include all the details suggested in Freddie Gulliver's guidance. For example, listing individuals with particular skills such as plumber or electrician was unlikely to be relevant because the main purpose of the plans would be to operate a rest centre until the Suffolk emergency team could take over, in conjunction with the emergency services.
- It would be important to make sure that local farmers had a copy of the plan for their Parish, with the relevant names and contact numbers. In relation to field fires, it would be useful to know which farmer owned which field in each Parish. Phil Baker said he would talk with Freddie Gulliver about this.

2. *Insurance*

It was understood that if an Emergency Plan was activated by Suffolk County Council, the Parish Council would be automatically covered by SCC's public liability insurance. But if a Plan was activated initially by the PC, SCC's insurance would not apply, and the PC would have to rely on its own public liability insurance. It was not clear if this would continue

throughout the emergency, or only until SCC, once notified by the PC, had taken over responsibility. Phil Baker said he would seek clarification on this point from Freddie Gulliver.

Phil Baker had spoken to Zurich, Edwardstone PC's insurers, to check that rest centre volunteers and other activities related to activation of a CEP would be covered. Edwardstone's policy document did say that Councillors and volunteers would be covered in general, but he wanted to be sure that the very specific risks involved in an emergency would also be included. It was possible that the names of volunteers trained to operate a rest centre would need to be listed as an appendix to the policy. Zurich had said they would consult with their underwriters and get back to him.

3. *Next steps*

It was agreed that by the next meeting, those present would

- identify possible rest centres in their Parish and consult with those responsible.
- identify individuals prepared to act as Community Co-ordinator, Rest Centre Co-ordinator, Information Co-ordinator and Winter Gritting Co-ordinator, and deputies for these roles.
- produce draft Community Emergency Plans for their own Parish and circulate them to the group for discussion at the next meeting.

4. *Date of next meeting: **Tuesday 6th February 2024, 19:30*** - venue to be decided.