

Role of Elected Members – During an Emergency

For emergency responders, this is a crucial time regarding the protection of people, property and the environment. The role played by the local authority is a supporting one, liaising with the emergency services, providing resources and other facilities and services as required.

Elected Members may become aware that an incident has happened in their ward. Contact with the Council should be through the 01768 817817 telephone number – outside of normal work time the call will be dealt with by the out of hours service.

For Health and Safety reasons, Elected Members are asked not to go to the scene, or attempt to cross police cordons.

Reliable information in the early stages of an incident can be difficult to obtain and it is often better for the Chief Executive or nominated director to have a clear overview of the situation before contacting Members directly.

Emergencies by their nature tend to be chaotic. In the early stages, there may be a degree of confusion and apparent disarray. This should pass quickly, not least because of the calm assurance of officers who have been trained through an annual training and exercise programme. In times of emergency the community looks to their elected representatives for assurance and leadership. In this role the Elected Member is well placed to pass important safety information and other advice from emergency managers directly to the affected communities.

Elected Members, for the areas affected by an emergency, can contribute to the District or County Council response in a number of important ways:

- Providing support and encouragement for the efforts of officers of all service areas involved in the response to the emergency
- Focus on lifting morale both amongst staff and the affected community
- Keeping a record of significant actions and events for use in subsequent debriefings and any official inquiries related to the emergency
- Maintaining close links with local communities and ensure their views are fed back to the Chief Executive or duty Emergency Planning Co-ordinator