

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 28 November 2022

Title: Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group Report

Portfolio(s):	Community Safety and Public Protection	Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor C Burdis
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Report from Service

Area:

Law & Governance

Responsible Officer:

Jacqueline Laughton – Assistant Chief Executive (Tel: 0191 6435724)

Wards affected:

All

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group who carried out an in-depth review of the Authority's response into the handling of Storm Arwen, including what work is outstanding and what lessons can be learned following a debated motion at the Council meeting 20 January 2022.

Following the Council meeting, the Elected Mayor wrote to the Chair of Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee (OS&PD) requesting that a review be undertaken through the establishment of a Task and Finish Group, which was agreed by the Chair (OS&PD).

The findings of the Storm Arwen Task & finish Group were reported to Council at its meeting 21 July 2022, which referred the report to Cabinet for its consideration.

The recommendations are set out in paragraph 1.2 below.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet consider and formulate a response to the recommendations presented in Appendix 1 of the report as a result of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee's, Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group review of the Authority's response into the handling of Storm Arwen.

1.3 Forward Plan:

This item was included in the Forward Plan published in September 2022 under the heading "Matters arising from Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees".

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to all themes in the 2021/25 Our North Tyneside Plan.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

At its meeting 20 January 2022 Council debated a Motion in relation to Storm Arwen.

Following debate it was agreed that the Elected Mayor would;

- “write to the Prime Minister to raise our concerns with the way the situation was handled and to commit to providing funding to aid the recovery”.
- “Launch a cross party inquiry into the handling of Storm Arwen by North Tyneside Council, including what work is outstanding and what lessons can be learned, and report back to full Council before the end of the municipal year”.

The Elected Mayor requested that a review be undertaken by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee (OS&PD). It was agreed that OS&PD would establish a Task and Finish group (“the Group”) to review Storm Arwen. In drawing up the Group’s terms of reference it was agreed that it would be appropriate for other named storms that occurred after Storm Arwen up to February 2022 to be included in the report.

The approach and Terms of Reference for the review was presented and agreed by the OS&PD Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2022.

All non-executive members were canvassed to be part of the Group, and 8 members took up the opportunity to be involved. The agreed approach for the review was through two focussed sessions, which took place on 16 and 23 May 2022.

On the completion of its work a report was presented at the Council meeting 21 July 2022, where Council decided to refer the report to Cabinet for its consideration as it has the responsibility to implement any changes to the Authority’s Emergency Planning arrangements.

- 1.5.2 The Group was supported by a team of officers who had key positions of responsibility during any emergency events, including severe weather.

The Group received extensive information to each storm event, which included

- The background and the Authority’s response
- Command and control arrangements
- Timeline of events
- Summary of the impacts of each storm
- Communication activity
- Impact and work undertaken by Authority service areas

- 1.5.3 The conclusion of the Group's very comprehensive review was that resilience and emergency planning practice constantly evolves through experience. Through its review the Group has made a number of recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.
- 1.5.4 The Group also recognised the significant work that took place during the storms - by individuals, neighbours, communities, responders, voluntary groups, businesses, and others who came out in very challenging conditions to provide help to those in need.

The Group concluded that the Authority was able to rapidly mobilise staff with the necessary specialist technical skillsets to support the range of requirements needed to keep residents and property safe.

The Group's view was that the activation and effective mobilisation reduced possible further impact to residents/businesses within the borough and all staff involved throughout all the storm events worked tirelessly and should be commended.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet may accept the recommendation set out in paragraph 1.2 above

Option 2

Cabinet does not accept the recommendation set out in paragraph 1.2.

Option 1 is the recommended option because Cabinet is obliged to consider the report from the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

Cabinet is appropriate to consider the findings and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group, Cabinet has the responsibility to implement any changes to the Authority's Emergency Planning arrangements.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group Report, Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee – 13 June 2022

1.9 Contact officers:

Jackie Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive, Tel. (0191) 643 7075

David Dunford, Senior Business Partner Tel (0191) 643 7027

Paul Wheeler, Democratic Services Officer, Tel (0191) 643 5318

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) The Authority's Emergency Planning obligations with weather events
- (2) Storm Arwen
- (3) Storms Barra, Malik, Corrie, Dudley and Eunice
- (4) Lessons Learned

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no financial implications at this stage.

2.2 Legal

In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Cabinet is required to provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee within two months. In providing this response Cabinet is asked to state whether or not it accepts each recommendation and the reasons for this decision. Cabinet must also indicate what action, if any, it proposes to take.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

The Task and Finish Group was presented with comprehensive information from lead officers within the Authority holding key positions of responsibility during any emergency events. The findings of the Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group were received and noted by Full Council at its meeting 21 July 2022.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

There was no external consultation/engagement.

2.4 Human rights

There are no direct issues relating to human rights arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

Given that the importance of communication, due regard is given to the communication needs of all part of the community including those with sensory impairments and those with learning disabilities.

2.6 Risk management

There are no direct issues relating to risk arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no direct issues relating to crime and disorder arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no direct issues relating to environment and sustainability arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Director(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Assistant Chief Executive X