

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Corporate Governance Committee 20 December 2007  
**AUTHOR/S:** Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services

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### PROVISION OF EMERGENCY PLANNING AND RESPONSE SERVICES WITHIN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

#### Purpose

1. To advise Members of the Emergency Planning arrangements within Cambridgeshire under the Civil Contingency Act 2004.

#### Background

2. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 received Royal Assent in the autumn of 2004 and placed a statutory duty on category one responders to:
  - (a) Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning.
  - (b) Put in place emergency plans.
  - (c) Put in place business continuity management arrangements.
  - (d) Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.
  - (e) Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.
  - (f) Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.
  - (g) Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.
3. At that time it was considered that South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) would not be able to meet its statutory duties without a substantial increase in staffing resources dedicated to emergency planning over and above the existing resource of 0.3 FTE (i.e. part of the duties of the Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services and the Health & Safety Adviser).

#### Considerations

4. Along with the other four District/City Councils and the County Council in Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is defined as a category one responder. The main duties of the Act outlined, fall equally on all of these Councils and in exercising their duties it was recognised that there was a risk of duplication, for example, carrying out their duty of community risk assessment or providing warnings when an emergency occurs, or each develop temporary mortuary plans.
5. The legislation also recognised this possibility and included the principle of a lead responder. The guidance accompanying the legislation made reference to the fact that in some instances responders would want to put their co-operation onto a formal footing and enter into joint arrangements.
6. Under the regulations lead category one responders must:

- (a) Take the lead responsibility in that local resilience area.
  - (b) Consult the non-lead category one responders in performance of the duty.
  - (c) Keep the non-lead category one responders informed about how they are fulfilling the duty; and
  - (d) as far as reasonably practicable, obtain approval from the non-lead category one responders for the way they are performing the duty.
7. In contrast non-lead category one responders must:
- (a) Co-operate with the lead category one responder in performance of the duty.
  - (b) Provide information to the lead Category one responder which will assist in performance of the duty; and
  - (c) assist the lead responder in any exercises or training in connection with the duty.
- However, the non-lead category one responder do not themselves need to perform the duty to an extent that would unnecessarily duplicate what the lead category one responder is doing.
8. In response to this, the Chief Executives Liaison Group endorsed the principle of exercising responsibilities on a joint approach basis, through the establishment of a combined Local Authority Emergency Planning Team, with the County Council acting as a lead authority. As a result the county emergency planning team (civil protection unit) was expanded, with the employment of further staff. Each district has been provided with a named emergency-planning officer, located at Shire Hall, part of whose job is to liaise directly with the emergency planning lead within the District Council.
9. An Agreement between the District Councils and County Council, on the provision of emergency planning and response services within Cambridgeshire, was drawn up and signed by all the partners in the summer of 2005. This agreement is attached at Appendix 1. Annexe A of the attached agreement details the services provided by the County Council and Annexe B the services to be provided by the District Council.
10. The Agreement is currently under review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

### **Performance Assessment**

11. The Cabinet Office looks for the duties under the Act to be provided and has ensured that the performance of local authority Category one responders is assessed by the Audit Commission through the comprehensive performance assessment framework.
12. In addition to this the non-lead authorities receive regular progress reports on the activity of the lead authority emergency planning team. These reports cover amongst other things; incidents / potential incidents managed; plan making activity; exercises; information sharing activities; training delivered; details of the activity of the various emergency planning groups. Detailed evidence is now being provided against all of the major service components to be delivered by the County Council team, thus providing greater clarity on what the Council's contribution is being used for and surety that the Council is obtaining value for money.
13. An audit of Emergency Planning – Civil Contingencies Act has been undertaken as part of the approved internal audit plan for 2007/08. At the time of writing the draft findings were that the control framework for the area provides substantial assurance that risks material to the achievement of the organisation's objectives for this area are adequately managed and controlled. No fundamental or significant recommendations have been made on the adequacy and application of controls.

## Implications

14. In response to the costs of implementing the Act, Central Government contributed £34,054 (2005/06) towards SCDC's costs, paid through the Council's Formula Grant. On notifying the authority of this additional funding, the Cabinet Office made it clear that the authority's performance against the duties in the Act would be measured and that the authority was expected to ensure that sufficient resources were made available to achieve the outcomes of the Act.
15. Due to delays in recruiting, and therefore the full service not being in place for part of 2005/06, SCDC's contribution to the joint team was £19,050. The full years cost of the service to SCDC is circa £23,000 in 2006/07 onwards.

16.	Financial	As detailed in paragraphs 14 – 15.
	Legal	As detailed in the report
	Staffing	
	Risk Management	
	Equal Opportunities	None

## Conclusions/Summary

17. The Council is under a statutory duty to provide for the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Emergency planning retains a high public profile, especially giving recent national events surrounding possible terrorist attack and flooding. It is clear that SCDC could not provide the service without a substantial resource injection into the service, over an above the current £23,000 paid to the County Council.
18. The lead responder arrangements are working well. The countywide service provides an effective and efficient means of ensuring the Council meets it's statutory obligations and that it is well prepared in event of an emergency occurring. The current performance framework should ensure that the Council has sufficient monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the Council's duties remain effectively discharged on the Council's behalf. Accordingly it is believed that the current arrangements provide value for money.

## Recommendations

19. That the Committee notes the current arrangements for the delivery of emergency planning in Cambridgeshire.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Cabinet Office: Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Performance Assessment Frameworks Internal Audit Report Emergency planning – Civil Contingencies Act (4.07/08) Draft 20 September 2007

**Contact Officer:** Dale Robinson – Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services  
Telephone: (01954) 713229