

# Understanding the role of Councillors in an emergency

Advice Note



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### Introduction

Councillors are often the people communities turn to when they need support, advice or help.

In an emergency, like any other council staff, councillors may find themselves affected by the emergency. It is important that councillors keep themselves personally resilient during an emergency and stay safe and do not take risks.

Where there is a power outage or internet failure councillors, like everyone else, will find it challenging to access information.

Councillors have a function in supporting their communities before, during and after an emergency event.

### Before an emergency

Councillors are responsible for promoting a culture of preparedness across the council and communities; they may as part of this support and encourage communities to set up Community Resilience Groups or support individual resilience by signposting people to appropriate information and services.

Councillors should also be aware of the risks for their area and support the mitigation of these risks where possible.

Your group may want to make contact with your local councillors in advance of an emergency to aid communication should an adverse event occur.

### During an emergency

Councillors should keep themselves safe in an emergency like every member of the public and council staff; they must follow instruction from the Emergency Services and not visit an emergency scene, obstruct it or become part of the emergency.

It may not be safe to travel during or immediately after an emergency so councillors may not be able to access communities in their area, equally they may not be able to contact communities if they are without power, telephone communications or internet.

Councillors do not have an operational or decision making role in an emergency, this is the role of the Council's Incident Management Team (IMT) lead by the Duty Emergency Response Co-ordinator (DERC). Your Local Area Team will feed information into the IMT and may ask councillors, if they are able, for any information they may have about an emergency situation.

Where possible councillors will continue to warn and inform their communities via whatever channels they have available to them; this information will come from Aberdeenshire Council to ensure that communications are consistent.

Where possible councillors may do what they can to support communities and their recovery from the immediate emergency.

## **Following the emergency**

Following the emergency councillors may offer the community leadership if required to assist in the recovery process; they can signpost to financial assistance which may be available and represent the council at meetings and memorials.

Part of a councillor's role is scrutiny and they may request or communities may offer information on what lessons can be learned, how things can be improved and how a community can be better prepared for the future.