

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

IMPACT OF HEATWAVES SHORT SHARP REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

JULY 2024



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Contents

	Page No
1. Membership of the Task Group	1
2. Foreword from the Chairman	2
3. Summary of Recommendations	4
4. Background Information	5
5. Chapter 1 - Understanding the Context of Heatwave Events and Emergency Responses	6
6. Chapter 2 - Engagement with the Local Communities	12
7. Chapter 3 – Outcomes	14
8. Areas to Note	16
9. Appendix 1 – Notice of Motion	17
10. Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference	17
11. Appendix 3 – Witnesses	20

MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



Councillor Mick Marshall
Chairman of the Task Group



Councillor Sam Ammar



Councillor Rachael Bailes



Councillor Bakul Kumar



Councillor Bernard McEldowney
(Membership from March – May 2024)



Councillor Josh Robinson

Supporting Officer Details

Jess Bayley-Hill – Principal Democratic Services Officer
Jo Gresham – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mat Sliwinski – Democratic Services Officer

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The climate crisis is not happening in the distant future in far-away places. It is happening right here and now. During the summer of 2022, the UK Health Security Agency reported 3,271 excess deaths in England and Wales across five distinct heat-periods. Increased mortality was especially pronounced for people with dementia or Alzheimer's and for those suffering with respiratory and circulatory conditions.

More frequent and intense heat events are made much more likely by climate change. Within a few more years we will probably have named summer heatwaves, as we do for winter storms, and we will all become much more familiar with the lethal combination of high temperatures and high humidity. The situation is fast-changing and as leaders in our community we need to be fast-moving too in our response.

As a council, we can continue to show leadership by playing our part in reducing carbon emissions that contribute directly to climate change and by influencing others to follow our example. But we also need to take a lead in recognising and adapting to the climate changes that are already here and will worsen in the future.

Because of the fast-changing nature of the climate emergency and our public response, we are recommending that an annual report each Spring should be presented to the Board on the impact of heatwaves, lessons learned and progress in emergency preparation, planning and responses.

During the course of our Review, we were reassured by the detail and thoroughness with which Officers explained current emergency planning arrangements and the improvements already being progressed. We particularly welcomed the Worcestershire Prepared initiative. This new organisation for improving coordination and information-sharing across the County was set up during the timescale of our Review so we were able to hear first-hand about progress from the Officer involved. The Council's partners Applied Resilience are carrying out an audit of potential locations for emergency rest centres and this will now include a focus on cool hubs as result of the interest and urgency shown in our Review.

I'd like to thank all the Members who volunteered their time to join the Review, the Council officers for their support and especially the three external witnesses – Nick Moon and Robin Church of Applied Resilience and Nathan Hazlehurst from Worcestershire Public Health. Thanks to their clear and patient explanations, we as Members are now much better informed about planning for future extreme temperature events. That will provide a platform for us to be

more engaged in future responses as local leaders and hopefully to help avoid preventable loss of life.

Councillor Mick Marshall
Chairman of the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendation (supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report).

1. Chapter 3 – Outcomes

Recommendation 1
That an annual report be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to update any areas of change in respect of the Impact of Heatwaves on the community and any changes in the response to these events.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time in preparing the report.

Background Information

Councillor Mick Marshall submitted a Notice of Motion at the Full Council meeting held on 24th January 2024. The Motion requested that the Cabinet be asked to undertake a review of how to take immediate action to educate and equip residents for impending heatwaves made more likely by climate change. This is to include awareness campaigns, distributing guidelines and establishing cooling centres to ensure the community's safety and well-being during future extreme temperature events.

Following consideration of the Motion at this meeting it was agreed by all Members that this matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and that the Board decide whether a review be undertaken on this matter.

A report was considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th February 2024 and was presented by Councillor Marshall. During consideration of this item, it was outlined that the review would be a short, sharp review consisting of a small group of Members to ascertain the impact and response to heatwave events in Bromsgrove.

At the March meeting of the Board, the membership of the Task Group was confirmed. It was noted that the Terms of Reference would be discussed at the first meeting of the Task Group and reported back to the Board at its meeting on 22nd April 2024.

Councillor Marshall was appointed as the Chairman of the review at the first meeting of the Task Group on 26th March 2024. This appointment was ratified at the Board meeting on 22nd April 2024 along with the Board's agreement of the Terms of Reference.

Chapter 1

Understanding the Context of Heatwave Events and Emergency Responses

At the beginning of its investigation to better understand the response to heatwave events and the context in which emergency responses were undertaken, the Task Group interviewed Nick Moon - CEO of Applied Resilience, Nathan Hazelhurst – Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Manager, Public Health and Robin Church - Applied Resilience.

During consideration of the evidence, Officers provided Members with a detailed presentation regarding responses to these kinds of events at a local and national level. It was explained that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 established the statutory requirements in respect of Emergency Preparedness for those at a local level.

Along with assessing the risk of emergencies occurring in the District and utilising these assessments to inform contingency plans, statutory requirements included the following areas:

Statutory Requirements	Action
Emergency Plans	Put in place emergency plans to reduce, control or mitigate the effects of an emergency.
Warn and Inform	Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
Share Information	Share information with other responders to enhance co-ordination.
Co-operate	Co-operate with other responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
Implement Business Continuity	Put in place Business Continuity Management Arrangements
Champion Business Continuity	(Local Authorities) – Provide business continuity advice to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity.

Officers explained that organisations were divided into two categories for responding to an emergency. However, all organisations had a statutory duty to cooperate with one another and any other key stakeholders. The Category One organisations included the following:

- Police
- Ambulance services

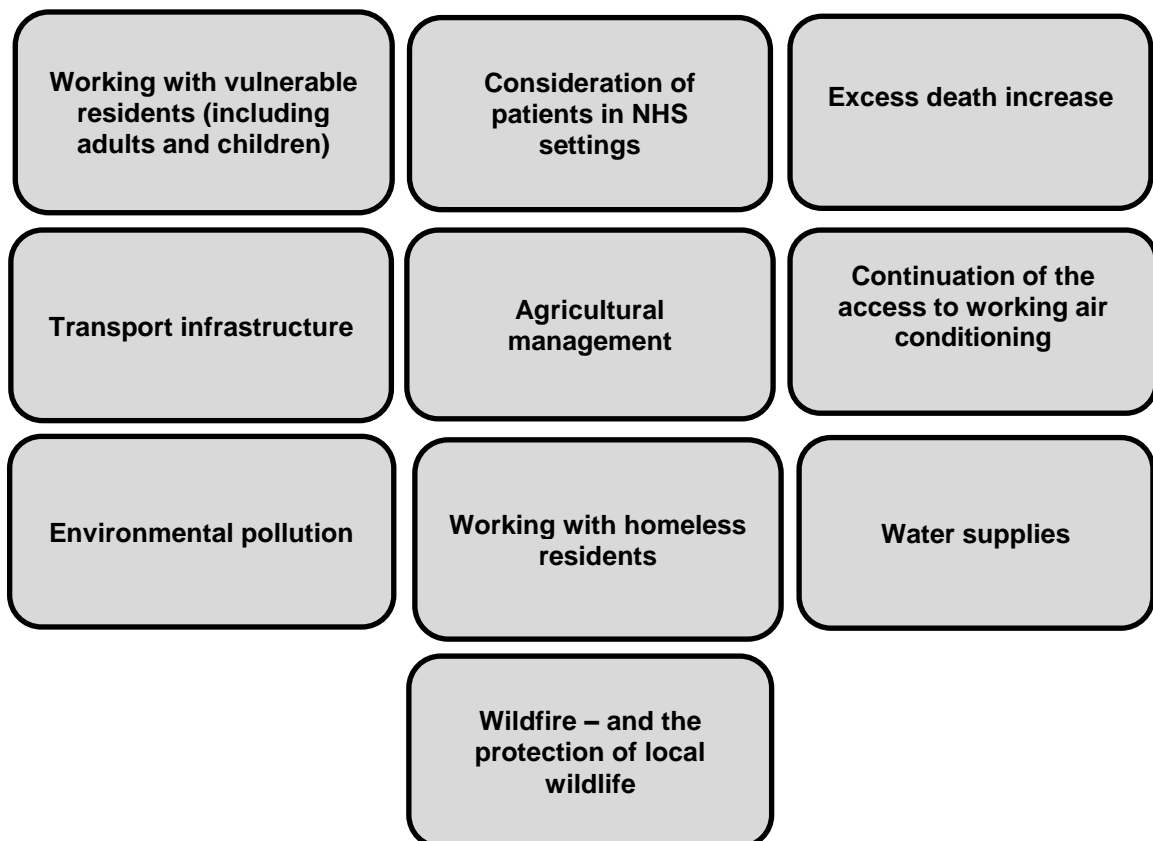
- Local Councils
- County Councils
- Fire Authorities
- NHS bodies.

Category Two organisations were as follows:

- Health and Safety Executive
- Transport Companies
- Utilities

Both of the categories above, came together to form Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) based on police force areas. These LRFs met at an executive level on a six-monthly basis. In addition to these meetings, there were a number of sub-groups that met more regularly in order to plan for emergency events such as adverse weather and heatwaves.

Specific Areas of Response to Heatwaves



During consideration of the evidence at this meeting it was explained that there were several levels of heatwaves, and each level informed the type of response.

Level	Response
Green	Planning stage and to ensure that were a heatwave event to happen the mitigations would be in place in order to alleviate the risk, such as air conditioning units in good working order.
Yellow	A more nationally driven status usually predicted by weather. At this level there would start to be a response.
Amber	This triggered an enhanced response and was dependent on temperature levels and length of time of the temperatures experienced.
Red	Required an emergency response.

It was noted that there were three levels of response by LRFs; Gold, Silver and Bronze. Gold was a more strategic level and Bronze was a more operational level. Most plans were actioned initially at the Silver level by the Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) and Duty Officers (DIRO).

In terms of preparedness, Members were informed that most response plans were already broadly written. These responses were risk and impact based and communication messaging was made through different channels, such as social media, outreach and out of hours responses.

Included in the responses was mobilization of volunteers and emergency services, initiating rest centres to provide places for residents who needed support. If there were any loss to utilities as a result of a heatwave, vulnerable residents would be contacted to ensure they were coping with the heatwave event. This was an area that Officers felt Members could provide enhanced support. It was explained that most utility providers held information on those who had registered themselves as vulnerable, this enabled them being contacted in extreme weather events such as heatwaves and cold weather. If Members informed residents of this service, it would ensure that more vulnerable residents could be contacted in events such as these. Members felt that this was a positive area in which they could contribute to help vulnerable residents within their communities and wards. This area was investigated further, as detailed later in this report.

As part of the detailed presentation, it was explained that a red heatwave event had a very specific and robust response including, to follow all local emergency response plans and feed into local (and, where appropriate, national) coordination and response. Furthermore, increased evidence-based advice would be provided to health and social care workers, working in community care homes and

hospitals and to the wider workforce. Media alerts regarding keeping cool and other safety measures, such as open water safety messaging would be increased. Support was provided to organisations to reduce unnecessary travel and to mobilise community and voluntary support. If there were any public events due to take place during a heatwave, these would be reviewed, and appropriate measures taken to ensure the safety of participants, following consultation with all parties.

Following the presentation and as part of the interview of Officers, Members were keen to better understand the response mechanisms in place and questioned some areas in more detail. These areas were as follows:

Declaration of a major incident

It was reported that there were command levels in place. Senior officers would declare a major incident, and this would need to be flagged up with central government and if necessary, the army could be mobilised.

In the case of a Level 4 national heat emergency, the response would be coordinated nationally through the Civil Contingencies Committee handling national emergencies – i.e. Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms A (COBRA) and UK Health Agency. The County Council would then follow public health messaging guidelines from the Government. In case of a Level 3, the County Council would take a lead on regional messaging but would still be expected to utilise the Government's support material.

In terms of the UK Emergency Alerts, it was explained that the County and local authorities could request the use of this facility from the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police following the request being signed off by an appropriate Government Minister.

Worcestershire Prepared

Whilst considering the evidence provided by Officers, it was reported that there was a new County wide initiative being proposed, Worcestershire Prepared. This proposed initiative would provide advice and support in events such as flooding and heatwaves in the future. This was a more proactive approach to these kinds of events which Members welcomed and at its second meeting Officers provided the Task Group with a detailed presentation, which included the following information:

Key Objectives

Provide a partnership where coordinated community resilience messaging can be created.

Coordinate and support town/parish councils in creating community level plans.

Create and develop public focused resources to aid in community resilience.

Coordinate community engagement activities regarding emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Provide a conduit to sense-check community facing communications.

Partner Organisations and Structure of Meetings

It was proposed that the membership of Worcestershire Prepared would include:

- Worcestershire County Council
- 6 District Councils
- Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (WCALC)
- NHS Integrated Care Boards or other suitable Health representatives
- Environment Agency
- Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
- West Mercia Police
- Voluntary Sector partners

Worcestershire Prepared was a proposed initiative at the current time of the meeting, however this was due to be formally considered at a Worcestershire County Emergency Planning Group meeting on 30th April 2024. If agreed the first meeting of Worcestershire Prepared would take place in May 2024.

It was envisaged that it would be established predominantly as an officer forum that would meet three times per year and report to the wider West Mercia LRF.

It was hoped that there would be a mechanism for elected member engagement as part of this structure.

Lessons Learnt

Emergency planning evolves as lessons are learnt from emergency events and technology improved. One example reported to Members was that following the heatwave event in 2022, the North Worcestershire Emergency Planning (Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove, Redditch) undertook a debrief of their response to the event. The main lessons identified was providing the right messaging at the right time to residents. It was reported that one of the main issues was people using disposable barbecues during the heatwave event thus creating a fire and health hazard. This could be an area of improved communication-during any future events.

During the final meeting of the Task Group, Members had requested further evidence in respect of Demonstration of Local Resilience Forum (LRF) response to a Heatwave Event. This would provide a final opportunity for the Group to understand the approach to a specific response from the LRF in the County.

During this presentation, information was provided in respect of Heat Health alerts and groups of residents that could potentially be at risk during such an event. This, once again, highlighted the robust approach to a response for those residents who were considered vulnerable or had specific needs in terms of working environments. The information also considered the types of health issues that could be experienced during a heatwave event, therefore enabling the response to be targeted to specific areas of need with the appropriate course of action such as dehydration prevention, keeping your home cool, application of sunscreen and swimming safety. Further evidence was provided in respect of the levels of response determined by the length of the heatwave and the impact of the heatwave on residents.

Chapter 2

Engagement with the Local Communities

As part of the investigation there was significant evidence provided to Members regarding what services and support was available to residents in heatwave events.

Vulnerable people

As highlighted earlier in this report, during extreme weather events vulnerable residents were contacted by phone, to check on their welfare. As often these residents were older and did not use social media, other communications such as leaflet drops were undertaken in order to provide information when there was the potential for an emergency event to take place. It was also reported that in terms of a list of vulnerable people, there was a database of vulnerable residents across the County who were known to the County Council's Adult Social Care Department. Along with these were already existing and trusted networks, such as faith networks and 'Meals on Wheels' who were also used to disseminate advice.

Members were keen to understand whether there would be the potential for the Council to supply electric fans to vulnerable residents. Although this was considered, it was agreed that there would be significant issues in the practicality of this approach and the costs involved.

Working with Local Communities

Part of the role of Emergency Planning was to encourage and promote business continuity in the event of an emergency, although difficult to promote as businesses were reluctant to invest in business continuity plans. It was felt that much like promoting awareness of the vulnerable residents' schemes, Members could promote and raise awareness of the need for business continuity plans.

Another area that was highlighted in terms of community engagement was that Worcestershire County Council Emergency Planning and North Worcestershire Emergency Planning were linking with partner organisations across the wider Birmingham and West Midlands region including Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Resilience Forum and voluntary organisations such as the National Trust. The County Council also disseminated messages to trusted community groups such as Parkrun.

Rest Centres and Cool Hubs

It was explained that Rest Centres were identified as spaces that provided a place for residents during an emergency event, such as flooding or fire. Cool Hubs were a venue that could provide support during a heatwave event.

The Chairman provided an update on behalf of Applied Resilience on the progress in relation to the Community Centres. It was noted that Applied Resilience was carrying out an audit across Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest on locations for community centres for numerous uses. This included using them as an emergency rest centre, survivor reception centres, community resilience hubs and cool hubs. It was explained that this was a large piece of work but it was hoped that it would result in additional capacity and resilience capability across the three areas.

It was clarified that libraries were not currently designated as cool hubs / warm hub locations. It was noted that while there was currently a list of 'warm space' locations in Bromsgrove, there was no such list for cool hub spaces.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Worcestershire County Council had already prepared some of the communication designed for use in a Summer preparedness campaign. The campaign covered themes such as water safety, exposure to sun and wildfires. The messaging was to be disseminated through print and broadcast media and a full range of social media. There would also be messaging provided at key events.

In relation to the Summer preparedness campaign, Members were keen that appropriate messaging related to heatwaves should be released earlier in the year, ideally starting in early May each year. It was reported that for this year the County was aiming to release Summer preparedness/heatwaves messaging in early June, however, in future years the aim would be to start the campaign from May.

Members raised the need for targeted messaging on social media in order to obtain the best results. Officers explained that in general, the approach was to utilise trusted networks where messaging could be disseminated to specific demographics. It was added that the County Council's Director of Public Health had been working on interactive public health messaging, including through videos and infographics, in both printed and digital formats.

Chapter 3

Outcomes

As detailed earlier in this report, the final meeting of the Task Group provided an opportunity for Members to discuss any recommendations they felt necessary following consideration of the evidence. It also offered a chance for them to discuss the robustness and whether the evidence presented had satisfied all of the necessary areas within the Terms of Reference.

On the whole, Members were very pleased with the evidence provided. It had demonstrated that there was a robust response to heatwave events and the establishment of the Worcestershire Prepared initiative was another layer of response that would enable residents to access appropriate support and services during times of a heatwave.

Officers had indicated that it was a complex picture due to the multi-agency response, however, plans were in place to fulfil the statutory responsibility and work effectively with partners when the need arose. Priority areas were identified such as working with vulnerable people along with appropriate messaging when necessary and that a more proactive approach would be taken in the future with the establishment of Worcestershire Prepared.

Members expressed some disappointment that the messaging and communications had not commenced for this year, and this was something that should be looked at for future years. As a result, the recommendation from the Task group was that the Overview and Scrutiny Board in future be provided with an annual report in order to ascertain whether the messaging for Summer preparedness had been implemented earlier. Going forwards the Overview and Scrutiny Board needs to understand any other updates or changes had been implemented in this area in the future.

In terms of the work around Cool Hubs, it was confirmed that this was being looked at as part of the planned audit of the Rest Centres. Officers explained that this audit had been bought forward as a result of this Task Group investigation, which pleased Members, who thanked Officers for providing such a speedy response in this area.

It was explained in order to establish and eventually help grow the numbers of Cool Hubs, a checklist had been created with questions that had been designed to ascertain whether a venue might be suitable for use as a Cool Hub in the future. It was suggested that this would certainly be an area where Members could provide support and disseminate the checklist to their networks. Members

welcomed this and were happy to support and suggested that this might be an area Parish Councils could help with.

Following all discussions in respect of the evidence, Members made the following recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

Recommendation 1
That an annual report be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to update any areas of change in respect of the Impact of Heatwaves on the community and any changes in the response to these events.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time in preparing the report.

Areas to Note

During the investigation there were several areas to note. These were as follows:

Training

At present, Emergency Planning training was organised by Democratic Services and delivered by Applied Resilience on an annual basis.

Members will continue to receive detailed Emergency Planning training as part of their training programme. It was noted that this had been arranged earlier in the year and was planned to take place again later in 2024.

Vulnerable Residents

It was requested by Officers that Members could help raise awareness of vulnerable resident schemes operated by utility companies by talking to those residents who fit within this criteria.

Business Continuity Plans

It was requested by Officers that Members could help raise awareness of business continuity plans for local businesses and the importance of having them in place.

NOTICE OF MOTION

MOTION – COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor M. Marshall

“That the Cabinet be asked to undertake a review of how to take immediate action to educate and equip residents for impending heatwaves made more likely by climate change. This will include awareness campaigns, distributing guidelines and establishing cooling centres to ensure the community’s safety and well-being during future extreme temperature events.”

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD – Short Sharp Review of the Impact of Heatwaves

Terms of Reference as at March 2024

The Short Sharp review of the Impact of Heatwaves has been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Board to carry out scrutiny of the Impact of Heatwaves.

1. The Task Group be made up of 6 Members with a quorum of 3. The Task Group will meet throughout the next three months at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview & Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings by the Chairman of the Task Group.
3. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
4. The Task Group is expected to complete the investigation, which is a short, sharp review within three months and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.

Aims and Objectives of the Task Group

The Short Sharp Review of the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group will cover the following areas:

1. Explore lessons learned by the Council and partner agencies from the heat events in Summer 2022.
2. Assess the level of co-ordination between agencies and their roles in emergency planning and response, including the Council's role in these responses.
3. Assess best practice guidance available in respect of this matter. This should include considering the governance guidance paper on hot weather and health from May 2023 and a report from the National Audit Office on Governmental Resilience in Extreme Weather from December 2023.

4. Explore potential ways in which to increase education of and information to the public about actions they could take in response to heat events and services available.
5. Explore opportunities to expand community and business resilience. This could include investigating the potential roles of cool hubs and other ways to keep people cool, awareness campaigns, community action groups and resilience measures.

WITNESSES

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

Internal Witnesses:

Guy Revans

Judith Willis

External Witnesses:

Nick Moon - CEO of Applied Resilience,

Nathan Hazelhurst – Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Manager,
Public Health

Robin Church - Applied Resilience

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Bromsgrove District Council, Parkside Offices, Market Street
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8DA
Email: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk