



CABINET – 9 FEBRUARY 2024

GAS OUTAGE: MAJOR INCIDENT AFFECTING RATBY AND KIRBY MUXLOE

URGENT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on the major incident declared on 30th January in response to a serious gas outage which has affected thousands of residents in Ratby and Kirby Muxloe.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The incidents, their significant impacts on the local communities, and the very positive response of those communities and their representatives, including volunteers, to an unprecedented situation, be noted;
 - b) The very positive response of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and its partner organisations in support of the local communities be noted;
 - c) Severn Trent Water be asked to provide an explanation of the cause of the burst pipe, the speed of its response and the repair effected to the first incident on January 29th/30th;
 - d) Severn Trent Water be asked to provide an explanation of the cause of the burst pipe, the speed of its response and the repair effected to the second incident on February 3rd;
 - e) Cadent be asked to confirm their observations when they attended the consequence of the first burst water pipe incident on January 29th /30th;
 - f) Cadent be commended for the steps and actions it has taken to address the gas outage and to mitigate its worst impacts on the local communities;
 - g) Severn Trent Water and Cadent be asked to provide a detailed account of the repair work and new installations undertaken by both organisations in the Ratby and Kirby Muxloe areas in the last two years, noting those works have

led to significant local disruption and the concern that the most recent incidents could be related;

- h) The Council fully participates in the recovery process to be overseen by the LRF, including to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to speedily compensate residents and businesses, repair/replace damaged appliances and put right any damage to the public realm;
- i) The LRF be asked to co-ordinate an assessment of the total cost to local public agencies contributing to the response and recovery with a view to recovering the costs from those responsible for the incident; and
- j) Volunteers and council staff who went 'over and above' in response to the incident including by helping co-ordinate the response and supporting response activities within the local communities be formally thanked for their efforts.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3. To inform the Cabinet of the impact of the gas outage and the local response to it, pay tribute to those who contributed to the response, and put on record the Council's concerns about issues yet to be resolved.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

- 4. None

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 5. None.

Resource Implications

- 6. Significant resources have been expended by the Council, and other local agencies, in response to this incident. It is proposed that these costs be quantified so that consideration can be given to recouping them.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 7. This report has been circulated to all Members of the County Council.

Officers to Contact

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PART B

The Gas Outage

8. At 06:30 on Tuesday 30th January Cadent (a gas distribution company that owns, operates and maintains the largest natural gas distribution network in the UK) received multiple reports of disrupted gas supply from residents in Ratby. Further inspection work identified that a water pipe had burst which resulted in water entering the gas supply. The previous day Severn Trent Water (at approximately 1800) was informed of a severed water pipe. It is understood that Severn Trent Water (STW) responded to this by attending the scene at 08:15.
9. At 09:01 on Tuesday 30th Cadent contacted the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Resilience Partnership Duty Officer to alert the Partnership to the incident and to request local authority support. Due to the closure of the M1 following a road traffic collision and diesel spillage there was significant travel disruption around the area which slowed the initial response. It was apparent that significant numbers of properties in both Ratby and Kirby Muxloe had been affected.
10. An initial call was held with Cadent at 10:30 to get an update at which it was agreed to stand-up a LLR Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG), chaired by the Director of Children and Family Services, the Council's On-Call Senior Manager for the week commencing 29th January. A Major Incident was declared at 13:00 by the TCG, due to the potential impact on welfare, the need to establish a multi-agency response and the potential duration of the incident. Three supporting cells were stood up:
 - Media and Communications
 - Environment and Infrastructure
 - Humanitarian Assistance
11. The Council's Resilience Planning Group has also met throughout the incident to co-ordinate the Council's input to the wider partnership response.
12. Cadent established an Incident Control Centre in Ratby Village Hall and handed out electric fan heaters and hot plates to affected households. The affected area was split into five zones by Cadent.
13. A further burst water pipe incident, to the same pipe in the same location, occurred on February 3rd. STW attended the scene and installed a temporary fix. Further replacement works were conducted during the evening of 4th February which included replacing a 9m section of pipe. During the second incident and subsequent remedial work, 69 properties were without water.
14. The response to the incident, coordinated by the LRF, has involved Cadent, STW, the County Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (regarding Ratby), Blaby District Council (regarding Kirby Muxloe), voluntary and community organisations from across Leicestershire, local businesses, volunteers and the local community.

15. The Major Incident declaration was stood down at 09:50 on 7th February as all properties that could be reconnected had been. As of 7th February the TCG is continuing to meet to manage and support the response.
16. Key statistics relating to the incident as of 7th February are as follows:
 - 3500 properties have been affected within the five zones;
 - 2715 properties were isolated off the gas network to facilitate the clearing of water from gas pipes, including all of Ratby and approximately 400 properties in Kirby Muxloe;
 - 2687 properties have been reconnected; and
 - It has not yet been possible to access 28 properties. Cadent are continuing to visit these properties twice a day for seven days.
17. Once properties are reconnected to the gas network Cadent were required to visit all properties to both turn off the gas supply and to turn it back on once they have checked the supply and appliances and have ensured it is safe to do so.
18. There is a process in place for Cadent to notify STW of any internal appliances that require replacement/ repair. This currently sits at 106 appliances. STW are working to contact all residents within this category and believe this will be done by midday on February 8th. If residents require alternative accommodation this will be provided by STW.

Issues and Observations

Cause of the incident

19. The precise cause of, and responsibility for, the incident remains unconfirmed, and it is recommended that in the first instance STW be requested to provide an explanation.

Initial response to the incident

20. There appears to have been a significant delay to the initial response by STW to the first incident of a water pipe bursting and it is recommended that an explanation for this also be sought.

Response of local agencies and the recovery process

21. Initial informal assessments of the response of local agencies to date indicate that it has been effective, well organised and welcomed by the local community. The response has been co-ordinated by the LRF's team and has been very well supported by officers of the three local authorities affected (the County Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Council, and Blaby District Council), and voluntary and community sector organisations including Leicestershire Search and Rescue, Leicestershire 4x4, British Red Cross, the Rapid Relief Team, and the Salvation Army. Many local authority officers volunteered to work out of hours to support the response within the communities directly affected providing invaluable assistance. The LRF will also co-ordinate the recovery effort moving forward and will carry out a full debrief of the incident so that lessons can be learned to inform future incidents of this nature within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. A

Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG), to be co-chaired by the two affected district councils, will start meeting in the week commencing February 12th. The LRF is aware of a similar incident which occurred in Sheffield in December 2022 and will liaise with the LRF covering Sheffield so that lessons learnt from that incident can be taken into account.

The response of the local community

22. County Councillors, council officers and others involved in the response have unreservedly praised the response of the local community itself. Local residents and businesses stepped up to help vulnerable neighbours and ensure that the impacts of the incident were minimised as far as possible.

Compensation to local residents and businesses

23. Both STW and Cadent have provided information on compensation and other support available to assist local residents and businesses inconvenienced by the incident and who have experienced damage and additional costs (e.g. energy costs) as a result. Supporting the speedy delivery of this support will be important as recovery from the incident proceeds. Both Cadent and Severn Trent have committed to donating to community venues/voluntary organisations which have supported the response.

The cost to the public purse

24. This incident appears to have been as a result of the actions of one or more privately owned companies, but large costs have been incurred by local public agencies in responding to it. These costs have been incurred at a time when councils and other agencies are experiencing significant and sustained funding pressures. Assessing what these costs have been will be important to inform preparations for future incidents and to underpin any potential recouping of the expense incurred.

Equality Implications

25. There are no direct equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Preservation of life and supporting the most vulnerable is the overriding principle that drives the actions of all partners involved such incidents.

Human Rights Implications

26. There are no direct human rights implications arising from this report.

Background Papers

None.

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