

PORLOCK PARISH COUNCIL

EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE



PURPOSE

The purpose of the Emergency Response Committee is to support the Council in preparing for, coordinating and monitoring community resilience and emergency response arrangements within the Parish. The Committee will work with relevant emergency services, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and community groups to improve preparedness, assist communication during emergencies and support recovery following significant incidents affecting the Parish.

The Committee shall oversee the establishment, management, training and support of the Porlock Emergency Response Team (PERT) and shall ensure that the Emergency Plan remains current, practical, legally compliant and capable of implementation during an emergency affecting the Parish.

The Committee shall promote community resilience, preparedness and recovery activities in support of the objectives of the Emergency Plan.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Cllr.
- Cllr.
- Cllr.
- Cllr.
- Cllr.

Non-Council Members:

- Representatives of community resilience organisations
- Representatives of approved Places of Refuge
- Other community volunteers as determined by the Committee

1. GENERAL

1. The Committee is a standing committee appointed by and solely responsible to Porlock Parish Council.
2. The Committee's duties are defined and agreed by the Council, which may vote at any time to modify the Committee's duties, add or remove members or dissolve the Committee or any sub-committee.
3. All Committee members must abide by:
 1. Standing Orders;
 2. Code of Conduct;
 3. Financial Regulations;
 4. Policies and Procedures;
 5. Civility & Respect Pledge;
 6. Relevant legislation relating to emergency planning, health and safety, safeguarding and data protection.
4. The Committee will consist of no fewer than three councillors.
5. A quorum shall be three councillors.
6. The Committee may co-opt up to eight non-council members with relevant skills, expertise or local knowledge.
7. Non-council members shall not have voting rights.
8. The Committee is not an operational emergency service and shall not direct emergency services, utility providers or statutory authorities.

2. MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

1. The Committee's Terms of Reference.
2. Adoption of, or substantial amendment to, the Emergency Plan.
3. Expenditure exceeding £2,000 (excluding VAT).
4. Creation of emergency response policies and procedures.
5. Safeguarding and volunteer management policies.

6. Formal agreements or memoranda of understanding with external organisations.
7. Applications for major grant funding commitments.
8. Establishment of permanent emergency facilities or assets.
9. Any matter likely to expose the Council to significant legal, financial or reputational risk.
10. Any matter reserved by law to full Council.

3. MATTERS DELEGATED TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Emergency Planning and Risk Assessment

1. Develop, maintain and review the Emergency Plan at least annually.
2. Undertake or commission an annual community emergency risk assessment and maintain a register of foreseeable risks affecting the Parish.
3. Review emergency activation and stand-down procedures annually.
4. Monitor emergency preparedness arrangements for flooding, severe weather, power failures, communications failures, public health incidents and other foreseeable emergencies.
5. Arrange and oversee emergency planning exercises, simulations and training events.

2. Porlock Emergency Response Team (PERT)

1. Establish and oversee the Porlock Emergency Response Team (PERT).
2. Determine the structure and membership of PERT and appoint volunteer coordinators where necessary.
3. Maintain records of membership, training and emergency contact details in accordance with data protection requirements.
4. Establish operational procedures for volunteers involved in emergency response activities.
5. Coordinate volunteer recruitment, induction, training and retention activities.
6. Liaise with Somerset Council, emergency services, voluntary organisations, utility providers, community groups and other relevant agencies.

3. Places of Refuge and Emergency Equipment

1. Maintain a register of approved Places of Refuge within the Parish.
2. Liaise with organisations responsible for Places of Refuge and ensure facilities remain suitable for emergency use.
3. Maintain an inventory of emergency equipment and community resilience assets.
4. Determine requirements for maintenance, testing, replacement and procurement of emergency equipment.
5. Ensure appropriate stocks of equipment, PPE and welfare supplies are available and fit for purpose.

4. Financial Responsibilities

1. Determine the requirement for and election of a Vice-Chair from amongst the councillor members.
2. Spend over £300 and up to £2,000 (excluding VAT) in line with approved budgets and earmarked reserves.
3. Monitor income and expenditure relating to emergency preparedness and resilience activities.
4. Prepare and submit an annual budget and three-year forecast for emergency planning and resilience activities.
5. Apply for grants and external funding opportunities within approved Council policies.

5. Community Resilience

1. Promote household emergency preparedness and community resilience initiatives.
2. Support the maintenance of emergency contact lists and community asset registers in accordance with data protection legislation.
3. Coordinate local communications relating to emergency preparedness and resilience.

4. VOLUNTEER SAFEGUARDING, WELFARE AND SAFETY

The Committee shall ensure that all emergency response activities are conducted in a manner that promotes the safety, welfare and wellbeing of volunteers and members of the public. The Committee shall:

1. Ensure suitable risk assessments are completed and periodically reviewed.
2. Ensure all volunteers registered as authorised volunteers and sign the Authorised Volunteer Agreement.
3. Ensure volunteers receive appropriate training, briefing and supervision from a PERT member before carrying out any volunteering activities.
4. Ensure adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available where required.
5. Promote the physical and mental wellbeing of volunteers during and following emergency incidents.
6. Ensure safeguarding arrangements are established for vulnerable adults and children where emergency activities may involve contact with such individuals.
7. Determine which volunteer roles require DBS checks and ensure such checks are maintained where appropriate.
8. Develop and recommend safeguarding and volunteer management policies to Council where necessary.
9. Ensure volunteers are not expected or instructed to undertake activities beyond their competence, training or physical capability.
10. Monitor volunteer welfare during prolonged incidents and ensure appropriate rest periods, refreshments and support are available.
11. Consider the emotional and psychological impact of emergency incidents and provide opportunities for debriefing and support following major events.

5. OPERATIONAL LIMITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Committee, PERT and all volunteers acting on behalf of the Council shall operate solely in a community support and resilience capacity.
2. Once blue-light responders (Police, Fire & Rescue) arrive on-scene, responsibility for the site completely rests with them.
3. PERT must stand down or strictly act *under the explicit direction* of the lead emergency officer.
4. The PERT Lead must record the time the emergency services took control, protect the Council from liability during the handover.

Neither the Committee, PERT nor volunteers shall:

5. Undertake activities that are the responsibility of the emergency services, statutory agencies or utility providers.
6. Enter floodwater or undertake water rescue activities.
7. Enter flooded properties or areas deemed unsafe.
8. Enter buildings where there is or has been a fire.
9. Enter damaged, unsafe or structurally compromised buildings.
10. Undertake medical treatment beyond the level for which an individual is trained and insured.
11. Carry out evacuations against a person's wishes except where directed by emergency services or another authority possessing the necessary legal powers.
12. Direct or control traffic on public highways unless authorised and trained by the relevant authority.
13. Use privately-owned equipment without the owner's consent and confirmation that it is safe and fit for purpose.
14. Enter private property without permission except where authorised by law or directed by emergency services.
15. Represent themselves as emergency service personnel or exercise powers reserved to statutory authorities.
16. Place themselves or others at unreasonable or foreseeable risk.

The primary role of the Committee and PERT shall be to:

17. Coordinate local community resilience activities by:
 1. Activation of the Emergency Plan and PERT
 2. Determining which refuges to open
 3. Deployment of emergency equipment to where it's needed
 4. Standing Down PERT
18. Provide information and communications support.
19. Establish and support Places of Refuge.

20. Assist vulnerable and isolated residents where it is safe to do so.
21. Coordinate volunteers and community resources.
22. Support recovery activities following an emergency.

6. SCHEME OF EMERGENCY DELEGATION

In circumstances where an emergency threatens or affects the Parish and immediate action is required:

1. The Lead Councillor, Deputy Lead Councillor and Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer acting jointly shall have authority to activate the Emergency Plan.
2. The same officers shall have authority to stand down the Emergency Plan once the emergency situation has sufficiently reduced.
3. They may mobilise PERT members, volunteers, emergency equipment and approved Places of Refuge where necessary.
4. Emergency expenditure up to £2,000 (excluding VAT) may be authorised in accordance with approved budgets, earmarked reserves and the Council's emergency arrangements.
5. Any emergency actions and expenditure undertaken under this delegation shall be reported to the next available meeting of the Committee and Council.

7. POST-INCIDENT REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Following any activation of the Emergency Plan, the Committee shall undertake a formal post-incident review. The review shall normally be undertaken within three months of stand-down and shall:

1. Assess the effectiveness of the Emergency Plan and associated procedures.
2. Review communications, decision-making processes, volunteer deployment, equipment performance and use of Places of Refuge.
3. Identify lessons learned, examples of good practice and areas requiring improvement.
4. Review any accidents, incidents, near misses, safeguarding concerns or welfare issues arising during the response.
5. Review the adequacy of risk assessments and operational controls.
6. Produce a written report and recommendations for consideration by the Council.

Any agreed actions arising from the review shall be incorporated into future versions of the Emergency Plan, associated risk assessments and operational procedures.

8. MEETING PROTOCOL

1. The Committee shall meet at least twice yearly.
2. The Chair of the Committee or any two councillor members may convene an extraordinary meeting.
3. Emergency meetings may be convened at short notice where circumstances require.
4. Non-council members may participate in discussions but shall not vote.
5. Councillor members shall have voting rights.
6. The Committee may establish working groups or task-and-finish groups to consider specific resilience matters.

9. DUTIES OF THE CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

1. Issue meeting agendas and summonses within the required statutory timescales in consultation with the Committee Chair.
2. Maintain records of Committee proceedings and decisions.
3. Manage the work of officers in respect of Committee decisions.
4. Monitor expenditure and ensure compliance with Financial Regulations.
5. Maintain emergency planning documentation and associated records.
6. Liaise with external organisations as instructed by the Committee or Council.
7. Ensure actions arising from post-incident reviews are appropriately recorded and monitored.

10. Review Date: Annually or following activation of the Emergency Plan.

Dated 14 October 2025

Duncan McCanlis

Johnathan Jones

Porlock Parish Council Chair

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer