

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Update
DATE: 20th August 2013
RECIPIENT: Cllr Kaur – Cabinet Member for Communities

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

This report provides an update on the duties, obligations and capabilities Southampton City Council (SCC) has in relation to Contingencies Act 2004. These duties comprise assessment of risks, the compilation, exercising and review of emergency response and business continuity plans, warning and informing the public, responding to emergencies and collaboration with other agencies including the emergency services.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

Emergency Response Team

The pre-identified SCC Emergency Response Team (ERT) comprising some 52 key executive, professional lead and support officers from the authority who continue to engage in training, familiarisation, exercising and response as necessary. Tests of this capability both in and out of hours suggest an ongoing availability of approximately 70% which is excellent for a voluntary scheme. Four monthly general update bulletins and weekly 'on call' contact rotas are published.

Following recent organisational restructure and the departure of key experienced personnel the ERT arrangements have been reviewed. Duty Directors, Balfour Beatty and Capita have an important role within the structure and are supported by the Emergency Planning Manager (EPM) and the staff in the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) in times of heightened alert.

The local NHS Public Health team has now been structurally integrated within the council effective from April 2013. The arrival brings with it new accountabilities for the council, such as the protection of the health of the population of Southampton. The Director of Public Health (DPH) is supported by a Consultant and Emergency Planning Officer. The DPH is focussed on fulfilling his statutory duties by working with multi-agency health partners, including local NHS providers, to ensure responses to health related incidents are tested, well co-ordinated and effective.

Divisional Business Continuity Plans (BCP)

A recent organisational restructure has triggered a review of BCP's co-ordinated through Directors and their Management teams. This review will also inform a number of SCC risk specific emergency plans developed in accordance with guidance issued by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat.

The ongoing support of CMT in ensuring corporate ownership, consistent application and broader awareness is essential. The benefits of doing so have been demonstrated within the SCC response to a number of recent disruptive challenges including power, IT and civic building 'outages' and severe weather. EPU staff continue to assist and facilitate the process.

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Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

The Chief Executive and EPM participate within the inter agency LRF Executive forum chaired by the Chief Constable. The EPM attends the subordinate interagency Delivery Group. In addition, each officer within the EPU supports the work of two subgroups of the LRF. In close liaison with service management the EPM continues to represent the interest of the SCC Port Health Team, which is separately designated under the Act as a Category 1 Responder.

Major Incident Plan/Emergency Control Centre

The City Council Major Incident Plan was reviewed and republished in January 2012. Issues subsequently refined since publication include: key roles and responsibilities, command and control structure and recovery obligations falling to the authority. The EPU and Emergency Control Centre (ECC) transferred to the City Depot complex in November 2011 now supporting closer working relations with Port Health and other key staff including the Facilities Manager and City Depot.

The facility also serves as a temporary back up ECC for Esso Fawley complex following the demolition of Fawley Power Station. This was recently tested and worked well.

Health Protection

Public Health has re-established the Southampton City Joint Health Protection Forum, which will link to the core health protection and emergency preparedness responsibilities of the Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP) and the Southampton Health and Wellbeing Board.

Whilst the group is there to provide assurance to the DPH that appropriate health protection planning mechanisms are in place for Southampton city residents and visitors the forum will also act as an information exchange between public, voluntary services and private providers including Solent and Southampton University.

Exercising and Training

SCC staff continue to actively participate in joint emergency services and local authority exercises and seminars, the most recent being "Ex Carmeron" (June 2013) with Portsmouth City Council.

Refresher ECC training for incident controllers, specialist leads and support staff was undertaken in November 2012. This again was well received and productive. It is also proposed to provide a broader awareness opportunity for CMT and Heads of Service with responsibility within the SCC ERT Rota.

The Public Health team will be working with partners across the city to ensure access to NHS and Public Health training is made available to the appropriate staff. The importance of maintaining competencies in health protection planning will be key to an effective emergency response.

Southampton has been identified by the Home Office as one of eighteen major UK economic and travel hubs. SCC has now delivered the required Plan and follow up exercise in liaison with the emergency services, the port and airport. National Counter Terrorism Office feedback has informed the development and recent publication of Version 2 of the plan.

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Nuclear Submarine Berth

The 3 year Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations (REPPiR) legal compliance cycle was recommenced in December 2012 with the publication of the 'SotonSafe' Plan Version 6. The interagency SotonSafe Emergency Planning Group now led by SCC Head of Regulatory Services and monitored by the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR), part of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), continues to meet twice annually.

This submarine berth within the Port continues to present its challenges, however a recent national audit of the site plan proved favourable. The way the Council has discharged its regulatory obligations has been cited as best practice.

Given the limited attendance, other obligations and pressures there are no current plans to repeat public meetings. However, an offer has been made by the EPM to meet with the lobbying group Solent Coalition Against Nuclear Submarines (SCANS) on a periodic basis.

Whilst submarine visits to the Port are infrequent it is important the momentum is maintained and complacency does not arise. Related costs are recovered from the Navy.

Following the tragic events of the 8th April 2011 during a submarine visit to the Port by HMS Astute statutory proceedings have now concluded. Plans have been implemented as a result of the incident and have been ratified by the ONR.

Incidents of Note

Recent incidents of note involving the EPU and its support colleagues have included oil and chemical pollution, major fires, evacuation, severe weather and large scale power failures.

A number of events involving torrential rain, high tides and surface water resulting in flash flooding in August and September continue to highlight the increasing challenges across the City and in particular the Itchen Basin and arterial road network in and adjacent to Port. The EPU contribute to the work of the SCC Flood Risk Board in terms of planning and sustainability, development and emergency response. New legislation places additional duties upon the authority including that of post event investigation. Whilst still in its infancy, such a cross directorate and partnership initiated by SCC is being cited as best practice within both the H&IOW LRF and elsewhere.

Proceedings arising from the Shirley Towers Fire on 6th April 2010 have now concluded. The Rule 43 Coroner's Inquest outcome and recommendations have now been published. The implementation of these continue to be lead by the Head of Housing Services supported by the EPM.

Future Developments and the EPM

The EPM has further developed collaborative working arrangements with New Forest and Eastleigh Borough Councils to mutual benefit resulting in an annual income of £15k.

Following an organisational review and report to CMT in May 2013 the EPU recently transferred to the Head of Regulatory Services Division. An action plan is in place to ensure timely and effective succession planning for a number of retiring officers within the EPU. A recruitment process is underway aimed to ensure an adequate handover between the former EPM retiring in October 2013 and their replacement. Proposed closer on call working and training with Environmental Health management will forge greater lead emergency officer resilience. A cross directorate EP & BC Management Board to oversee

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service delivery and corporate compliance will be chaired by the Director of Public Health. Terms of reference will be agreed at its forthcoming inaugural meeting.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no legal implications other than the statutory duty and guidance which directs the council's preparedness and there is the potential for reputational damage, litigation and costs should the council fail to meet these statutory obligations.

World events and Government impetus, not least in relation to the critical threats of pandemic influenza, industrial unrest, weather extremes and terrorism will ensure that emergency planning, business continuity and the capability of responders remain a priority for the Council.

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES: N/A

Appendices/Supporting Information: N/A

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