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Auckland Council: Preparedness for responding to an emergency



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Auckland Council: Preparedness for responding to an emergency

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Auditor-General's overview

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

About one third of New Zealand's population lives in the Auckland region. As the largest commercial centre in the country, the Auckland region contributes almost 40% of the nation's gross domestic product. It has a significant impact on the standard of living for all New Zealanders.

Because of the Auckland region's large population, location, and geography, it is vulnerable to many natural hazards (including tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, severe weather events, landslides, and earthquakes) and biological hazards (such as pandemics).

For these reasons, it is critical that Auckland communities are resilient and well prepared to respond to, and recover from, significant emergency events.

Auckland Council's 2021/22 annual report includes performance measures that indicate about three quarters of Aucklanders have a good understanding of the types of emergencies that could occur. However, they also indicate that only two thirds are prepared for an emergency. The results of Statistics New Zealand's 2021 General Social Survey showed that only 14% of people in the Auckland region lived in a household with basic emergency preparations. This is less than the national average.

Auckland Council plays a critical role in emergency preparedness and management in the Auckland region. The Council is responsible for co-ordinating and supporting the work of the Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group.¹ This group comprises councillors, representatives of the Independent Māori Statutory Board, and observers from relevant organisations (such as emergency services), lifeline utilities (such as suppliers of water and electricity), and welfare agencies. They all need to work together to implement the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan (the Group Plan) and provide emergency management support to communities in the Auckland region.²

In 2019, I agreed with Auckland Council to review how prepared the Council was to support Auckland's response to, and recovery from, significant emergency events. At that time, there had not been a large-scale natural disaster to test the Council's emergency management capabilities.

My staff carried out work in 2019 and identified substantial concerns. The Group Plan was published in 2016, but there had been limited progress in implementing it. Auckland Council did not have a coherent programme of emergency

1 Civil defence and emergency management groups are established under section 12(1) and 12(1A) of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002.

2 Auckland Council (2016), *Working together to build a resilient Auckland: Auckland Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan 2016-21*, at aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz.

management readiness exercises and testing in place. Auckland Emergency Management, the business unit in Auckland Council responsible for supporting emergency management activities, also needed to improve how it worked with other agencies involved in emergency management in the Auckland region.

In my view, Auckland Emergency Management's work programme was too ambitious, and the business unit was not well positioned to carry it out. Continued restructuring and staff turnover had eroded institutional knowledge and impacted Auckland Emergency Management's ability to make significant progress.

I was also concerned that Auckland Council's systems for prioritising activity, monitoring and reporting progress, and measuring effectiveness were not adequate to support good governance of its emergency management activities.

In 2020, my Office prioritised work looking at the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This significantly affected our review of Auckland Council. At this time, Auckland Emergency Management was also focused on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As well as Covid-19, several emergencies occurred in Auckland in 2020 and 2021. These included water shortages in February 2020, the Papatoetoe tornado in June 2021, and the West Auckland floods in August 2021.

To some extent, these emergency events have tested Auckland Council's emergency management preparedness. Although the Council told us that it has learnt valuable lessons from responding to these events, and reviews were carried out into the Council's response, not all recommendations from those reviews have been systematically implemented.

None of these events were of the scale of the January 2023 floods. Auckland Council's response to the January 2023 floods has been the subject of a separate independent review, *Auckland Flood Response Review: Independent, External Review of Events, January 27-29, 2023* (the 2023 independent review) by a former Commissioner of Police.³ That response was not the focus of our audit. I am pleased to see that there has been an independent review of the response.

My team resumed work with Auckland Council in the second half of 2022 to understand how much progress it had made since 2019. In early 2023, we spoke again with representatives from some relevant organisations about their relationship with the Council and the Council's current emergency management capability and capacity.

³ Bush, Mike (2023), *Auckland Flood Response Review: Independent, External Review of Events, January 27-29, 2023*. Bush International Consulting.

What we found

In my view, Auckland Council is better positioned to carry out its emergency management functions in 2023 than it was in 2019. We saw evidence that the Council made changes in response to our draft findings and implemented lessons from recent emergency events.

By late 2022, Auckland Council had fully staffed Auckland Emergency Management and increased capacity to support its emergency management preparedness work with iwi, Māori, and local boards. A more focused and prioritised emergency management work programme was under way and a structured training programme had been re-established. Auckland Emergency Management was working more closely with other regional emergency management organisations and the National Emergency Management Agency. It had also improved how it monitors the progress of its emergency preparedness work.

These are encouraging developments. However, there is still much to do, including creating a clear strategy and plan for working with communities to build resilience, strengthening working relationships with Māori, and responding to the findings from the 2023 independent review. Auckland Council also needs a more systematic approach to testing its systems and processes by running regular emergency management readiness exercises, carrying out post-event evaluations, and implementing improvements.

It is important that Auckland Council continues to build on the progress it has made. Continued restructuring, staff turnover, and frequent disruptions in Auckland Emergency Management have all been significant factors in why the Council has not been able to fully implement the Group Plan. The Council needs to better support Auckland Emergency Management to build momentum with its work programme. Consistent leadership and support from governance are key to this.

In my view, it is essential that the Group Plan is reviewed and updated as soon as possible. This is an important opportunity for Auckland Council to continue to assess what it has learned from recent emergency events, re-engage with relevant organisations and communities, and set realistic and achievable goals for improving emergency management in the Auckland region.

Auckland Council told us that work to review and update the Group Plan has started and is scheduled for completion in January 2024. This time frame should allow the Council to align the plan with wider reform of the national Civil Defence and Emergency Management regulatory framework that is currently in progress.

Although it is important to consider how wider reforms will affect the Group Plan, I strongly encourage the Council to prioritise this work. Recent flooding events

demonstrate that emergencies can happen at any time with devastating effects. The Council needs to be properly prepared for the next emergency event.

I have made six recommendations to support the Council's emergency preparedness and management work. I note that my recommendations to update and finalise the Group Plan and to carry out regular emergency management readiness exercises are also recommendations in the 2023 independent review. The overlap in these recommendations reinforces their importance.

I intend to follow up in 12 months on what progress Auckland Council has made against these recommendations. As part of my follow up, I intend to look at the Council's progress against the recommendations in the 2023 independent review. The Council has committed to many actions. It is critically important that it prioritises its efforts and stays focused.

There is considerable public interest in how Auckland Council will support its communities to prepare for, and respond to, emergencies. I encourage the Council to keep the public well informed about its progress with emergency preparedness activities and with implementing recommendations from my review and the 2023 independent review.

I acknowledge the significant effort that Auckland Council made in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and other recent emergency events. I thank Council staff for their continued co-operation with my review. Although this review has taken longer to finalise than we would have liked, the Council did make some improvements in response to the preliminary findings from our work. I also thank people from the agencies and organisations involved in emergency management in the Auckland region who spoke with my team during our work.

Naku noa, nā



John Ryan

Controller and Auditor-General | Tumuaiki o te Mana Arotake
22 June 2023

Our recommendations

We recommend that Auckland Council:

1. complete its review and update of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan and its associated framework for action as soon as possible;
2. prepare a strategy and plan to guide its community resilience work, including how it will work with local boards;
3. strengthen governance oversight of its progress with key emergency preparedness matters, particularly its progress on implementing recommendations from recent reviews;
4. include in its emergency management work programme enough emergency management readiness exercises, including exercises that involve working with other agencies, to properly test its response and recovery capabilities;
5. develop a clear approach and appropriate processes to systematically evaluate responses to emergency events, record lessons, and implement improvements identified from responding to emergency events or from its emergency management readiness exercise programme; and
6. keep the public regularly and well informed about its progress with emergency preparedness activities and implementing recommendations from recent reviews.

1

Introduction

- 1.1 In this Part, we discuss:
 - why we did this work;
 - what we looked at;
 - how we carried out our work; and
 - the structure of this report.
- 1.2 The Auckland region is at risk of several types of natural hazards (including tsunami, volcanic eruptions, severe weather events, landslides, and earthquakes). It also faces risks from technological hazards (such as utility failures) and biological hazards (such as pandemics).
- 1.3 It is critical that the Auckland region is resilient and well prepared to respond to, and recover from, significant emergency events. Not only does the well-being of people who live in and around Auckland depend on this, but a significant event in the Auckland region affects the whole country.
- 1.4 Auckland Council (the Council) is responsible for co-ordinating and supporting the work of the Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (the Auckland CDEM Group). The Auckland CDEM Group is a statutory committee of Auckland Council. It comprises governing body members and observers from relevant organisations.⁴ They are responsible for working together to lead and implement Auckland's Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan (the Group Plan) and provide Auckland communities with emergency management support.
- 1.5 When we started our work in 2019, the Auckland CDEM Group's work was guided by the Group Plan, which sets out priorities for emergency management in the region and informs the Council's emergency management work. The Group Plan was current in 2019 but has now expired. However, it remains in place until a new plan is finalised.

⁴ In this report, when we refer to relevant organisations we mean emergency services, lifeline utilities (including water, wastewater, transport, energy, and telecommunications services), and welfare agencies.

Why we did this work

- 1.6 Section 104 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 requires the Auditor-General to review the Council's service performance and each of its council-controlled organisations from time to time.⁵
- 1.7 We started this work in 2019. We decided to review the Council's disaster resilience and readiness work because, at that time, a large-scale natural disaster had not recently tested the Auckland region or Auckland Council's capability.
- 1.8 Given the potential social, environmental, and economic effects of a natural disaster in the Auckland region, we considered it important that Parliament and the public had assurance about the quality of civil defence and emergency management in the region.

What we looked at

- 1.9 We wanted to find out how well the Council was improving resilience in its communities and how well prepared it was to manage its response to natural disasters.
- 1.10 We wanted to answer three questions:
- What strategies and plans were in place to build resilience and preparedness to manage natural disasters, and how were they progressing?
 - How well was the Council partnering with other agencies, organisations, and communities to build readiness to respond to natural disasters?
 - How was the Council working to ensure equity in community resilience and readiness throughout the region?
- 1.11 Our review was in progress when the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020. We reprioritised our work programme to focus on the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we did provide the Council with a draft report in 2021 and we have seen evidence that the Council made changes in response. These changes include the Council refocusing its work programme, reporting progress against the new work programme more regularly, and developing an improved training plan for staff.
- 1.12 The Council also prioritised work that focused on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 400 employees worked on the Council's response and a further 150 employees were seconded to other organisations. The Council told us this was unprecedented in complexity and scale. We describe the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in more detail in the Appendix.

⁵ Our other reports on Auckland Council include *Auckland Council: Working to provide customer-centred services online* (2017), *Auckland Council: How it deals with complaints* (2016), and *Auckland Council: How it deals with building consents* (2015), at oag.parliament.nz.

- 1.13 There were also other emergency events in the Auckland region, including water shortages in February 2020, the Papatoetoe tornado in June 2021, and the West Auckland floods in August 2021.
- 1.14 Our work did not look at the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic or to these other emergency events. However, when we resumed our work in 2022 to update our 2019 findings, we thought it was important to acknowledge these events and provide the Council an opportunity to share what it learned and what changes had been made.

How we carried out our work

- 1.15 We reviewed a range of the Council's emergency management documents and observed some council meetings. We interviewed senior managers and staff in the Auckland Emergency Management business unit of Auckland Council. We also interviewed staff from the Council's research and evaluation, community, Māori responsiveness, and communications teams.
- 1.16 We also interviewed:
- staff from council-controlled organisations;
 - local board chairpersons;
 - university researchers;
 - representatives from lifeline organisations;
 - representatives from the community; and
 - staff from the National Emergency Management Agency.
- 1.17 We communicated with staff from the Secretariat for the Auckland Independent Māori Statutory Board.
- 1.18 We sat in on meetings of the:
- Auckland CDEM Group;
 - Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group (the Co-ordinating Executive Group);
 - Auckland Welfare Co-ordination Group; and
 - Auckland Lifelines Group.
- 1.19 Most of this work was carried out in 2019. However, the Council subsequently provided us with updated information and additional evidence.

- 1.20 In late 2022, we requested further documents from the Council and met with Auckland Emergency Management staff to discuss their work programme and the changes they have made since our 2019 work. This helped to ensure that our findings were current.
- 1.21 In early 2023, we met with representatives from the main emergency management organisations, including Te Whatu Ora, the New Zealand Police, Hato Hone St John, and Fire and Emergency New Zealand. We also met with some staff from the Secretariat for the Auckland Independent Māori Statutory Board.

Structure of our report

- 1.22 In Part 2, we discuss the administrative arrangements for emergency management in the Auckland region and the progress that the Council has made in implementing the Group Plan.
- 1.23 In Part 3, we discuss how well the Council has worked with other organisations on emergency management and the work it is doing to build community resilience.
- 1.24 In Part 4, we discuss the work the Council has been doing to improve capability through training and emergency management readiness exercises and how it evaluates and monitors performance.

2

The Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan

- 2.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- the administrative arrangements for emergency management in the Auckland region;
 - the strategic direction and goals of the Group Plan;
 - the framework for action set out in the Group Plan;
 - progress on implementing the framework for action; and
 - the need to review and update the Group Plan and framework for action.
- 2.2 The Council has a critical role in emergency management, which it must carry out in partnership with many other agencies and organisations. To ensure that this activity is well co-ordinated, the Council needs a clear strategy and implementation plan.
- 2.3 We wanted to understand what strategies and plans had been prepared, how they were prepared, and whether they were fit for purpose. We expected the Council to have:
- a clear strategy that guides its emergency management activities, is aligned with the national emergency management framework, and is informed by an understanding of the particular challenges that Auckland's diverse communities face;
 - developed the strategy in partnership with emergency management organisations in the region;
 - translated the strategy into a multi-year implementation plan, with specific and prioritised work aimed at achieving the strategy, and clear accountabilities for carrying out this work;
 - ensured that work has clear deliverables and milestones and is resourced appropriately; and
 - defined measures of success to track progress against the strategy.

Summary of findings

- 2.4 The Group Plan provides strategic direction for emergency management activities in the Auckland region and is aligned with the national emergency management strategy. Relevant organisations and the community were involved in the Group Plan's development. However, the framework for action that was designed to support implementing the Group Plan was in our view too ambitious and, therefore, unrealistic.
- 2.5 Continued restructuring and staff turnover in Auckland Emergency Management before 2019 had eroded institutional knowledge and impacted its progress to implement the Group Plan.

- 2.6 In 2019, we found that little progress had been made against the actions set out in the Group Plan. Since 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic and other emergency events have further impeded progress. Implementing the Group Plan is far from complete and it is overdue to be updated.
- 2.7 The Council recently started updating the Group Plan and now intends to complete it in January 2024. We encourage the Council to complete this work as soon as possible.

Auckland Council's role in emergency management

Regional emergency management groups

- 2.8 Central and local government's emergency management work is governed by the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 (the Act) and regulations.
- 2.9 The Act requires local authorities to establish civil defence emergency management groups to be responsible for emergency management at a regional level. Civil defence emergency management groups involve regional, city, and district councils working with local and regional organisations to co-ordinate emergency management planning.
- 2.10 There are 16 regional civil defence emergency management groups. Each must prepare and approve a civil defence emergency management group plan. These plans set out how each group will co-ordinate emergency management for its region.
- 2.11 The plans have many requirements, including setting out the hazards and risks that each group needs to manage and how it will manage them.

The Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group

- 2.12 There are five principles that underpin the Auckland CDEM Group's role:
- promote the sustainable management of hazards;
 - empower communities to achieve acceptable levels of risk;
 - provide planning and preparation for responding to, and recovering from, emergencies;
 - co-ordinate programmes and activities and encourage co-operation and joint action between agencies for the "4 Rs" framework and resilience;⁶ and
 - provide the basis for integrating local and national emergency management policies, processes, and operations.
- 2.13 When we started our review in 2019, the Auckland CDEM Group was responsible for overseeing the Council's emergency management work. The Auckland CDEM

6 The 4 Rs are reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.

Group is a statutory committee set up under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act. The Auckland CDEM Group is intended to be Auckland's strategic forum for civil defence and emergency management planning and policy, including providing direction and leadership to the Council and the other emergency management organisations it works with. It was meeting quarterly at that time.

- 2.14 The Auckland CDEM Group's members were the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Auckland, six councillors, and up to two representatives from the Auckland Independent Māori Statutory Board. Representatives from relevant organisations could attend as observers. The Mayor selected a councillor to be chairperson.
- 2.15 The same structure continued after the 2022 local government elections.

The Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group

- 2.16 The Act requires the Auckland Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group to establish and maintain a Civil Defence Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group (the Co-ordinating Executive Group).⁷
- 2.17 The Co-ordinating Executive Group is responsible for:
- providing advice to the Auckland CDEM Group as well as any task groups or subcommittees;
 - implementing, as appropriate, the Auckland CDEM Group's decisions; and
 - overseeing the preparation, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of the Group Plan.⁸
- 2.18 The Co-ordinating Executive Group meets quarterly and is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive. The Group comprises:
- statutory members representing the New Zealand Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, Hato Hone St John, and health and disability services;

⁷ The requirement to establish a Co-ordinating Executive Group is in section 20(1) of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act.

⁸ The functions of the Co-ordinating Executive Group are defined in section 20(2) of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act.

- co-opted members such as the Auckland Group Controller,⁹ the Group Recovery Manager, the Auckland Emergency Management General Manager, a representative from Auckland Transport, and a representative from the Auckland Lifelines Group; and
- contributing members such as the Auckland Welfare Co-ordination Group chairperson, the Harbourmaster, the chairpersons of the Auckland Regional Leadership Group, and representatives from the Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Defence Force, and the National Emergency Management Agency.

2.19 Figure 1 shows the relationship between the Auckland CDEM Group, Auckland Emergency Management, and the Co-ordinating Executive Group.

Auckland Welfare Co-ordination Group and Auckland Lifelines Group

2.20 Two other groups have important roles in emergency management. They are the:

- Auckland Welfare Co-ordination Group – a group of social sector government agencies and other organisations that co-ordinate community welfare and recovery in the event of an emergency; and
- Auckland Lifelines Group – a regional collaboration of lifeline organisations.

2.21 A member of the Council's emergency management staff is the chairperson for the Welfare Co-ordination Group, and a senior Council manager is the chairperson for the Auckland Lifelines Group.

Auckland Council's role

2.22 The Council is the Auckland CDEM Group's administering body and carries out administrative functions and duties. The Council is responsible for funding and co-ordinating emergency management activities in the Auckland region. Because there are many organisations involved in emergency management throughout the Auckland region, the Council's co-ordination role is critical to the Auckland CDEM Group's operation.

9 The Group Controller directs and co-ordinates the use of personnel, materials, information, services, and other resources made available by departments, emergency management groups, and other persons during a state of local emergency. The Group Controller also carries out other functions delegated by the Group or allowed by legislation.

Figure 1
Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management groups



Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group

Statutory committee of Auckland Council



Membership

Mayor, Deputy Mayor, **6** councillors, **2** representatives from the Auckland Independent Māori Statutory Board



Responsible for preparing a Group Plan that sets out the hazards and risks and how to manage them

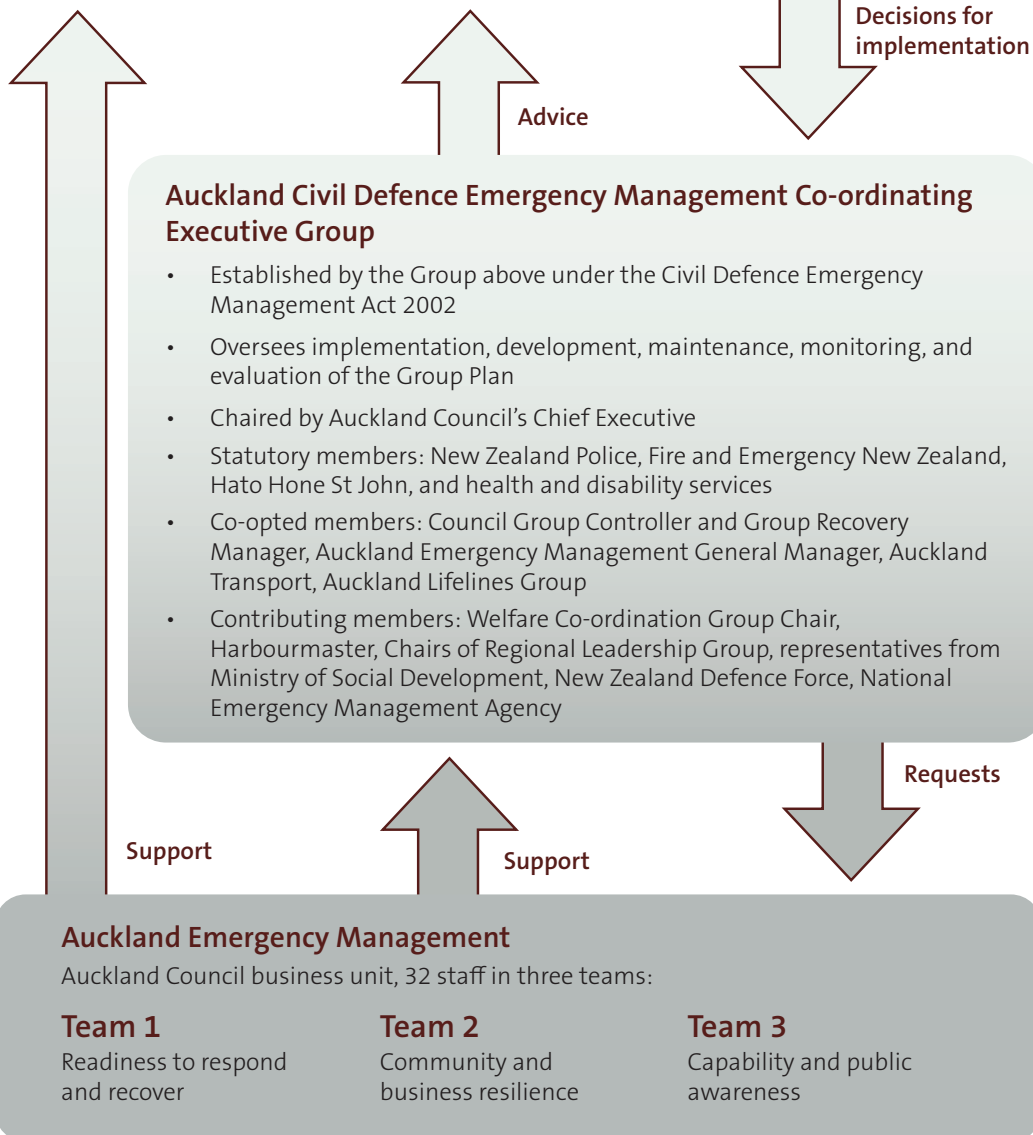


Observers

Various emergency management partners and stakeholders



Strategic forum for civil defence and emergency management planning and policy, including providing direction and leadership



- 2.23 In practice, the Auckland CDEM Group’s work is supported by Auckland Emergency Management. Auckland Emergency Management is expected to:
- co-ordinate and plan activities related to hazard and emergency management;
 - encourage co-operation and joint action in the region;
 - identify and understand the aspirations of its communities and their implications for risk and hazard management; and
 - examine risks and hazards to the Auckland region and prioritise each hazard.
- 2.24 At the time of writing this report, Auckland Emergency Management had 32 staff in three teams reporting to a general manager. One team focused on Auckland’s readiness to respond to, and recover from, emergency events. Another team focused on building community and business resilience. The third team was responsible for emergency management capability and public awareness.

The Group Plan provides strategic direction for emergency management activities

- 2.25 The Group Plan is the five-year strategic plan for the Auckland CDEM Group and relevant organisations in the Auckland region. Although it was intended to cover just 2016 to 2021, it remains in place until a new plan is finalised.
- 2.26 The Group Plan sets out:
- the hazards and risks that the Auckland CDEM Group needs to manage;
 - the actions needed to manage the hazards and risks;
 - how its objectives align with the national civil defence emergency strategy in place at the time;
 - arrangements for declaring a state of emergency in the Auckland CDEM Group’s area; and
 - arrangements for co-operating and co-ordinating with other civil defence and emergency management groups.
- 2.27 The Group Plan’s vision statement is “working together to build a resilient Auckland”. It sets out five overarching goals:
- Reduction: Reducing risks from hazards to Auckland.
 - Readiness: Increasing community awareness, understanding preparedness, and participation in emergency management.
 - Response: Enhancing Auckland’s capability to manage disasters.
 - Recovery: Enhancing Auckland’s capability to recover from disasters.
 - Resilience: Building a resilient Auckland to support the vision of Auckland as “the world’s most liveable city”.

- 2.28 The first four of these goals align with the national emergency management strategy's 4 Rs framework that was in place when the Group Plan was prepared. The fifth is consistent with the *National Disaster Resilience Strategy Rautaki ā-Motu Manawaroa Aituā*'s emphasis on resilience.¹⁰

Auckland Council developed the 2016 Group Plan with other relevant organisations and the community

- 2.29 The Council prepared the Group Plan in 2015 and formally approved it in 2016.
- 2.30 When drafting the Group Plan, the Council consulted with:
- councillors, local board members, and advisory panels;
 - other relevant organisations, including the then Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management; and
 - the wider community through various groups and networks.
- 2.31 The Council carried out formal public consultation on the draft Group Plan between February and April 2016. The then Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management also carried out a technical review of the Group Plan.
- 2.32 The Council incorporated the Ministry and the public's feedback into the revised draft Group Plan before it underwent Ministerial review. After the Ministerial review, the Auckland CDEM Group approved and adopted the Group Plan.

The Group Plan accurately described the specific challenges Auckland faced

- 2.33 It is important to understand the specific challenges that communities face. This allows the design of community readiness activities to consider the level of resilience and experience of different demographic groups. It also means that responses can be tailored to those groups' specific challenges and vulnerabilities.
- 2.34 The Group Plan provides a broad, high-level assessment of the state of emergency management in the Auckland region in 2016. It provides information about:
- demographic trends and ethnic diversity;
 - infrastructure (water, gas, buildings, and communications networks);
 - the economy; and
 - the geographical and environmental features of the region.
- 2.35 The Group Plan also has commentary about the Auckland region's risk profile, including a high-level account of important hazard management work that the Council was carrying out when the Group Plan was being prepared.

¹⁰ *National Disaster Resilience Strategy Rautaki ā-Motu Manawaroa Aituā* replaced the previous National Civil Defence Emergency Management Strategy. As well as the 4 Rs framework, the new strategy emphasised building resilience in a way that contributes to the well-being and prosperity of all New Zealanders.

2.36 When it was approved in 2016, the Group Plan accurately described the Auckland region’s complex demographic, economic, and physical landscape, including the needs of people who lived there. However, this information is now more than five years old and needs to be reconfirmed or updated.

The Group Plan’s framework for action was too ambitious

2.37 The Group Plan had a “framework for action” that set out the actions to take to achieve its overarching goals (see paragraph 2.27) and address specific issues (see Figures 2 and 3). This framework also identified the agency who would lead the action and the time frame for each action to be completed.

2.38 When the Group Plan was approved in 2016, there were 80 actions in the framework. The framework assigned the Council responsibility for all but two actions.¹¹ Most actions were assigned to Auckland Emergency Management.

Figure 2
Examples of the link between actions in the Group Plan’s framework and the reduction goal

Issue	Activities	Actions
Hazards and risks including how they are managed need to be better understood and more effectively communicated by the CDEM sector.	Increase the understanding of disaster risk in Auckland through further investigation, promotion and accessibility of research.	<p>9. Develop an effective and comprehensive hazard and risk awareness campaign.</p> <p>10. Conduct further investigation and research into the consequences of hazards and ensure that hazards and risks are not considered in isolation.</p> <p>11. Support the development and implementation of the Natural Hazard Risk Management Action Plan (NHRMAP) to deliver best practice risk reduction and resilience outcomes.</p> <p>12. Develop a 10-year hazard research plan to target gaps in knowledge and information in line with the NHRMAP (e.g. impacts from climate change and future growth).</p> <p>13. Provide targeted and coordinated risk reduction education and training as part of a professional development programme.</p> <p>14. Develop a mutually beneficial exchange programme with international partners and organisations to learn about disaster risk reduction and how it is being applied globally.</p>

Source: Adapted from *Auckland Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan 2016-2021*.

11 One action was assigned to the New Zealand Police and the New Zealand Fire Service. Another action was assigned to Civil Defence Emergency Management Recovery Task Groups. We did not audit the progress of actions that these organisations were responsible for.

Figure 3
Examples of the link between actions in the Group Plan’s framework and the readiness goal

Issue	Activities	Actions
CDEM information needs to be more comprehensive and accessible to the public and taught more consistently by education providers.	Increase the level of community awareness and understanding of the risks from hazards and how to prepare for emergencies through public education.	<p>21. Develop a public education strategy to enhance disaster preparedness through relevant and meaningful community engagement.</p> <p>22. Utilise technology and innovative solutions to help communicate information to the public.</p> <p>23. Work with primary schools and early childhood centres to ensure that emergency preparedness is being taught as part of the school curriculum.</p> <p>24. Develop an education programme for secondary schools and tertiary education institutions in the area of disaster resilience.</p> <p>25. Develop a targeted public education campaign for Auckland’s public alerting and warning systems.</p>
Community participation and preparedness in emergency management is low because CDEM’s activities are not well understood and changing people’s behaviour is challenging.	Empower the community to increase their own resilience through strategies and tools.	<p>29. Work with established community and organisational networks to increase participation, optimise collaboration and to empower the community to help themselves and others during a disaster.</p> <p>30. Develop a Māori Responsiveness Plan and establish partnerships with Māori to ensure greater involvement in CDEM.</p> <p>31. Develop guidance to leaders, elected members and advisory panels on what they can do to increase resilience within their community and support elected members through a comprehensive framework across the 4 Rs.</p> <p>32. Encourage community-led hubs which assist the community to effectively respond in an emergency.</p>

Source: Adapted from *Auckland Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Plan 2016-2021*.

2.39 Significant work was required to achieve the Group Plan’s goals and objectives. However, in our view, the expectations set out in the framework for action were not realistic. Many of the actions are significant and complex pieces of work. For example:

- developing a mutually beneficial exchange programme with international organisations to learn about disaster risk reduction and how it is being applied globally;
- developing an education programme for secondary schools and tertiary education institutions on disaster resilience; and

- working with established community and organisational networks to increase participation, optimise collaboration, and to empower the community to help themselves and others during a disaster.

2.40 In the documents we reviewed, the time frames for completing these actions had been frequently adjusted, extended, or postponed. We saw many examples of plans and strategies that were still in draft form and activities and actions that had not been completed. In our view, Auckland Emergency Management did not adequately prioritise the different actions and its work programme lacked focus. We do not think that the governance of this work programme was effective.

Not enough progress has been made on implementing the Group Plan’s framework for action

2.41 In 2019, at our request, the Council assessed its own progress against the actions outlined in the Group Plan. At that time, the Council told us it had completed 16 actions and was on track to complete a further 44 actions.

2.42 The Council provided an updated assessment of progress in 2022. However, many of the activities they highlighted were broadly defined. Some activities we consider to be ongoing functions of Auckland Emergency Management rather than specific initiatives. Some of the updated information contradicted earlier information we were provided.

2.43 Overall, the information the Council provided did not give us a complete picture of progress against each action in the Group Plan.

2.44 The Council has progressed a range of activities that support actions identified in the Group Plan. These include:

- sharing work programmes with Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s community risk managers and their teams to deliver shared community resilience-building activities, working with the Capability and Capacity Working Group, and meeting quarterly with Emergency Management Committees, which comprise operational organisations in the northwest, central, and southern parts of the region (these activities are intended to support the “Develop strategic partnerships to deliver effective and sustainable strategies” action in the Group Plan);
- chairing the Auckland Lifelines Group (this activity is intended to support the “Maintain the Auckland Lifelines Group to promote research opportunities and increase infrastructure resilience” action in the Group Plan);
- developing and delivering an education programme “Kia Rite, Kia Mau” to marae and schools (this activity is intended to support the “Develop an education programme for secondary schools and tertiary education institutions in the area of disaster resilience” action in the Group Plan);

- trialling a Community Emergency Hub Guide with a range of community groups, and designing and providing signage to groups that have an active community hub (this activity is intended to support the “Encourage community-led hubs which assist the community to effectively respond in an emergency” action in the Group Plan); and
 - developing and distributing business information packs, and holding webinars, workshops, and stands at industry and community events and speaking engagements (this is intended to support the “Develop an effective partnership and working relationship with sector groups to help promote organisational resilience” action in the Group Plan).
- 2.45 The Council has also made some progress against the broad goals of the Group Plan (see paragraph 4.9).
- 2.46 Despite this, most of the actions in the Group Plan have not been fully completed. This lack of progress suggests that there are a range of management and governance issues that need to be addressed by Auckland Council, the Co-ordinating Executive Group, and the Auckland CDEM Group.
- 2.47 In our view, not enough progress has been made in:
- developing a disaster risk reduction strategy and creative workspace to guide relevant organisations, practitioners, and policy makers in how to effectively manage hazards and risks in the long term, including the effects of climate change (action 5);
 - developing an education programme for secondary schools and tertiary institutions on disaster resilience (action 24);
 - carrying out regular audits of agency resources, capability, and capacity during a disaster (action 40);
 - developing a library of exercise co-ordinating instructions for Auckland across the range of hazards identified in the Group Plan (action 52); and
 - developing, maintaining, and implementing an agreed common operating structure and procedures for sharing/managing resources to enable an efficient response across all agencies (action 54).
- 2.48 There are also important matters in the Group Plan that were not necessarily the subject of specific actions in the framework but that still need to be addressed. We note that *Auckland Flood Response Review: Independent, External Review of Events, January 27-29, 2023* also referred to this. These matters are:
- developing or supporting specific contingency plans for very high priority hazards (including flooding and “superstorms”); and

- regularly testing the Council’s capability and capacity to respond to a large-scale emergency and learn from that testing.
- 2.49 Council staff told us that they prioritised the emergency management work programme in 2022/23 to focus on five priorities. These are to:
- review the Group Plan;
 - review the Evacuation Plan for Auckland;
 - work on a multi-agency capability and capacity strategy and training programme;
 - develop and establish improved partnerships with Māori to ensure that they have greater involvement in emergency management; and
 - develop a process, framework, and understanding of the roles and responsibilities for air quality in the event of a fire in Auckland.¹²
- 2.50 We are pleased that the Council has brought more focus to Auckland Emergency Management’s work programme. We also appreciate that this work will take time to complete. However, in our view, it is important for the Council to improve its understanding of all the other actions in the Group Plan, and why they were initially included, to determine if they are still relevant.
- 2.51 If any actions in the Group Plan are not progressed, it will be important for the Council to be transparent about its reasons when it updates the Plan. Ideally, that information would be available to the Auckland CDEM Group, relevant organisations, and the public.

The Group Plan must be reviewed and updated as soon as possible

- 2.52 The Council has created a project schedule for reviewing and updating the Group Plan. Work on this has started, including reviewing the hazards that the Auckland region faces and some specific analysis of tsunami risk.
- 2.53 The original project schedule stated that the Council would finish reviewing and updating the Group Plan by the end of November 2023. The Council intended to submit the updated Group Plan to the Auckland CDEM Group for approval, and then to the Minister of Emergency Management by the end of 2023. Until then, the current plan remains in effect.
- 2.54 The Council told us it originally set November 2023 as the deadline for completing the update because there was a national-level regulatory work programme under way. This programme involves the development of a new Emergency Management Act, review of the National Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan Order 2015, and development of a National Disaster Resilience Strategy roadmap.

Because these are important parts of the regulatory framework in which the Council carries out its emergency management work, it wanted to align the updated Group Plan with any changes to the regulatory framework.

- 2.55 We now understand that updating the plan has been delayed because Auckland Emergency Management staff have had to focus on flooding and cyclone responses for most of 2023 to date. The Auckland CDEM Group met on 26 April 2023 and agreed to a January 2024 completion date for the Group Plan.
- 2.56 We understand the reasons for this time frame. However, we strongly encourage the Council to progress this work as soon as possible. Emergencies can happen at any time. The Council needs to agree priorities and implement improvements urgently to ensure that it is better prepared for the next event.
- 2.57 The Council told us that it expects the updated Group Plan to be more concise and have fewer objectives and actions. The Council also expects the plan to embed a commitment to greater iwi and Māori involvement in emergency management.
- 2.58 We support this. In our view, one of the main reasons that progress towards achieving the Group Plan's goals and objectives has been slow is because Auckland Emergency Management was trying to do too much at once. We encourage the Council to consider how other business units in the Council can support Auckland Emergency Management's work programme.
- 2.59 In our view, a thorough assessment of current emergency management capability and capacity as well as responses to recent events is also required to inform the review and update of the Group Plan. This is necessary to make sure the right activities are prioritised, and will assist the Council to properly resource Auckland Emergency Management's work programme so it can deliver on the updated plan.
- 2.60 In our view, it would be useful if the Group Plan's actions were organised into a sequenced plan that better reflects interdependencies. This will help other relevant organisations understand what actions to focus on first. It will also encourage them to work together and with the Council to make progress.
- 2.61 There also need to be clearer measures to assess progress towards the updated plan's goals and objectives. This will help the Council understand what progress has been made each time the Group Plan is reviewed. It will also improve transparency for relevant organisations and the community.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that Auckland Council complete its review and update of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan and its associated framework for action as soon as possible.

- 2.62 The Council should work with relevant organisations and their partners, as appropriate, to ensure that respective roles, responsibilities, and expected actions are understood and clearly defined in the Group Plan. The Council should also ensure that the priorities in the updated Group Plan are adequately resourced.

Working with others

- 3.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- the quality of Auckland Council’s relationships with relevant organisations;
 - the roles and responsibilities of organisations involved in emergency management in the Auckland region; and
 - the work that the Council has done and is planning to do to improve community resilience to natural disasters and other emergencies.
- 3.2 We wanted to understand how effectively the Council works with relevant organisations to build readiness and resilience for natural disasters and other emergencies. We expected the Council to:
- identify which organisations it needs to work with to effectively build resilience and readiness and carry out emergency management activities in communities; and
 - understand how prepared and resilient the diverse communities in the Auckland region are for an emergency event and have a work programme for improving their preparedness and resilience.

Summary of findings

- 3.3 When we began our review in 2019, we found that the effectiveness of the Council’s working relationships with relevant organisations was variable. A significant reason for this was the high staff turnover in Auckland Emergency Management before 2019, which was affected by three restructures between 2014 and 2019.
- 3.4 Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and other emergency events has tested the Council’s relationships with relevant organisations and we have seen evidence that these relationships are improving. All the representatives from relevant organisations we spoke to told us this was the case. The Council has also improved its capacity and capability to work with Māori in recent years. However, in our view, work is still required to strengthen the Council’s working relationships with its 21 local boards.
- 3.5 The review and update of the Group Plan gives the Council an important opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all the groups involved in implementing the plan, and to further strengthen relationships with relevant organisations.
- 3.6 In 2019, our view was that the Council’s community resilience work was reactive rather than prioritised according to community needs. In 2023, the Council still lacks a co-ordinated plan for improving the resilience of its communities.

- 3.7 We strongly recommend that the Council prepare a strategy and plan to improve community resilience. Increasing community awareness and preparedness for emergency events is an important part of this. Recent surveys highlight the need for more work in this area. We encourage the Council to review the findings of recent surveys about preparedness to identify the implications for its emergency management work.

The quality of key relationships has been variable

- 3.8 The Group Plan emphasises the value of effective partnerships with important groups and organisations, including iwi and Māori, the Council's 21 local boards, the Auckland Lifelines Group, and the Welfare Co-ordination Group. At the time of our 2019 work, it was our view that the Council did not understand the value of these relationships or was not drawing on them enough.
- 3.9 Staff turnover in Auckland Emergency Management also undermined the relationships between the Council and organisations that provided welfare services. This created risks to effectively providing welfare support after an emergency event.
- 3.10 Auckland Emergency Management was restructured three times between 2014 and 2019, which led to several years of significant and sustained staff turnover. Three different people held the general manager role during this time.
- 3.11 We are concerned that this situation continued for a prolonged period. In our view, governance over the Council's emergency management activities during this time was inadequate.
- 3.12 This level of disruption and staff turnover limited continuity of staff to consistently carry out, monitor, and report on work. Emergency management expertise and institutional knowledge was eroded.
- 3.13 Lack of staff continuity also negatively affected relationships with key partners, created an unstable and uncertain work environment, and undermined staff's ability to progress their work. It is important that our findings and views in this report are understood in this context.
- 3.14 We have seen recent evidence that staff turnover in Auckland Emergency Management has reduced. In late 2022, teams were fully staffed. Auckland Emergency Management has established new roles and recruited staff to support emergency preparedness work with iwi, Māori, and local boards.
- 3.15 Relationships with relevant organisations have changed over time. Since 2019, there have been changes in personnel or membership across these groups.

The experience of working together responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and other emergency events appears to have improved relationships between the Council, Auckland Emergency Management, and partners.

- 3.16 In early 2023, we spoke to some representatives of relevant organisations to understand how their relationship with Auckland Emergency Management has changed since our work in 2019. Those we spoke to indicated that their relationships had improved and they felt confident about working together well in emergencies. However, we were also told that there were still opportunities for further improvement at the operational level, particularly in relation to understanding roles and responsibilities during a response.

The Welfare Co-ordination Group

- 3.17 The Council draws on its partnerships with agencies that provide welfare support throughout the Auckland region. The Welfare Co-ordination Group is a group of agencies that provide welfare services and plan for, and respond to, emergency events. These agencies have a shared welfare plan of action that they follow in an emergency event to deliver emergency welfare services and support.
- 3.18 The welfare plan describes nine welfare sub-functions at an operational level. Lead agencies have been designated for each sub-function and are responsible for co-ordinating and delivering services. Auckland Emergency Management is responsible for some sub-functions.
- 3.19 The nine sub-functions, and the lead agencies for them, are:
- identifying and registering people who require assistance during and after an emergency event (Auckland Emergency Management);
 - managing the system for identifying people's needs and co-ordinating how agencies will respond to those needs (Auckland Emergency Management);
 - helping family, whānau, and significant others to make contact during and after an emergency event (New Zealand Police);
 - care and protection services for children and young people (Oranga Tamariki);
 - psychosocial support for individuals and communities (Te Whatu Ora);
 - providing basic household goods and services to support affected people (Auckland Emergency Management);
 - providing shelter and accommodation for people who have been displaced by an emergency (Auckland Emergency Management and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment);
 - providing information about, and access to, financial assistance for people affected by an emergency event (Ministry of Social Development); and

- providing for the needs of animals when an emergency event means that their owners are not able to (Ministry for Primary Industries).

3.20 In 2019, when we interviewed representatives of relevant organisations (including members of the Auckland Welfare Co-ordination Group), they spoke of the strong relationships they had with the Council. Some were complimentary about staff contribution to emergency management, particularly staff from Auckland Emergency Management. However, they also noted the effect that Auckland Emergency Management's restructures had on relationships (see paragraphs 3.10-3.13).

The Auckland Lifelines Group

3.21 The Auckland Lifelines Group is a collaboration of lifeline organisations in the Auckland region. The Group aims to improve the resilience of the Auckland region's lifeline utilities,¹³ with a particular focus on risk reduction and readiness. Its objectives include:

- encouraging and supporting the work of lifeline organisations to identify hazards and mitigate the effects of hazards on lifeline utilities;
- facilitating communication between organisations to increase awareness and understand interdependencies between organisations;
- co-ordinating lifeline utilities input into emergency management planning;
- developing best practice approaches to mitigation, readiness, and response for lifeline utilities; and
- creating and maintaining awareness of the importance of lifelines utilities and reducing the vulnerability of lifeline utilities in the Auckland region.

3.22 We heard that the Auckland Lifelines Group effectively supports connections between organisations across the region. The Lifeline Utility Co-ordinator is a Council staff member who is responsible for co-ordinating engagement between lifeline utilities. The Lifeline Utility Co-ordinator is the hub for communicating information during an emergency response and preparing for an impending emergency.

3.23 We were told that when there is advance notice of an emergency, such as a severe weather event, members of the group and the Council exchange useful information. However, we also heard that during an emergency there can be challenges getting timely status updates.

¹³ Lifeline utilities provide infrastructure services to the community. These include water, wastewater, transport, energy, and telecommunications. Examples of lifeline utilities include suppliers or distributors of water, electricity generators or network distributors, road and rail network providers. For more information, see alg.org.nz. See also the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 for a more complete description of lifeline utilities.

- 3.24 We also heard that Auckland Lifelines Group members were sometimes reluctant to share information about the resilience of their assets. Some members do not share business continuity plans with the Council.
- 3.25 We understand some information could be sensitive and that there is a need to maintain a level of confidentiality about how systems operate. However, it is also important for the Council to improve its understanding of the risks to lifeline utilities in an emergency.
- 3.26 Proposed amendments to the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act include a requirement for critical infrastructure entities to establish and publish their planned “emergency levels of service”.¹⁴

Auckland Council should continue to strengthen partnerships with Māori

- 3.27 The *National Disaster Resilience Strategy Rautaki ā-Motu Manawaroa Aitua* emphasises the importance of partnerships with Māori to build disaster resilience. The Council acknowledges that this needs to be a priority.
- 3.28 The *Civil Defence Emergency Management Māori Responsiveness Plan 2016-2021* was developed to support the Council to improve the delivery of the Council’s commitments to Māori and te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Council published this plan in August 2016.
- 3.29 In 2019, we spoke with a representative from the secretariat of the Auckland Independent Māori Statutory Board. They told us they would like to see the Council increase its engagement with Māori and develop a specific plan for emergency management with marae and Māori communities.
- 3.30 In 2023, we spoke with staff members from the secretariat for the Māori Statutory Board about its work and relationship with the Council. We heard that representatives from the Board regularly participate in civil defence and emergency management meetings and that Auckland Emergency Management and the Board secretariat are in frequent contact.
- 3.31 Members of the secretariat we spoke with acknowledged the progress the Council had made with initiatives such as Kia Rite, Kia Mau¹⁵ and recent work with marae on emergency management matters. However, staff still felt more work was needed.

14 See the Emergency Management Bill 225-1 (2023), at legislation.govt.nz.

15 Kia Rite, Kia Mau is a programme being trialled in a small number of schools that places te ao Māori at the heart of how whānau visualise and prepare for hazards. See Auckland Council minutes (February 2023), *Kōmiti Ārai Tūmatanui me Te Toko Raru Ohorere/Civil Defence and Emergency Management Committee*, at infocouncil.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

- 3.32 Although staff from the secretariat told us that Council staff are committed to working with the Board and Māori on emergency management matters, they often lacked capacity to do so effectively. Staff from the secretariat acknowledged that the Council has other resources that can provide Auckland Emergency Management additional support when needed. However, staff from the secretariat told us that, when this happens, it often comes at the expense of other work. Overall, staff from the secretariat felt Council staff were spread too thin given the level of guidance that the Council needs to engage effectively with Māori communities.
- 3.33 Council staff, including those working in Auckland Emergency Management, told us about past challenges that the Council has had in understanding Māori perspectives on emergency management and in establishing effective relationships. The Council's relationship with iwi and Māori was sometimes described to us by Council staff as "transactional". In our view, it is important that the Council reflects on how it can improve engagement when it reviews and updates the Group Plan.
- 3.34 In 2020, the Council participated in an online hui with Te Kotahitanga o Tāmaki Makaurau, a collective of 36 marae in the Auckland region. The Council saw this as an opportunity to establish partnerships with marae, support resilience-building activities, and improve capability for an emergency response. The Council told us that following this hui, several marae expressed an interest in working collaboratively with the Council.
- 3.35 Auckland Emergency Management has been working with marae using a framework called Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau (strong marae, strong family).
- 3.36 The framework emphasises whakawhānaungatanga, the process of building and maintaining relationships based on understanding and connection. It incorporates mātauranga Māori to build knowledge of hazards and risks and identify ways for communities to support each other.¹⁶ The aim is to support marae to develop their own plans for their communities because they best understand the history and strengths of their people, and the hazards and risks they face.
- 3.37 The Council told us that its relationships with iwi and Māori also improved after working together to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and other emergency events. For example, the Council told us that it worked alongside iwi, hapū, whānau, and marae to ensure that Māori communities had their voices heard and needs met during the Covid-19 pandemic.

16 Mātauranga Māori refers to the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity, and cultural practices (definition from maoridictionary.co.nz).

- 3.38 We encourage the Council to continue improving these relationships and explore other ways to broaden its reach and engagement with the diverse communities in the Auckland region, working with the Māori Statutory Board, other Council business units (such as Ngā Mātārae: Māori Outcomes Directorate), and the Mana Whenua Kaitiaki Forum.
- 3.39 We understand the Council has immediate plans to:
- engage with three of the 13 identified marae that have a high hazard risk; and
 - confirm the approach, structure, and resource requirements for achieving positive welfare outcomes for Māori in an emergency.

Auckland Council should continue to strengthen connections with local boards

- 3.40 There are 21 local boards across the Auckland region. Local boards provide governance at a local level in the Council. Members are elected to represent and support their communities, make decisions on local matters, and provide input into regional strategies, policies, plans, and decisions.
- 3.41 The Group Plan emphasises the critical role local boards have in working with communities to better understand disaster risks and deliver emergency management services. The Group Plan states that local boards are responsible for implementing the 4 Rs framework directly with their communities.
- 3.42 In 2019, some local board chairpersons told us that they were unclear about what the Council expected of them in relation to emergency management. The *Review of the response to the Auckland storm of 10 April 2018*¹⁷ also highlighted several local board members' concerns about the availability of information and support to their local communities (see paragraph 4.46).
- 3.43 Lack of clarity can reduce the effectiveness of an emergency response. The 2018 review recommended that Auckland Emergency Management support local boards to play an appropriate role in future responses to emergency events. This support included clarifying their role and providing resources to enable them to work effectively with Auckland Emergency Management.
- 3.44 Despite the positive intent signalled in the Group Plan and other corporate documents, it was clear to us in 2019 that local boards were not sufficiently involved with, or informed about, the Council's emergency management activity.
- 3.45 In 2020, the Council prepared a local board engagement strategy. The aim of the strategy was to improve understanding, communication, and collaboration between the Council and local boards.

¹⁷ Smol, David (2018), *Review of the response to the Auckland storm of 10 April 2018*, at our.auckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

- 3.46 More recently, the Council told us they were planning community engagement initiatives with 12 local boards.¹⁸ The Council told us this would include meeting with new local boards and a variety of other community and business organisations, as well as participating in community events.
- 3.47 Although these are positive developments, there is still much to do. We encourage the Council to continue this work so that local boards clearly understand how they can effectively support emergency management for their communities and across the region.

Greater clarity of roles and responsibilities is needed

- 3.48 In 2019, we found that the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of agencies involved in Auckland's emergency management activities were often unclear. The Group Plan identifies a lead agency for each of the actions in the Plan. Responsibility for implementing actions is mostly assigned to Auckland Emergency Management, even though a range of other organisations need to work together and with the Council to provide emergency management services in the Auckland region.
- 3.49 The Council has recognised that it needs to work with relevant organisations more effectively. In August 2021, Auckland Emergency Management met with members of the Co-ordinating Executive Group (see paragraphs 2.16-2.19) to identify and agree on priorities that other members of the Auckland CDEM Group could collaborate on and contribute to.
- 3.50 The Council told us that, as a result of these discussions, two working groups were established to progress priority work.
- 3.51 The first is the Emergency Management and Services Co-ordination Group. The purpose of this group is to co-ordinate and integrate work priorities across the agencies involved in emergency management. It is also expected to identify operational and tactical risks and escalate them to the Co-ordinating Executive Group.
- 3.52 The second working group is the Capability and Capacity Working Group. The purpose of this group is to better enable relevant organisations to share exercise and training resources and to identify regular opportunities for joint exercises and training.
- 3.53 We understand the Council also intends to develop a recovery operations guide for the Co-ordinating Executive Group and the Auckland CDEM Group to adopt. The guide will set out recovery roles, responsibilities, practices, and procedures.

¹⁸ The 12 local boards are Rodney, Waiheke, Aotea Great Barrier Island, Waitemata, Devonport-Takapuna, Upper Harbour, Otara Papatoetoe, Puketapapa, Waitakere Ranges, Hibiscus and Bays, Papakura, and Manurewa.

It will also clarify the recovery roles of local boards and council-controlled organisations.¹⁹

- 3.54 Updating the Group Plan provides further opportunity for the Council to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all the groups involved in implementing the plan are clear and to strengthen relationships to ensure that they can effectively support that implementation.
- 3.55 The Council also has plans to improve its management of, and engagement with, volunteer groups. This work is expected to include completing a scan of existing and potential volunteer partnerships and developing a more structured volunteer management system.
- 3.56 Since our earlier work, the Council told us it worked more closely with the National Emergency Management Agency and other emergency management groups (particularly the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office). This includes:
- signing up to a Partnership Charter between all civil defence and emergency management groups and the National Emergency Management Agency (launched in May 2022);
 - Council staff participating in quarterly workshops with the National Emergency Management Agency about the regulatory work programme (see paragraph 2.54); and
 - sharing staff across regions in emergencies.

Auckland Council still lacks a co-ordinated plan for community resilience

- 3.57 Although the Group Plan sets out an extensive list of community resilience principles, we did not see an overarching strategy or plan for building resilience throughout the Auckland region.
- 3.58 The Council told us that the *National Disaster Resilience Strategy Rautaki ā-Motu Manawaroa Aituā* has been guiding the Council's community resilience work since 2019. The Minister of Civil Defence issued this strategy in 2019 under section 31 of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act. It outlines the vision and long-term goals for civil defence and emergency management in New Zealand. It also includes six objectives related to enabling, empowering, and supporting community resilience.

¹⁹ Council-controlled organisations are part of the Auckland Lifelines Group. This is because several of them provide critical lifeline services, including transport services (Auckland Transport) and water supply and wastewater services (Watercare). Auckland Council is a part shareholder of Auckland Airport (transport services) and owner of the Ports of Auckland (freight services). Both of these organisations are members of the Auckland Lifelines Group and provide critical lifeline services. The Council is also a member of the Auckland Lifelines Group.

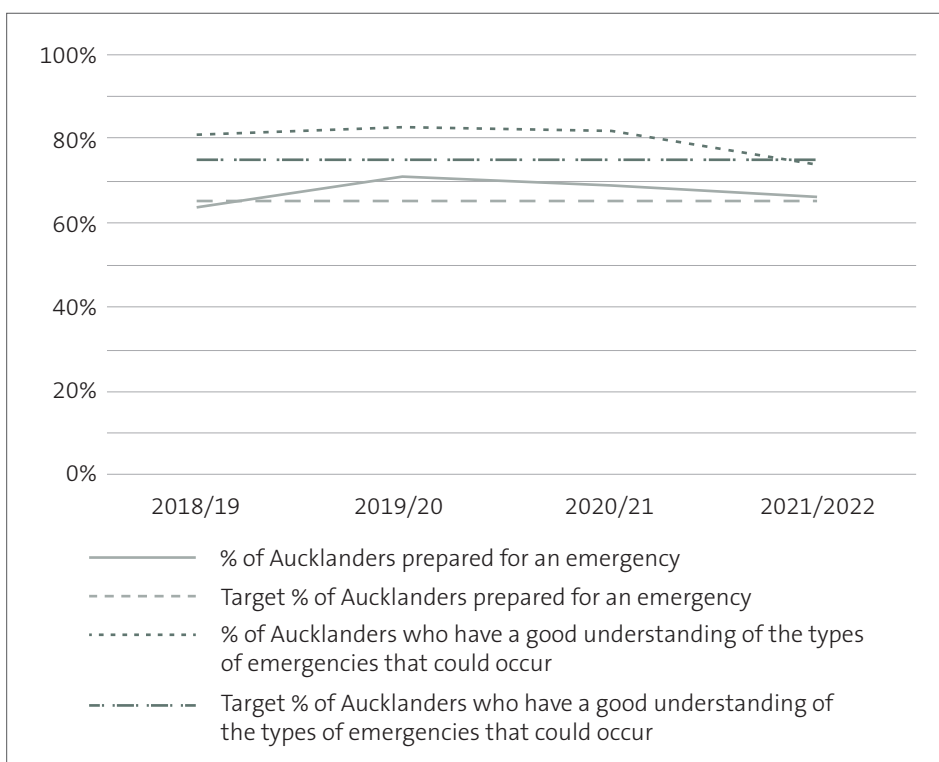
- 3.59 The national strategy provides useful direction. However, in our view, the Council's work programme to improve community resilience and preparedness for an emergency needs further development.

There is significant potential to improve awareness and preparedness for emergency events

- 3.60 The Council routinely reports against measures and targets for community awareness and preparedness for emergency events in its annual reports.
- 3.61 Figure 4 shows the percentage of Aucklanders who are prepared for an emergency and the percentage who have a good understanding of the types of emergencies that could occur. Figure 4 also shows the targets set by the Council for 2018/19 to 2021/22 for each of these measures.
- 3.62 The percentage of Aucklanders who are prepared for an emergency event is less than the percentage who have a good understanding of what emergencies could occur. Although results for both measures generally meet the Council's targets, results have declined between 2019/20 and 2021/22.
- 3.63 The results from the Council's annual reports about emergency preparedness are different from the emergency preparedness results from Statistics New Zealand's 2021 *General Social Survey*. Statistics New Zealand's survey shows only 14% of people in the Auckland region living in a household had basic emergency preparations, which is lower than the national average.²⁰
- 3.64 It is not clear why the results are so different. Regardless, both show that a considerable number of people in the Auckland region might be underprepared for an emergency.
- 3.65 We encourage the Council to review these surveys to understand why the findings about the level of preparedness are different and whether there are implications for its emergency management work.
- 3.66 The Council told us it is planning to complete and publish a public awareness strategy in the near future.

²⁰ See Statistics New Zealand (2022), *One in five say their household is prepared for a natural disaster*, at stats.govt.nz.

Figure 4
Percentage of Aucklanders prepared for an emergency and who have a good understanding of the types of emergencies that could occur, 2018/19 to 2021/22



Source: Auckland Council annual reports 2018/19-2021/22.

Auckland Council provides limited emergency management information in languages other than English

- 3.67 The Council's website includes advice on:
- making a household emergency plan;
 - preparing emergency items at home;
 - preparing a getaway kit for when people need to evacuate; and
 - checking in with friends and neighbours.
- 3.68 However, much of the Council's advice is only in English. The Council has also not assessed the uptake of the information that it does translate into other languages.

- 3.69 The Council told us it plans to translate material into Samoan, Hindi, Tongan, Mandarin, and Fijian to coincide with the relevant language weeks. The Council is exploring ways to communicate emergency management information, such as with a Pacific Disaster Communications Working Group that intends to develop resources for distribution to Pacific communities. The Council has work in progress to produce story books in four languages (Mandarin, te reo Māori, Hindi, and Samoan) about understanding and preparing for storms and floods. The Council received funding from the National Emergency Management Agency for this work.

More work is required to support isolated and vulnerable communities

- 3.70 The Council told us that it uses the National Disaster Resilience Strategy to determine which groups in the community to work with to build resilience. The National Disaster Resilience Strategy references various groups, including Māori, disabled people, children, rural people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- 3.71 The Council said that, since 2016, its approach has focused on engaging with priority communities and working alongside them to strengthen their disaster awareness, social networks, preparedness, and community-led response capability.
- 3.72 For example, as of November 2019, the Council had identified 37 isolated communities that were at risk of being cut off during an emergency event. Although the Council was actively working with 16 of these communities, this was because they had proactively sought assistance from the Council after they were isolated during or after an emergency event. We did not see evidence of a clear plan that prioritised working with communities that had the highest needs. We are concerned that there could be other communities not getting the same level of support.
- 3.73 We also heard that, during flooding events in early 2023, Auckland Emergency Management did not communicate effectively with all communities and there were delays in engaging with some of them. One representative of an emergency management partner agency we spoke to was frustrated by gaps in response activities that, in their view, Auckland Emergency Management should have helped organise.
- 3.74 The representative told us that there was limited public safety messaging about the dangers of floodwater and a lack of monitoring of evacuated properties to ensure that they remained empty and not occupied by homeless or otherwise vulnerable people. We were also told that better planning is needed for establishing welfare centres to ensure that all agencies are aware of them.

- 3.75 Follow-up from specific community initiatives has also been limited. For example, in 2017, the Council held two consultation workshops with people from Chinese communities. Participants at the workshop talked about their communities' understanding of emergency management and discussed resilience from a Chinese cultural perspective.
- 3.76 The notes we reviewed from those workshops described a need for the Council to work closely with Chinese communities to raise awareness of emergency management and hazards and risks. However, we found no evidence that the Council took specific actions in response to the workshops, other than telling us it planned to hold a business resilience conference for Chinese business owners in 2022/23.
- 3.77 The Council also proposes to develop additional resources to support various groups in the community to improve their emergency resilience and response. These are:
- a Lifestyle Emergency Preparedness Handbook for lifestyle block owners, supported by three workshops in conjunction with Fire and Emergency New Zealand;
 - a Places of Worship Handbook; and
 - a guidebook for communities to set up and run a community-led emergency hub with practice exercises and supporting signage.
- 3.78 Auckland Emergency Management is also involved in wider Council initiatives aimed at building the resilience of communities that are at high risk of coastal and other flooding. These include working with:
- Healthy Waters and Wai Ora to support community engagement on flood preparedness;
 - the Community Climate Action team to integrate disaster adaptation initiatives into Climate Action Plans;
 - the Sustainability Initiatives Team to embed community-led emergency hubs into their Sustainability Framework for 120 community hubs; and
 - the Resilient Land and Coast team to integrate disaster resilience-building into Shoreline Adaptation plans.
- 3.79 All of the Council's planned activities are steps in the right direction. The Council told us it is taking a deliberate, strategic, considered, and planned approach to this work. However, in our view, a clear strategy and plan that prioritises activities and guides the Council's community resilience-building efforts would be beneficial. The Council needs to carefully consider what work it will prioritise, and remain focused on making progress.

- 3.80 We also think that further work is required to better understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of the Auckland region's diverse communities and to prioritise the most vulnerable.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Auckland Council prepare a strategy and plan to guide its community resilience work, including how it will work with local boards.

Building capability and tracking progress

4

- 4.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- how the Council tracks and reports on its emergency management performance for governors and senior managers;
 - capability and capacity building through training and emergency management exercises; and
 - review and evaluation of emergency management performance.
- 4.2 We wanted to assess how effectively the Council was evaluating, testing, and monitoring its emergency management activities. We expected the Council to regularly:
- monitor implementation of the Group Plan's framework of action and progress towards achieving the Group Plan's objectives;
 - evaluate its emergency management work to assess its effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement;
 - test its emergency management systems and processes to ensure that they are ready to respond to an emergency event;
 - address and embed actions and recommendations for improvement;
 - carry out training and exercises (informed by an understanding of staff and organisational development needs) to improve its capability and capacity; and
 - report to the Auckland CDEM Group and Co-ordinating Executive Group about its progress towards achieving the Group Plan's objectives so they can assess progress and adjust priorities if necessary.

Summary of findings

- 4.3 In 2019, we were concerned that the Council's systems for monitoring and reporting and measuring effectiveness did not support good governance of its emergency management activities. The Council's testing of its emergency management capability through regular exercises and simulation activities was also limited. It is important that the Council has regular exercises to test its emergency management capability. We have recommended that the Council include exercises that involve working with other agencies to properly test its response and recovery capabilities.
- 4.4 The Council has made some improvements since 2019. It now reports internally on progress against its annual emergency management business plan measures. This provides some indication of its overall progress in achieving the Group Plan's objectives. However, in our view, the strategic importance of the Council's emergency management work means there needs to be much closer monitoring and governance oversight.

- 4.5 We encourage the Council to create robust performance measures so it can monitor and report on progress towards implementing the actions in the updated Group Plan.
- 4.6 The Council has recently developed improved training for staff, including practising various aspects of emergency management. The Council has used specialist expertise to support this training and is also working with other emergency management offices to train and develop the emergency management workforce. The Council plans to carry out local training exercises in 2023. It is also committed to participating in nationally organised training exercises.
- 4.7 In our view, the Council needs to improve its reporting against the Group Plan. In 2019, we found that the Council did not have a process for centrally tracking progress against each action that it was responsible for in the Group Plan. As a result, it was difficult to know which actions the Council had completed at any point in time. The Council needs regular and up-to-date monitoring so that it can carry out reliable planning and prioritise resources to progress initiatives.
- 4.8 We did not see evidence of the Council providing the Auckland CDEM Group with regular and systematic analysis of progress across all the goals, objectives, and actions in the Group Plan. We also did not see the Auckland CDEM Group explicitly seeking this information. Although the Auckland CDEM Group did receive and consider various project and activity updates on a regular basis, in our view these updates were not enough to meet the commitment in the Group Plan to “continually monitor and measure progress against current goals and objectives outlined in the Group Plan”.
- 4.9 However, from the reports we reviewed, we were able to see that the Council had made some progress towards achieving the Group Plan’s goals:
- For the reduction goal, the Council led and supported the development of a *Natural Hazards Risk Management Action Plan*, which:
 - identifies Auckland’s natural hazards and its risks;
 - defines the Council and others’ responsibilities for managing those risks; and
 - identifies the actions that the Council will take to reduce risk from natural hazards and increase resilience.²¹
 - For the response goal, the Council, working with the Welfare Co-ordination Group, co-designed a welfare plan for Auckland. The plan provides a high-level

21 The Council told us that this plan was adopted by the Council’s Environment and Climate Change Committee in June 2021 and that responsibility for the sponsorship and ownership of that plan was transferred from Auckland Emergency Management to the Council’s Infrastructure and Environmental Services division.

guide for delivering emergency welfare services and support. The Council published the plan in February 2019.²²

- For the recovery goal, the Council developed a framework during our review called *Ara Whakariteritanga – Preparedness for Recovery*. This framework outlines the Council’s approach to recovery, provides direction based on community values and principles, and identifies actions to build momentum on improving preparedness to recover from a disaster. The framework was formally accepted at an Auckland CDEM Group meeting in August 2019.

4.10 We also describe other work the Council has made towards progressing actions in the Group Plan (see paragraph 2.44).

Better performance information is required for governance to be effective

4.11 Governors and senior managers need regular and meaningful information about performance so they can direct and support improvements to the Council’s emergency management function. They also need this information to know that the Council can respond effectively in an emergency.

4.12 The information that governors and senior managers need includes performance information on work programme delivery and measures of outputs, impact, and outcomes.

4.13 In our view, the lack of centralised collation and monitoring of actions against the Group Plan has made it more difficult for governance to be carried out effectively.

4.14 In 2019, we reviewed the Council’s quarterly reports that it sent to both the Auckland CDEM Group and the Co-ordinating Executive Group.

4.15 The reports described a range of activities that were planned or under way, what needed to be done, and deadlines for completion. However, it was frequently unclear how these activities related to the actions in the Group Plan. Therefore, these reports did not adequately describe progress on implementing the actions.

4.16 In our view, without high-quality performance information, the Auckland CDEM Group and the Co-ordinating Executive Group had limited ability to provide effective oversight of the work programme and to accurately anticipate challenges, identify risks, and support Auckland Emergency Management.

4.17 Management is responsible for collecting and reporting performance information. However, governors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that they seek, obtain, and consider performance information about the emergency management function. Some representatives of relevant organisations told us that progress

²² See Auckland Council (2019), *Te rurukutanga mahi toko i te ora i ngā mate ohotata: Welfare coordination in emergencies – Auckland Welfare Plan*, at aucklandemergencymanagement.org.nz.

reporting and governance meetings (including with the Co-ordinating Executive Group and the Auckland CDEM Group) have been focused on low-level or detailed discussions about the activities under way instead of progress against strategic goals and objectives.

- 4.18 The Council has made some improvements since 2019. It now periodically reports internally on progress against its annual emergency management business plan and relies on this as an indication of its overall progress in implementing the Group Plan. The annual business plan identifies the main deliverables, the measures of success for each item, the owner of the work, and the team responsible.
- 4.19 In our view, further improvements are required. It is important that the updated Group Plan has robust performance measures so that progress can be tracked for both the actions and the objectives.
- 4.20 In our view, the work of Auckland Emergency Management is strategically important for the Council and it needs closer monitoring. We consider that the Council's governing body, the Co-ordinating Executive Group, and the Auckland CDEM Group need to have regular visibility of Auckland Emergency Management's wider work programme.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that Auckland Council strengthen governance oversight of its progress with key emergency preparedness matters, particularly its progress on implementing recommendations from recent reviews.

- 4.21 We note that recent reports to the Co-ordinating Executive Group in November 2022 and February 2023 provided information about the process for reviewing and updating the Group Plan.
- 4.22 The Council also told us that it will regularly report on its progress against a prioritised action plan in response to the *Auckland Flood Response Review: Independent, External Review of Events, January 27-29, 2023*. This reporting will be provided to the Council, the Auckland CDEM Group, and the Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

Improvements are being made to build staff capability

- 4.23 The Council told us that being prepared for an emergency involves its people knowing what their role is in an emergency, being trained, practising their roles through regular exercises, and having effective working relationships.
- 4.24 The Group Plan sets out four actions that are designed to improve disaster preparedness through ongoing training and exercises. Two of these actions are to:
- support the ongoing development and implementation of an integrated training framework; and
 - establish and implement an exercise calendar that aligns with the national exercise programme, which should contain at least two exercises every year.

More attention is now being given to training staff

- 4.25 Improvements to training have taken time to implement. The Council told us that this work took a “back seat” to actual response and recovery work during the Covid-19 pandemic. We accept that other emergency events would also have added to that pressure.
- 4.26 The Council has restarted work on a “learning needs analysis” that was paused in 2020 because staff and volunteers were deployed to support the Council’s response to Covid-19.
- 4.27 The Council now requires staff at Auckland Emergency Management to complete its Integrated Training Framework Foundation course. This training is for people wanting to work in an emergency co-ordination centre. It introduces emergency management principles, structure, and terminology.
- 4.28 Since 2019, the Council has made enhancements to the Integrated Training Framework Foundation course (including making it suitable to take online). An intermediate-level course is now available. These courses are part of a professional development path that is currently being developed for staff involved in response and recovery.
- 4.29 As well as building the capability of Auckland Emergency Management staff, this training seeks to increase the number of people available to work in an emergency control centre during an emergency (referred to as duty staff) and reduce pressure on existing duty staff who need to be on call in case of an emergency. The Council has also sought to increase the number of functional specialists from across the Council that can be called on in an emergency. This will make the arrangements for resourcing these roles in an emergency safer and more resilient.

- 4.30 As well as the Integrated Training Framework Foundation course, response staff are provided with professional well-being assistance relevant to their roles.
- 4.31 The Council told us that it is working with the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office on training development and options, particularly identifying common training needs. Given that all civil defence emergency management groups across the country will have similar responsibilities, there are likely to be opportunities to share training materials and resources. Having the same or similar training resources and practices for all the emergency management groups could help support a cross-organisation career path for staff working in emergency management.
- 4.32 The Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office has prepared response training resources that the Council is intending to use to develop Auckland Emergency Management staff. In November 2022, the Council told us that it would take about six months to train the trainers who will then be able to provide training across the Council.
- 4.33 In the Council's 2022/23 business plan, it committed to training staff who will provide welfare services in an emergency. The Council intends to have regular engagement with other emergency management group welfare managers and the National Emergency Management Agency to share lessons and help improve practices. The Council anticipates that its training programme will include exercises for providing welfare services.
- 4.34 The Council is also part of a Capability and Capacity Working Group formed in 2019 which has met approximately every quarter since October 2021. The purpose of that group is to better enable partners to effectively share exercise and training resources and identify opportunities for joint exercises (see paragraph 3.52).

Regular exercises are required to test operational readiness

- 4.35 In 2019, we saw evidence that the Council was planning exercises to test emergency management systems and processes. We reviewed documents that showed the Council was involved in three exercise programmes between 2016 and 2019. This is half the number stated in the Group Plan.
- 4.36 One of the exercises that the Council was involved in was Exercise Tangaroa in 2016. The then Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management led the exercise. It took place over three days and tested New Zealand's preparation for, response to, and recovery from a major tsunami.

- 4.37 Another exercise the Council was involved in was called Exercise Flux. This was a 12-week exercise that took place between June and August in 2019. It tested several scenarios, including flooding, coastal inundation, slips, landslides, lifeline failure, infrastructure damage, isolated communities, and evacuations.
- 4.38 The third exercise was about business continuity planning. Auckland Emergency Management held this with different departments of the Council in 2018 and 2019. This exercise tested how departments of the Council would respond to an emergency.
- 4.39 The Council's own planned exercises for 2020 were disrupted because it had to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Council told us it did participate in three America's Cup testing and readiness exercises (during November and December 2020). Auckland Emergency Management was also involved in targeted exercises with agencies in mid-2022, including with Hato Hone St John, New Zealand Red Cross, and Auckland Airport.
- 4.40 The Council also told us that the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the interagency National Exercise Programme led by the National Emergency Management Agency.
- 4.41 It is critically important that a schedule of exercises is developed to support the Council's wider programme of training and development. Regular exercises are important to ensure that skills learned through training courses can be applied in practice, that knowledge of response protocols remain current, and that policies and processes can be tested and improved on an ongoing basis. We discuss the importance of regular emergency management exercises in our report *Co-ordination of the all-of-government response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020*.²³
- 4.42 Although we have seen evidence of the Council developing annual training schedules, it is important that those schedules include exercises that properly test and practice its response and recovery responsibilities. These exercises should be scheduled well in advance.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that Auckland Council include in its emergency management work programme enough emergency management readiness exercises, including exercises that involve working with other agencies, to properly test its response and recovery capabilities.

²³ Office of the Auditor-General (2022), *Co-ordination of the all-of-government response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020*, at oag.parliament.nz.

Auckland Council does not systematically evaluate its emergency management activities or adequately monitor improvements

- 4.43 The Group Plan stated that:
- work programmes would be evaluated to ensure that performance meets the required standard; and
 - evaluation action plans would be put in place to improve capability and capacity.
- 4.44 We looked for evidence of an overarching evaluation plan. The Council provided us with a report to the Co-ordinating Executive Group in 2017 that referred to an evaluation action plan. However, the Council could not provide us with this plan or an equivalent document.
- 4.45 We did see some examples of work that the Council has carried out to review aspects of its functions and activities relevant to its emergency management role. These are discussed below.

Review of the 2018 storm event

- 4.46 In April 2018, after a storm event, the Council commissioned an independent review to identify opportunities to further improve capability to respond to major natural hazard events. The 26 recommendations from the *Review of the response to the Auckland storm of 10 April 2018* included:
- further improving intelligence gathering to identify all vulnerable and potentially vulnerable households after the event;
 - continuing to support local boards to have an appropriate role in future responses;
 - reviewing the status of ongoing work to build community self-reliance;
 - continuing to invest in inter-agency relationships at governance and operational levels; and
 - reviewing resources available for major responses.
- 4.47 We did not see evidence that the recommendations from this review were systematically implemented or that there was a process for monitoring them. We are concerned that many of the recommendations identified after the 2018 storm event still have not been implemented.

- 4.48 The 2023 independent review also commented on this. It identified examples of actions that, if implemented, would “likely have improved CDEM [civil defence and emergency management] responses” to the January 2023 flooding event.
- 4.49 The Council told us in March 2023 that implementation of 12 recommendations for Auckland Emergency Management was ongoing and that many of those recommendations were being progressed as part of business-as-usual work.
- 4.50 The Council also told us that a recommendation relating to call centre, website, and application capacity for frontline response agencies has not been progressed and is not a current priority for the Co-ordinating Executive Group. Instead, the Council said that Auckland Emergency Management has been focusing on relationships between the communications teams from the response agencies.

Other reviews

- 4.51 The Council produced a draft post-exercise report in November 2019 after Exercise Flux. It did not set a timeline for completing the full evaluation and, to our knowledge, this was never carried out.
- 4.52 Some of the Council’s emergency management functions during the Covid-19 response were reviewed. Some of the lessons from those reviews included:
- **Operations** – Resources to better manage the deployment of the 394 people involved (including volunteers) were needed. Health and safety expertise was needed earlier, and a decision-recording tool needed to be used.
 - **Intelligence** – The format of intelligence products was not fit for purpose. Those products needed to be standard across emergency management groups. There was too much expectation that the intelligence function would include collecting, collating, and cleaning data.
 - **Logistics** – The close relationship between logistics and welfare functions was the key to successfully delivering more than 50,000 food boxes, securing transport links to Great Barrier Island, and setting up the distribution centre at Spark Arena. There were good working relationships with Te Pou Whakarae,²⁴ but better relationships were needed with third-party logistics and distribution companies. Service-level agreements needed to be put in place across the Council to allocate personnel more quickly in a declared emergency.
 - **Planning** – Some pre-existing planning templates were inappropriate. The review recommended that existing planning documents, deployment processes, and related standing operating procedures all be reviewed.

²⁴ Te Pou Whakarae involved a team working alongside iwi, hapū, whānau, and marae to identify and bridge gaps in the delivery of welfare services.

- 4.53 In our view, the Council needs to take a more systematic and robust approach to evaluating its emergency management initiatives. A formalised review or evaluation should be carried out after any significant emergency event.
- 4.54 To get the best value, evaluations should be completed in a timely way. Implementing recommendations and other actions for improvement should also be actively managed and monitored. This should involve:
- assigning responsibility to a staff member;
 - determining a management response;
 - establishing a deadline for action; and
 - monitoring progress in addressing the management response to each recommendation.
- 4.55 Governors also have a responsibility to ensure that these actions are carried out.
- 4.56 In our view, the Council should establish an approach that sets out:
- how Auckland Emergency Management proposes to carry out evaluations or reviews of emergency events;
 - expectations for how issues or lessons identified will be dealt with; and
 - appropriate processes to ensure that the benefits of these reviews are recorded and improvements made in a timely way.
- 4.57 In our view, there should be regular reporting to governors about lessons identified and how they are embedded into ongoing emergency management activities.
- 4.58 This should include regular monitoring of any improvements required to be implemented and regular reporting to the Council's Co-ordinating Executive Group and the Auckland CDEM Group on the progress of those actions.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that Auckland Council develop a clear approach and appropriate processes to systematically evaluate responses to emergency events, record lessons, and implement improvements identified from responding to emergency events or from its emergency management readiness exercise programme.

- 4.59 We discuss the importance of regularly reviewing response activities in some detail in our report *Co-ordination of the all-of-government response to Covid-19 pandemic in 2020*. We also highlight the need for:
- more consideration to ensuring that regular review of response activities occurs during an emergency or crisis;
 - a more formalised and systematic approach to recording and publicly reporting progress against recommendations from reviews and other work; and

- better guidance and tools to support review activity and improve overall capability.
- 4.60 We made recommendations in that report for relevant organisations to work together to demonstrate how they are making improvements during an ongoing response by:
- systematically identifying lessons, acting, and monitoring progress;
 - seeking independent expertise and acting on that advice, as appropriate;
 - reporting the findings of reviews publicly in a timely and accessible way, including whether they have implemented recommendations; and
 - ensuring that key staff maintain a good understanding of emergency management frameworks, including relevant legislation and guidance on lessons management.
- 4.61 In our view, these recommendations are also relevant to the Council as it reviews and updates the Group Plan.
- 4.62 We did not look at the Council's response to the significant flooding events that took place across the Auckland region in January 2023. However, we are pleased that the 2023 independent review was carried out. It is critically important that the findings of that review, wider evaluation work, and the recommendations in this report are considered in the update of the Group Plan.
- 4.63 As part of monitoring the Council's response to our recommendations, we also intend to monitor the Council's progress against the recommendations in the 2023 independent review.
- 4.64 There is considerable public interest in how the Council will support its communities to prepare for, and respond to, emergencies. We encourage the Council to keep the public well informed about its progress with emergency preparedness activities and with implementing recommendations from our review and the 2023 independent review.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Auckland Council keep the public regularly and well informed about its progress with emergency preparedness activities and implementing recommendations from recent reviews.

Appendix

Auckland Council's Covid-19 response work

Auckland Council's roles and responsibilities during the Covid-19 response were to:

- co-ordinate processes and structures with relevant organisations;
- activate an emergency co-ordination centre;
- lead on operational response co-ordination;
- support the New Zealand Police in co-ordinating, setting up, and managing regional borders;
- establish liaisons with the health sector and support that sector;
- be ready to lead, co-ordinate, and deliver welfare services in partnership with support agencies with plans in place to identify and meet community need;
- support the fast movement of consumer goods; and
- monitor for any supply chain or infrastructure issues and escalate accordingly.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Auckland Council supported its communities by:

- handling more than 35,900 requests for assistance during Alert Levels 3 and 2;
- ensuring that the most remote communities were able to access essential services – this included daily flights to Aotea Great Barrier Island and a ferry service to Kawau Island to ensure that residents continued to receive services and supplies;
- delivering 50,000 Ministry of Health bilingual English and te reo Māori Covid-19 flyers and a total of 2500 kai and hygiene packs across Auckland;
- working with community partners to reach out to the city's homeless and providing accommodation and essential services such as distributing food packages;
- making more than 15,000 calls to those aged 70 and older who lived alone;
- partnering with other agencies to dispatch more than 27,400 food parcels and 10,000 essential parcels through a distribution centre at Spark Arena to over 25,000 households; and
- working alongside iwi, hapū, whānau, and marae to ensure that Māori communities received the support they needed.²⁵

²⁵ Auckland Council launched two initiatives to support a Māori response to and recovery from Covid-19. These were Te Pou Whakarae and the Manaaki Fund. Te Pou Whakarae involved a team working alongside iwi, hapū, whānau, and marae to identify and bridge gaps in the delivery of welfare services. The Manaaki Fund was a one-off grant available to the Council's established Māori partners who were actively supporting Māori whānau to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

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