

Item 10.1

Wildfires and Community Emergency Planning

Brief notes on the meeting held at Groton Parish Hall on 19th September 2023

Present: Phil Baker (Chair) Edwardstone PC, Roland Cheeseman, Groton PC, Mark Freeman, Great Waldingfield PC, Theresa Munson, Boxford PC, Piers Roberts, Groton PC, Chris White, Little Waldingfield PC, Tristan Wood, Edwardstone PC

1. *Way forward*

The five Parish Councils represented agreed that the best way forward would be to work together as a group to produce Community Emergency Plans, which would have much in common but which could also diverge to take account of local circumstances specific to particular Parishes.

2. The group agreed that it would not be appropriate to have a “hierarchy” of rest centres with Boxford, say, as the main centre and other parish halls, churches, pubs or other buildings in a secondary or support capacity. The decision as to which rest centre was to be used would depend on the location of the incident being responded to. Because of the dispersed nature of settlements within parishes, it might be more appropriate to use a rest centre in a neighbouring parish, if this was closer to the incident than the Parish’s own rest centre. This underlined the importance of the parishes working together.

3. *Contact trees*

Each Parish would need to come up with its own contact tree. Clearly this should include the key holders for the buildings to be designated as emergency rest centres. Those present undertook to talk to the relevant key holders in their Parish and report back to the next meeting.

4. *Consultation*

It was agreed that consulting local communities and involving people in the development of the emergency plans was important. Phil Baker undertook to draft an article for the next edition of Box River News and circulate it to the group on his return from holiday (after 5th October) to get comments in time for the BRN deadline of 15th October. The article would explain that the main focus of the group was to plan for a future wildfire and invite comments and suggestions from people in the community. Readers would also be asked whether there were other risks that they thought should be included. The article should also invite expressions of interest from people interested in volunteering to be on the Emergency Plan contact list for their Parish. Members of the group would also come to the next meeting with their own risk priorities.

5. *Template*

It was agreed that the plans should be as succinct and practical as possible. Piers Roberts and Roland Cheeseman agreed to draft an outline template for the kind of plan they would want for their Parish. This would provide members of the group with a starting point for identifying where their own plan might coincide with or diverge from the template.

6. *Date of next meeting:* 14 November, 19:30 at Great Waldingfield Parish Hall.

