

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 19 February 2013

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: Proposed Regional Emergency Planning Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 The report provides the final business case for a regional emergency planning service for approval.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Emergency Planning Service is a discrete but essential service. In North Wales the configuration is five separate service units with a shared service in Flintshire and Denbighshire. The total employer complement is 16.5 full time equivalent (FTC) with a combined budget (in scope of the review) of £722,000.

2.02 Local Authorities are category 1 responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The act sets out the duties of local authorities and emergency services in preventing, preparing for and responding to emergencies. Duties include:-

- assessments of risks in the local authority area
- maintaining emergency plans
- business continuity arrangements
- liaising with other public services who are category one responders e.g. Police, Fire and Health Services
- advising businesses on business continuity arrangements.

2.03 The core functions of the service are: -

- assessing risk
- preparing plans (emergencies and business continuity)
- liaising with emergency services
- advising senior management on emergency planning
- training employees and volunteers on emergency procedures and plans
- planning resources for responding to an emergency.

- 2.04 Given growing responsibilities over recent years the services have come under strain. Resilience, and best use of resources are challenges to be met.
- 2.05 The key respondent partners are organised on a regional basis e.g. North Wales Police and the Emergency Planning Service lends itself to a collaborative model of working. The rationale for a collaborative model is further demonstrated by the Local Resilience Forum which assesses risks, prepares plans and reviews the operation of plans in real emergencies on a regional basis; the experience is that major emergencies and climatic events can affect more than one county area simultaneously and mutual aid agreements for councils to assist each other in responding to emergencies are enacted.
- 2.06 The regional partners identified the service as one for a convenient and effective collaboration model with the aims of improving prevention of and preparation for emergencies; standardisation of common policies and plans; having a more resilient service through the shared and flexible use of expertise and limited human resources.
- 2.07 The Chief Executives of the six councils commissioned the development and testing of a business case for a single service, with sub-regional teams, and an officer presence within each authority to ensure local expertise and knowledge and local service continuity.
- 2.08 The Welsh Government – Local Government Compact has since included emergency planning as a recommended regional collaborative service.

3.0 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 The business case (attached) proposes a regional service with: -
- a sub-regional service structure
 - one hub led by a Regional Manager and the other by a Deputy Regional Manager
 - an Emergency Planning Officer in each local authority
 - common policies, processes and plans and shared resources in a single management structure.
- 3.02 The regional service would be commissioned and overseen by an operational board of commissioning officers. Periodic performance reports would be made to the constituent authorities for accountability.
- 3.03 The locally placed officer would be responsible for: -
- Engagement with managers, employees and elected members in their host authority
 - Supporting risk identification locally
 - Putting emergency plans into action

- Developing local business continuity plans

3.04 The sub-regional hub officers would:-

- deliver plans
- provide training
- develop and deliver test exercises
- work with the Local Resilience Forum
- provide administrative and management support.

3.05 The benefits of the proposals will be:-

- resilience and improved specialisation
- consistency
- sharing of best practice, capacity and capability
- better liaison with the LRF
- more capacity for working with service managers in each local authority.

3.06 The proposals suggest savings of up to £75,000 at around 10% of cost. Further savings may be possible from reduced duplication. Once the service is established consideration will have to be given to the potential of joint services with Police, Fire and Health.

3.07 The proposal needs to take account of the Compact agreement to:-

- establish a local authority shared service in 2013
- consider the establishment of a joint service serving local authorities, Police, Fire and other partners by September 2015.

3.08 The Welsh Local Government Association has offered £35k from the Improvement Fund to assist North Wales in the management of transition to a regional service. Flintshire County Council is acting as the lead authority for the project.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the Council adopts the final business plan to join a regional emergency planning service on the basis that:-

- the new service will be established on a cost neutral basis and will aim for annual savings of 5% – 10% on existing costs (£35-£75,000 per annum)
- the service will be commissioned by a management board accountable to the constituent councils with regional oversight provided by the North Wales Safer Communities Board

- Flintshire will host the new service and lead the transition to the new service
 - the cost of the new service will be recovered from the partners on the basis of population
 - implementation will include transitional arrangements to ensure that no authority pays more than the current cost of the service
 - the employment model will be decided as part of the transition plan
 - current employees will be given prior consideration for posts in the new structure and the new service will be implemented in such a way as to maximise staff retention and redeployment.
 - the Implementation Team will protect competition for the senior posts within the framework of prior consideration.
 - each Local Authority will nominate to an Implementation Team. The Implementation Team to assist in the appointment of the temporary Project Manager.
- 4.02 Authority to approve the detailed transition arrangements to the new service and undertake all necessary tasks to establish the new service is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio /Cabinet Member.
- 4.03 The project works to the following timeline:-
- councils agree to join a regional service by end March 2013
 - commencement of briefing and consultation of staff on the business case and proposals – February 2013
 - each Council to nominate to an Implementation Team by February 2013
 - appoint a project manager to deliver the project by end March 2013
 - appoint Regional Manager and Deputy by June/July 2013
 - employment model agreed by June/July 2013
 - creation of operational structure, operating processes, development of the detailed budget and identification of accommodation by September 2013
 - development of Service Level Agreement and Partnership agreement by September 2013
 - employee selection and transfers made by September 2013
 - new service operational from October 2013.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The implementation of the service will be designed to be cost neutral to all partners and will endeavour to deliver savings to each of the partners in a range of a 5% - 10% reduction in gross costs regionally £35,000- £75,000 per annum

6.0 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 Improving the quality of Emergency Planning will have a positive impact on vulnerable groups in society by reducing the potential for loss of home, possessions and harm that arise from emergencies.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 Preventing, managing and minimising the impact of emergencies will have a positive impact on the environment.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 Improving the quality of Emergency Planning will have a positive impact on vulnerable groups in society by reducing the potential for loss of home, possessions and harm that arise from emergencies.

9.0 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 It is possible that a small number of employees may opt for early retirement or redundancy on a voluntary basis as a consequence of the re-organisation of this service.
- 9.02 Any costs will be met from future savings.
- 9.03 The new, regional service will be hosted and led by Flintshire.
- 9.04 There may be some Human Resource impact in managing transfers and ensuring that advantageous terms and conditions of transferring staff are protected in the TUPE process.

10.0 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 There will be consultation with Trade Unions in each local authority on the implementation of the new service and potential TUPE transfers, with Trade Unions regionally and with each affected employee.
- 10.02 Flintshire County Council will co-ordinate consultation with employees and trade unions.

11.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The North Wales Police and Fire Services and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Boards have been consulted on this proposal.

11.01. The Chief Executive of each of the six North Wales Local Authorities was consulted on the Business Case.

11.03 The Business case was developed with the Heads of the Emergency Planning Services.

11.04 The Business Case has been shared with the Public Service Leadership Group which oversees the national Compact.

12.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: - The Business Case for Change.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Contact Officer: Colin Everett, Chief Executive

Telephone: 01352 702101

Email: Chief.Executive@flintshire.gov.uk