

Elected Members Emergency Response Information & Guidance

Emergency Response Plan Annex 5

Version: 4.0

Date: July 2026

Classification: OFFICIAL

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Essex County Council Responsibilities	2
3	Multi-Agency and ECC Emergency Response Structures	3
4	Role of Members in an Emergency.....	4
4.1	Role Summaries	4
4.2	Preparation for An Emergency.....	6
4.3	Response to an Emergency	7
4.4	Recovery from an Emergency	10
5	Role of Key Council Officers.....	12
5.1	Gold Officers.....	12
5.2	Strategy Advisors	12
5.3	Communications Team	13
6	Principles of Resilience	14
	Appendix A: Glossary	15
	Document Control	18

1 Introduction

Essex County Council has a key role to play in responding to [emergencies](#) and [major incidents](#).

When emergencies occur in Essex, ECC is required to be able to respond quickly and effectively, alongside our partners, whilst continuing to deliver essential 'business-as-usual' services.

Councillors have an important part to play in emergencies. This annex will provide information on the roles and responsibilities that are expected of both political leaders (The Leader/CABINET MEMBERS) and of all Elected Members (Divisional Councillors), and has been developed to align with national guidance.

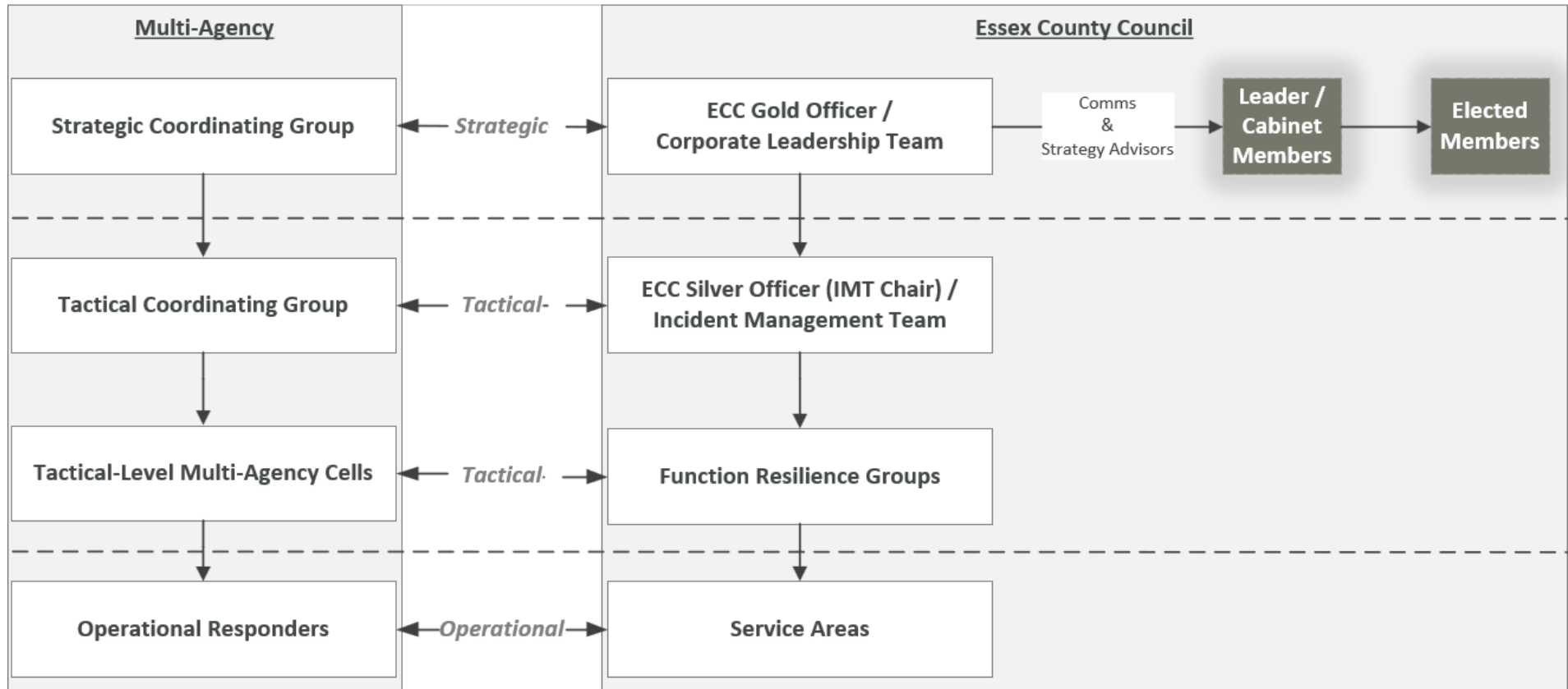
2 Essex County Council Responsibilities

During an emergency, the overarching responsibilities and priorities of ECC are:

Community support and humanitarian assistance	Meeting the immediate, short, medium, and longer-term needs of those affected.
Communications	Providing public information, in line with the agreed multi-agency communications strategy.
Coordinate voluntary sector	Where numerous organisations are involved.
Partner agency support	Working in partnership with wider responders, ensuring a joined-up response.
Coordinate local authority response	Where an incident affects multiple Lower Tier Local Authorities, ECC may play a coordinating role.
Lead the recovery	Coordinating longer-term recovery and renewal, including supporting communities to become more resilient.
Service-specific priorities	Activities required by legislation, e.g., mortuary capability, safeguarding, investigation and enforcement, public health.

3 Multi-Agency and ECC Emergency Response Structures

The diagram shows a typical multi-agency major incident command structure and how this aligns with ECC's involvement, including Elected Members.



4 Role of Members in an Emergency

The following sections provide an overview of the role of All Elected Members and Senior Councillors throughout an incident; followed by more detailed descriptions of respective roles across preparedness, response, and recovery.

4.1 Role Summaries

Theme	All Elected Members (Divisional Councillors)	Senior Councillors (Leader / Cabinet Members)
Primary Focus	Community representation, local political leadership, insight into resident needs.	Strategic political leadership, civic representation, oversight/assurance of council-wide activity.
Working Relationship	Do not engage in operational activity; feed intelligence through officers.	Work closely with Chief Exec / ECC Duty Gold Officer; aligned but not directing.
Visibility	Be visible to communities; reassure residents and calm tensions.	Act as public face of the council; lead media and high-level political engagement.
Communications	Share verified information; reinforce council messages locally; avoid speculation.	Deliver approved strategic messages; ensure consistency across channels; avoid contradiction.
Media	Support residents approached by media; do not act as spokesperson unless directed.	May undertake press conferences, interviews, and give official statements but should be informed by Chief Executive/Duty Gold Officer.
Stakeholder Engagement	Engage residents, community groups, and local businesses.	Engage MPs, ministers, combined authority mayors, neighbouring councils, VIPs.

Official

Government Liaison	No formal role with central government; support community understanding of information.	May make formal representations for financial assistance; attend ministerial meetings.
Governance	Maintain community contact; report issues; support BAU by flagging local service needs.	Allocate Cabinet roles: spokesperson, BAU lead, recovery lead, member liaison.
Community Intelligence	Identify local needs, vulnerabilities, and issues; feed intelligence to officers.	Receive intelligence from officers and councillors.
Boundaries & Expectations	Avoid judging response effectiveness; stay outside operational cordons; follow comms guidance.	Avoid publicising unconfirmed information; maintain oversight but not operational direction.
Support to Staff & Partners	Offer local encouragement and community support; signpost residents appropriately.	Provide visible support, thanks, and encouragement to staff and responders.
Record Keeping	Maintain record of actions, decisions, and key information.	Maintain record of actions, decisions, and key information.

4.2 Preparation for An Emergency

All Elected Members (Divisional Councillors)	Senior Councillors (Leader / Cabinet Members)
Be familiar with the content of this Elected Members Information & Guidance, understand the role of Divisional Councillors and Senior Councillors in emergencies.	
Be aware of ECC's Emergency Response Plan, and Business Continuity Plan, including how the role of Members fits into them. Know how to access these plans, using the Members Portal – Emergency Planning page .	
Attend relevant training, to build understanding and confidence in emergency role.	
Engage with residents to support the development of community-informed resilience. This involves engaging with residents/ businesses/ local communities/ faith-based organisations to build an understanding of local risks and vulnerabilities.	Set strategic direction by making policy and funding decisions that ensure the council is ready to respond to emergencies affecting communities or essential services, and the council contributes effectively to the Local Resilience Forum.
	Provide oversight and assurance that ECC's emergency planning and business continuity arrangements are robust and effective.
	Assure Local Resilience Forum performance, by engaging with senior Officers engaged in this forum, and with senior elected representatives from other responder organisations, to maintain strong governance, allowing effective monitoring, challenge, and influence, aligned with local needs.
	Build direct links with other council leaders, to enable rapid political communication and coordinated leadership during major incidents.

4.3 Response to an Emergency

All Elected Members (Divisional Councillors)	Senior Councillors (Leader / Cabinet Members)
Maintain record of actions, decisions, and key information. This will serve as an aid to memory, and inform future learning, debriefing, and any inquiry.	
Community Leadership • Be visible and active within Division, provide reassurance and calm community tensions. Offer support to those affected • However, be mindful of restricted areas such as police cordons, not to unintentionally hinder responders, or become involved in operational responder decisions.	Civic Leadership and Assurance • Senior Councillors should maintain regular communication with the ECC Gold Officer to ensure shared, up-to-date situational awareness. • Officers will lead the operational response, whilst Senior Councillors provide civic leadership and assurance. Political and Officer leadership must remain closely aligned, ensuring emergency strategy/direction align with political policy. • Appoint a Cabinet Member to act as a political point of contact for all councillor-related activity, ensuring Members' needs and concerns are addressed. • If the incident requires significant time and attention from the Leader, assign another Cabinet Member to lead on the Council's routine business. • Seek assurance that business continuity plans are deployed as appropriate, so essential services continue.
Effective Communication • Share only verified information provided by the council's Communications Team. Avoid speculation, assumptions, or commentary on the operational response. • Communicate clearly using appropriate channels (social media, community groups, face to face conversations).	Public Face of the Council. • Work with ECC's Communications Team to provide clear, reliable and consistent information to the public, ensure agreed tone, accuracy, and message discipline.

• Where information is limited, provide regular updates to maintain trust—even if the update is simply that there is no new information.	• Use a variety of channels to reach diverse audiences and ensure messages are aligned across traditional media, social media, and direct community engagement. • Avoid issuing contradictory, speculative or unconfirmed information. • Identify which Cabinet Member will act as the council's spokesperson. This will usually be the Leader but may be delegated where necessary or where another Cabinet Member has relevant portfolio responsibility.
Local Intelligence and Community Insight • Observe and gather information about emerging needs, concerns, vulnerabilities and local dynamics. • Feed this information through council officers, not directly to operational responders. • Use local insight to identify vulnerabilities, community assets, or potential risks requiring attention.	Information Flow • Confirm the arrangements in place for regular councillor briefings. • Emphasise consistent communication even when information is limited, to prevent Members being isolated.
Supporting Residents and Media Interactions • Signpost the public and businesses to appropriate agencies for support, ensuring vulnerable residents are not missed. • Assist residents who may be approached by the media by helping them understand their options.	Engagement with Political and Community Stakeholders • Engage with senior political figures, including Local Members of Parliament, Government Ministers, Leaders of other affected councils, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, and Mayors, to agree how you will all work together. • Represent the council during VIP visits, ensuring visits are sensitive to community needs and operational realities. • Liaise with the ECC Gold Officer regarding any operational implications of VIP or Ministerial visits.

Official

	Government Representation • Senior Councillors may need to lead on making representations to central government for financial assistance.
	Political Leadership of Early Recovery • Officers will begin recovery planning as early as possible, whilst the response phase continues. Political Leadership should also be ready for this early on. • Assign a Cabinet Member to provide political oversight of recovery work.
	Support to Staff and Volunteers • Provide support and encouragement to staff, volunteers, and partners involved in the response. • With support from ECC Comms, send regular messages of thanks to council officers.

4.4 Recovery from an Emergency

All Elected Members (Divisional Councillors)	Senior Councillors (Leader / Cabinet Members)
Act as community representatives - Advocate for residents' needs within recovery planning. - Make sure recovery plans reflect lived experience. - Highlight issues with frontline services. - Feedback intelligence from those affected.	Provide visible Civic Leadership - Be present and visible to affected communities. - Act as a trusted public voice during the recovery period.
Be visible and supportive locally - Stay present in neighbourhoods to reassure, listen, and support. - Build trust and prevent communities from feeling forgotten.	Oversee recovery governance - Ensure the council has a clear recovery strategy, a costed, timebound action plan, and that these align with political policy direction. - Seek assurance that the multi-agency Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) is delivering effectively.
Support communication - Share accurate, authorised information from the council. - Counter rumours or misinformation. - Explain recovery timelines and processes simply and clearly.	Advocate for resources - Make the case to government for additional funding or support if required. - Support the establishment and oversight of disaster relief funds.
Enable community contribution - Identify local groups, volunteers, networks, and assets that could support recovery. - Connect these to the council or voluntary sector partners.	Maintain political coordination Work with MPs, Ministers, neighbouring council Leaders, PFCC, and Mayors, to ensure consistent messaging and joined-up leadership.

Support community cohesion and healing • Participate in community meetings, vigils, restorative activities, and engagement sessions. • Help promote unity and prevent division, especially after traumatic events.	Ensure communities remain informed • Communicate clearly and honestly about progress. • Guard against misinformation by providing regular updates.
Support staff and partners • Encourage and thank teams working on recovery. • Recognise ongoing pressures on officers and volunteers.	Champion learning and improvement • Support transparent reviews, debriefs, and inquiries. • Promote a culture of honest reflection to drive improvement.
Participate in reviews and scrutiny • Take part in debriefs, scrutiny reviews, inquests, public inquiries. • Supply notes and records from the response period where requested.	Be present for memorial and community events • Attend remembrance activities sensitively where deaths have occurred.

5 Role of Key Council Officers

5.1 Gold Officers

ECC Gold Officers are empowered to make the necessary strategic decisions on behalf of the organisation. An ECC Gold Officer is always available, with a rota fulfilled by members of ECC's Corporate Leadership Team, and Directors with delegated responsibility. Larger and protracted incidents may require a response from all CLT.

A summary of ECC Gold Officer's role is:

- Provide strategic direction and overview to ensure an effective response
- Coordinate with other responders at strategic level, including participating in multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Group and Recovery Co-ordinating Group meetings
- Authorise expenditure (within delegated limits)
- Keep Leader and Cabinet Members informed
- Authorise / request mutual aid requests from / to other local authorities or partners
- Plan and coordinate the recovery

Working with Gold Officers as Cabinet Members.

The close relationship between ECC's Gold Officer and Cabinet Members is essential for guiding both the response and recovery phases of an emergency.

While Gold provides strategic operational direction, Cabinet Members brings democratic oversight, local priorities/policy, and an understanding of community expectations. Together, they develop a shared view of how the response will progress and what the recovery pathway should look like.

5.2 Strategy Advisors

Theme	Key Responsibilities
Strategic Political Advice	Provide high-level political guidance to senior elected members; help them understand implications of emergency decisions.
Legal & Policy Alignment	Ensure decisions comply with statutory duties (e.g., Civil Contingencies Act) and align with council priorities.
Political Engagement	Facilitate contact between council leaders and MPs, neighbouring authorities, and partner agency politicians.
Decision-Making Support	Ensure elected members receive timely briefings to enable rapid strategic decisions.

Official

Media & Public Preparedness Support	Prepare councillors for media engagement; offer advice on messaging and what can be communicated.
Risk & Issue Monitoring	Track emerging issues, community concerns, and reputational risks, escalating them to leadership.

5.3 Communications Team

Theme	Key Responsibilities
Public Information & Warnings	Issue safety messages, updates, and guidance via social media, website, press releases, and local media.
Multi-Agency Messaging	Coordinate with partners to maintain consistent messaging across agencies.
Strategic Communications Delivery	Translate Gold Command decisions into clear public and internal communications.
Support to Leaders & Councillors	Prepare media briefings, Q&As, statements, and support press conferences/interviews.
Misinformation Management	Monitor public channels, identify misinformation, and correct it swiftly when required.
Internal Communications	Keep staff and councillors updated with accurate, timely internal briefings.
Recovery Communications	Share recovery progress, available support, and community engagement information.

6 Principles of Resilience

When interacting with those affected, or setting policy and strategy, it is worth considering the 5 principles of resilience ([Hobfoll et al. 2007](#)) as an evidenced-based post-disaster interventions model.

Promote Sense of Safety	Helping people feel physically and psychologically safe (clear information, visible protection, reducing uncertainty and threat).
Promote calming	Reducing intense emotions and physiological arousal (reassurance, routines, managing stress and fear, avoiding alarmist messaging).
Promote a sense of self and community efficacy	Supporting people's belief that <i>they and their community can cope and take effective action</i> (empowerment, skills, involvement, agency).
Promote connectedness	Strengthening social bonds, peer support, family and community networks (belonging, mutual aid, trusted relationships).
Promote hope	Supporting realistic optimism about recovery and the future (clear recovery pathways, visible progress, meaning and purpose).

Some examples of the principles of resilience in action (available online):

- Jacinda Ardern's speech following the New Zealand mosque attacks
- Jens Stoltenberg's speech following the terrorist attack on Utoya Island, Norway

Appendix A: Glossary

Emergency	<i>“An event, situation or incident which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or the security of the UK or of a place in the UK.”</i> In the event of an emergency impacting Essex, it is possible that a <i>major incident</i> (see below) may be declared by one or more emergency responders.
Functional Resilience Group	ECC’s Function Resilience Groups (FRG) will implement and manage the response of their Function. The FRG of some Functions may closely align with their regular Function Leadership Team (FLT) membership, whilst others may differ; this is individual choice depending on each Function’s needs. Close working between a Function’s FRG and FLT will be required, should these differ in membership significantly.
Incident Management Team	ECC’s Incident Management Team (IMT) is responsible for the internal tactical level coordination and decision making in relation to the incident; including determining and agreeing the objectives and identifying resources to support response. IMT will take direction and follow the strategy set by CLT/ECC’s Gold Officer.
Major Incident	<i>“An event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency.”</i> A major incident is beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment, or national security. A major incident may involve a single-agency response, although it is more likely to require a multi-agency response, which may be in the form of multi-agency support to a lead responder. The severity of the consequences associated with a major incident are

Official

	likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident, although a major incident is unlikely to affect all responders equally.
Operational Command	The tier of command and control within a single agency or multi agency at which the management of 'hands-on' work is undertaken at the incident site(s) or associated areas. In ECC the operational roles could be social workers, crisis support teams, transport operatives, as well as support services.
Preparedness	Process of preparing to deal with known risks and unforeseen events or situations that have the potential to result in an emergency.
Recovery	The process of rebuilding, restoring, and rehabilitating the community following an emergency. This phase takes place after the response to a disaster or incident has concluded, although it should be planned for and considered right at the beginning of any emergency. Recovery may lead to a further phase of "renewal". Renewal activities are part of recovery, but they are more strategic and longer-term with the aim of building stronger, more resilient, and sustainable communities and systems. These activities are often more political and focus on broader policy changes with goals that are sometimes referred to as moving towards a 'new normal'.
Response	Decisions and actions taken in accordance with the strategic, tactical and operational objectives defined by emergency responders. At a high level these will be to protect life, contain and mitigate the impacts of the emergency and create the conditions for a return to normality.
Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)	Multi-agency body responsible for co-ordinating the joint response to an emergency at the local strategic level. Officers working at this level are referred to as Gold Commanders.

Official

	The ECC representative will be one of the ECC Gold Officers, who are CLT members, and some Directors with delegated authority. An SCG does not have the collective authority to issue commands or executive orders to individual responder agencies, but agrees joint strategy and ensures coordination as each organisation exercises control of their own operations in the normal way.
Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)	A multi-agency group of tactical commanders that meets to determine, co-ordinate and deliver the tactical response to an emergency. Officers working at this level are referred to as Silver Commanders. The ECC representative will be one of the ECC Silver Officers, who are Directors, and some Assistant Directors/Heads of Service with delegated authority. The group's role is to jointly conduct the overall multi-agency management of the incident: determining priorities for allocating available resources and seeking additional resources if required; planning and coordinating tasks; assessing risks and using this to inform tasking of operational commanders.

A complete civil contingencies glossary is available from the Cabinet Office [online](#).

Document Control

Publish Notes

Author	ECC Emergency Planning & Resilience Team
Authorised by	Jo Tyler and Paul Turner
Date	30 th June 2026
Version Number	V4.0
Classification	Official
Next Review Date	June 2029

Version Control

Date	Version	Changes	Editors
April 2018	V1.0	First issued	EP&R
Jan 2020	V2.0	Full Review	M Marcheselli
April 2023	V3.0	New template, minor wording amendments, new structure diagram	EP&R
July 2026	V4.0	Full review	EP&R

Distribution

Date	Version	Distribution	Method
April 2018	V1.0	ECC Elected Members	Member's Portal
02/03/2020	V2.0	ECC Elected Members	Member's Portal

Official

May 2023	V3.0	ECC Elected Members, ECC Gold & Silver Officers, Operational Leadership Team, Virtual Incident Response Centre members, and EP&R	Member's Portal, RD, Email, MS Teams
July 2026	V4.0	ECC Elected Members, and EP&R	Member's Portal, RD, MS Teams

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

Contact us:
emergency.plans@essex.gov.uk
Emergency Planning & Resilience Team
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH



Essex_CC



facebook.com/essexcountycouncil

The information contained in this document
can be translated, and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

This is an internal document