BRIEF FOR LOCAL COUNCILS
BUSINESS CONTINUITY & EMERGENCY PLANNING

Resilient Communities

Risk Awareness | Individual & Family Resilience | Resilient Carers and vulnerable | Business Continuity | Resilient Communities/ Community Champions | Regional Resilience

Cross Organisational Working/ Partnerships

Communications
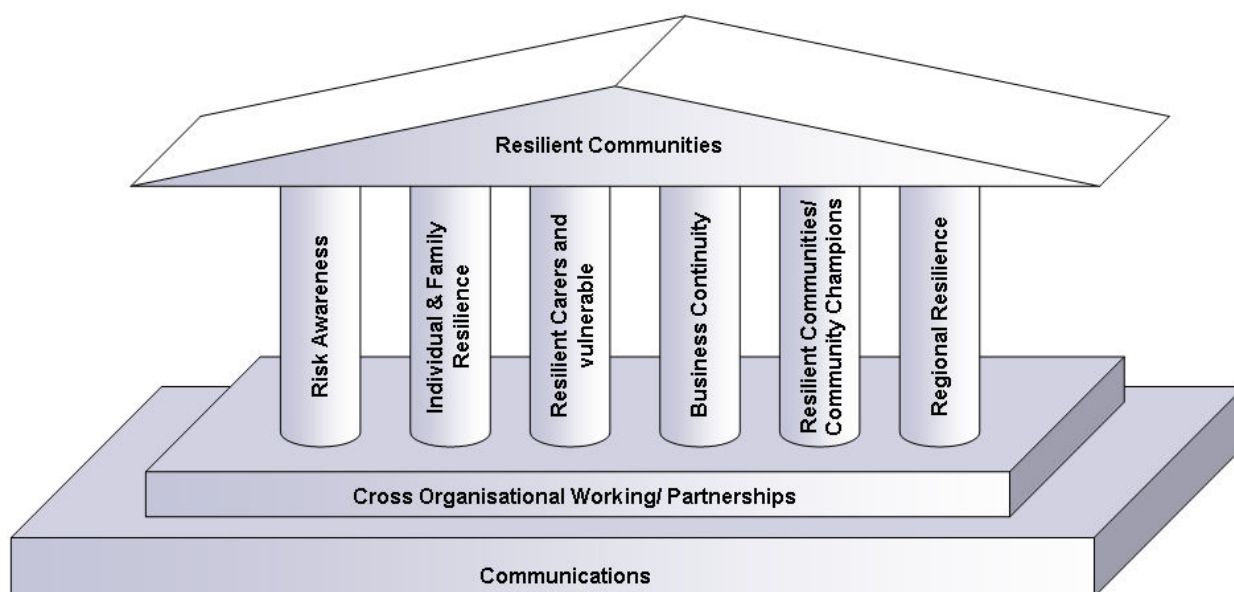
Introduction

There are some fundamental challenges on the horizon that can only be met if we work together as communities. We have run many workshops to investigate the impacts of climate change, peak oil, demographic change and the rise of the tiger economies. These workshops have highlighted some common threads:

1. **Rise to the challenge early**. It is essential to rise to these challenges early or we will face their full detrimental impacts.
2. **The Big Society**. We can only hope to meet these challenges by working together as communities, as David Cameron would say, "as a Big Society". Given the financial challenge, it is only through a change in cultural norms, reinforced by the whole community, that challenges needing such fundamental change can be met.
3. **Community Resilience Strategy.** We need a strategy that provides a framework through which we can join up community initiatives to build stronger, more resilient communities with a greater focus on an individual's responsibility for their own resilience. We must provide advice and support for individuals so that they do not become victims and are able to support the community in a time of crisis rather than being a draw on finite resources.

Background

Workshops have been run over the past six months to support the Sustainability Team within the Council to meet the Council's requirements under recent legislation to adapt to climate change. The workshops have provided a useful insight into the opportunities and threats posed by the above challenges and how they can be mitigated or exploited. These insights have been developed into an action plan which can be delivered through a programme of work under the banner of a Community Resilience Strategy.

Community Resilience Mission

We want to empower individuals, households, businesses, community groups and public organisations to take responsibility for their own resilience so that when the worst happens, all sections of the community have protected themselves and are enabled join together in a pre-planned way until life returns to normality.

The main streams of work identified for the Community Resilience Strategy are:

- Risk Assessment & Risk Awareness
- Individual & Family Resilience
- Resilient Carers and the Vulnerable
- Business Continuity
- Communities and Community Champions
- Cross Organisational Working/ Partnerships
  - Information Sharing
  - Long term investment
- Regional Resilience
- Communications

Risk Assessment & Risk Awareness

Work has been underway to develop a Community Risk Register to identify and assess all the main hazards to the community. It is our intention to publish this risk register on the Council web pages so that the public will have a better understanding of the risks to the community. The risks are broken down into four key areas; health hazards; societal hazards; natural hazards and infrastructure hazards. The key hazards within these areas are as follows:

Hazard Group	Hazard
Health Hazards	Influenza pandemic New & emerging disease Zoonotic notifiable animal disease
Societal Hazards	Gas leak or explosion Major road accident Air accident
Natural Hazards	Flood Snow & severe low temperature Heat wave
Infrastructure Hazards	Fuel stoppages Widespread, prolonged electrical failure Major failure of the water supply

Individual & Family Resilience

Consistent and useful advice is needed to promote individual and family resilience so that people can take responsibility for their own resilience. The community risk register web pages will have links to practical advice on how to prevent, protect against and prepare for common hazards.

Resilience Carers and the Vulnerable

There are a great number of carers within our communities many of whom have people who are almost entirely dependant on them for their wellbeing. What if these carers are subject to an accident? How do we tie together our systems and community knowledge to ensure we support carers and provide some level of support and back up in an emergency?

Business Continuity
We will use business networks and other communications channels to promote business continuity within our communities. Again, we will provide specific advice and guidance through the website and offer personal support where appropriate.

Community Resilience and Community Champions.
Bath & North East Somerset has had a small network of Community Emergency Resource Advisers (CERAs) for some time, loosely affiliated will parishes. These community spirited people have not been effectively constituted into any specific organisation and have not received the level of training, advice and guidance that their role deserves. The current arrangements are not satisfactory with poorly defined roles, responsibilities and limits to authority. However, the concept of CERAs or similar volunteers is a commendable idea that is ripe for the times of the Big Society.

We see CERAs as a key pillar of any future community resilience strategy. If the strategy is to go forward we need public spirited volunteers within each community to help spread messages of resilience and self reliance and to play a key coordination role in emergencies. We propose to ask for volunteers to fulfil the following roles:

- Develop Community Resilience Plans, potentially linking to existing community or parish plans.
- Act as a point of contact for the Emergency Services in an emergency, providing useful information about the community and its resources (including information about the vulnerable).
- To act as the focal point for the promotion of community resilience within the community
- Support the community and local authority preparing for emergencies and providing warnings of impending incidents/issues. E.g. this can be as simple as notifying the highways team of problem blocked drains when a flood warning is received.

What we propose to do.

- Provide annual training/seminar for volunteers.
- Provide advice and guidance as necessary.
- Provide ID badges for volunteers.
- Work with the emergency services to ensure volunteers are acknowledged and their role is understood.
- Ensure the work of volunteers is supported and covered by insurance.
- Maintain a register of volunteers
- Collate Community Resilience plans and promote best practice.
- Annual exercise to test the CERA network
- Toolkit for setting up community resilience plans and systems

Cross Organisational Working/ Partnerships
The community resilience strategy needs to be supported by the whole community if we are to deliver cultural change. Organisations supporting the community should make sure that messages of personal responsibility and self reliance are reinforced at every opportunity. Neighbourhood watch schemes, fire safety inspection, etc. need to promote these common messages.

Information Sharing. It is essential that local partners work together to share information in an emergency so that vulnerabilities can be quickly identified and prioritised.

Long Term Investment. Coupled with the risk assessment is risk appetite. We know that in the long term risks such as flood, heat wave, and interruptions in fuel supply are likely to increase. We have the choice of accepting the impacts of these risks or investing to mitigate against them. This type of investment must be part of long term strategic planning if we are to invest wisely.

Regional Resilience

Our plan in Bath & North East Somerset must tie in with the wider plans of the region so that we work together across boundaries for the common purpose of resilient communities.

Communications Plan.

The strategy is founded on a communications plan that uses existing community networks and community champions to fully integrate resilience. To start the ball rolling, the Business Continuity & Emergency Planning team are producing a Community Resilience Manual for the public. The manual will provide sound advice and guidance to underpin the principles laid out in this brief. The manual will be available in December 2010.

Next Steps

We are working with the Policy & Partnerships service within the Council to see how this work can be taken forward. The next logical step will be to develop a business case to justify a Community Resilience Strategy and if successful, work will progress developing the above work streams.