

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## 1. *What is an Emergency ?*

Put simply, an EMERGENCY could be any event that occurs in the locality that is of such magnitude that a community response is required.

Examples of such an event are:

- Extreme weather, (hot & cold).
- A major accident involving road, rail and air.
- Terrorist action.
- War.
- Pollution, (e.g. Drinking Water, River Pollution, Gas Leaks & Air Borne Fumes).
- Pandemics, (e.g. Avian Influenza).
- Flooding.
- Long term utility failure, (e.g. Gas, Water, Electricity & Sewerage)
- Industrial Action.
- Fuel shortages. (e.g. Transport and Heating)

*Or Any combination of emergency events.*

Major incidents may require the community to give assistance, based on local knowledge and resources, to the emergency and supporting services.

## 2. *Why have a plan ?*

- Plans save time, reduce confusion and speed up recovery.
- The uncertain affects and consequences of global warming and global politics are good reasons for having a plan in place in case an emergency arises.
- It would be wrong to assume that rural Withyham Parish is unlikely to be affected by most of these events.

## 3. *What does a plan seek to achieve ?*

a) To enable the community to provide a co-ordinated response to;

- an emergency incident
- support the emergency services and/or other responding agencies
- assist in promoting recovery.

b) To provide assistance to other communities that may experience a problem.

An example of this may be to accommodate displaced persons from other areas.

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## **4. Why is the Parish Council involved ?**

A Parish Council is the first level of government. The Civil Contingencies Act of 2004, places a responsibility on County and District Councils to prepare for emergencies. Ultimately, these bodies are likely to be heavily reliant on the support that can be provided by individual Parishes.

## **5. What can the Parish Council do ?**

The principal resources within a Parish are the people who live there and the various assets at their disposal, (e.g. manpower, skills, equipment and buildings.). The task of the Parish Council will be to assist the emergency services to locate and co-ordinate these resources.

The Parish Council is the primary link with Wealden District Council which has the responsibility of managing a recovery on a District wide basis.

In the early stages of an emergency, District resources may be so stretched that local 'self help' will be essential until District resources can be prioritised and mobilised.

## **6. How is the Parish organised ?**

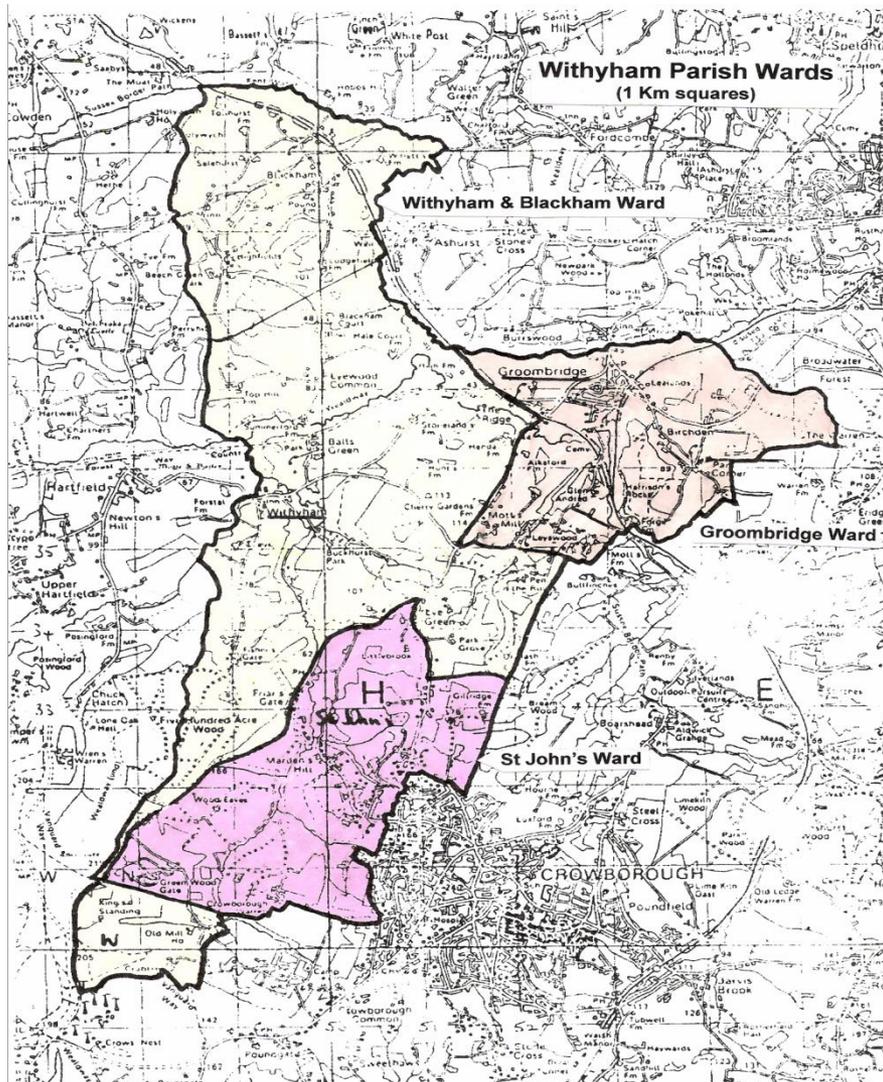
Withyham Parish is made up of three Wards, namely,

- Withyham & Blackham Ward,
- Groombridge Ward,
- Withyham St Johns Ward.

Each Ward is lead by an elected Chair person supported by elected local Parish Ward Councillors.

In the event of an emergency, the Ward Chair, under the direction of the Parish Chair and the Parish Emergency Planning Co-ordinator (PEPCO), with the support of the Parish Clerk, will direct operations.

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## 7. So, what happens when an emergency arises ?

Each Parish Councillor has been issued with an extensive Emergency Plan Manual. When an emergency is recognised, the following steps will be followed:-

- a) The Parish Chair, the Parish Clerk and the Parish Emergency Planning Co-ordinator will meet at Groombridge Village hall.
- b) At the same time, each Ward Chair will meet with their respective Ward Councillors at the Ward's village hall. Their first task will be to make an immediate *initial* Parish-wide assessment of the local situation. The Ward Chair will then report the local information to the Parish Emergency Planning Co-ordinator, (PEPCO). The Ward Chairs will also initiate the collection and reporting of additional information back to the PEPCO.
- c) Ward Chairs will then meet, circumstances permitting, with the PEPCO, the Parish Chair and the Parish Clerk. An initial Situation Assessment will then be reported to Wealden District Council Emergency Planning Control, (WDC EP C) at Hailsham. (continued on next page)

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## 7. (continued)

If mobile and land line telephones are not working, the Situation Report will be made to WDC EP C using a VHF radio that is held by the PCRCO.

d) In the meantime, Ward Councillors will, as appropriate, call together local residents and form task teams with appointed Team Leaders covering subjects according to local needs. Task Teams made up from community volunteers may be needed to organise emergency shelter, central feeding and food distribution, etc.

e) Following the meeting with Ward Chairs, the Parish Co-ordinating team will liaise through the PCRCO with WDC EP C or the Emergency Services as directed by WDC EP C.

Having determined what help is available from the Emergency Services, the Parish co-ordinating team will issue appropriate instructions to Ward Chairs.

## 8. *How can the Parish prepare for such a mixed variety of possible emergencies ?*

The reality is that the Parish Council and parishioners will have to adapt to any particular situation as it arises. However, there are many features common to most emergencies. These are:-

- Communications – within the Parish and with emergency services.
- Management & Control
- Immediate response routine
- Information gathering
- Situation assessment
- Reporting information to Wealden District Council
- Emergency Planning Control
- Liaison with emergency services
- Care of vulnerable people, (e.g. the sick, medically dependent, infirm, the very young, elderly, etc.)
- Emergency feeding
- First Aid
- Housing & shelter

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## **9. *What should I do in the event of an emergency ?***

Dial 999 to ensure the emergency services are aware of the emergency and follow any advice given.

Contact other members of the community

Firstly - Your local Parish Councillor

If you cannot contact your local Parish Councillor, then contact any of the following:

- Parish Community Resilience Co-Ordinator
- Chair of Parish Council
- Parish Clerk / Any Parish Councillor

## **10. *What do I tell them ?***

Give information about the nature of the emergency;  
They will need to know:-

- Your name, location and contact number
- What has happened
- Where it happened
- When it happened (date and time)
- Brief details of casualties, if any
- Details of effected vulnerable people, particularly the elderly, disabled, and the very young.