



Cabinet 14 September 2011

Emergency Planning

1. Background

- 1.1 On 19 January 2011 the Cabinet considered recommendations emanating from the meeting of the Emergency Planning Working Party held on 15 December 2010. The Cabinet resolved that (Minute 111 (a)(2) refers):-

'it be approved in principle that future meetings of both the Borough Council's Emergency Planning Working Party and Forest Heath District Council's Emergency Planning Working Group be aligned so that they may meet together on the same date on a rotational location basis as appropriate.'

- 1.2 On 25 May 2011 the Cabinet considered its Annual Review and Appointment of Working Parties (Report C6 refers). Arising from the consideration of this report the Cabinet resolved that (minute 5(4) refers):-

'Merging of Emergency Planning, Central Safety and Joint Staff Consultative Working Parties with the equivalent at Forest Heath District Council be explored'.

- 1.3 The Terms of Reference of the Borough Council's Emergency Planning Working Party is attached as Appendix A.

- 1.4 On 8 July 2011 the Corporate Services Committee of Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) considered the issue of merging the two Emergency Planning bodies and on 20 July 2011 FHDC full Council resolved that a West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel be formed with a Terms of Reference detailed in Appendix B to this report, which is an expansion of those for the Borough Council's Emergency Planning Working Party. FHDC Emergency Planning Working Group has not been reconstituted.

2. Considerations

- 2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a legal obligation upon emergency services and local authorities (defined as "Category 1 responders" under the Act) to assess the risk of, plan, and exercise for emergencies, as well as undertaking Business Continuity Management. Category 1 Responders are also responsible for warning and informing the public in relation to emergencies. Finally, local authorities are required to provide business continuity advice to local businesses.

- 2.2 Across Suffolk a Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) is in place, consisting of specialist officers employed by Suffolk County Council. While some of these officers produce policy and guidance applicable across the whole county, others (referred to as District Emergency Planning Officers) are allocated to disseminate information, give advice and training across geographic areas:-
- (a) **East:** covers Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils;
 - (b) **Central:** covers Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Ipswich Borough Council; and
 - (c) **West:** covers St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District Councils.
- 2.3 District Councils support the work undertaken by JEPU staff by providing facilities and staff to manage emergencies, such as Emergency Control Centres and Rest Centres for people displaced.
- 2.4 Any policy decisions associated with the Emergency Planning function requires Member approval. In order to give more full consideration to the detail of such policy and also to enable direct briefing of Members about current issues and practice, the Borough Council currently operates an Emergency Planning Working Party that makes recommendations to the Cabinet. FHDC had an Emergency Planning Working Group, which reported to the Corporate Services Committee.
- 2.5 In practice, much of the work of the Borough Council's Working Party and the former FHDC Working Group involves common information delivered by the same officers. In addition, during consideration of the wider strategic agenda relating to shared services, the opportunity to create a single forum for Emergency Planning discussions arose.
- 2.6 The draft Terms of Reference for a single group are set out in Appendix B. Members are asked to look particularly at the following:-
- (a) numbers of Members / quorum;
 - (b) chairing arrangements; and
 - (c) location of meetings.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:-
- (1) a West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel be formed with Forest Heath District Council based on the Terms of Reference detailed in Appendix B to Report C128;
 - (2) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to appoint to the West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel on the nomination of Group Leaders; and
 - (3) the Borough Council's Emergency Planning Working Party be disbanded.

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Emergency Planning Working Party: Terms of Reference

- (a) To provide a group of members who can develop an enhanced level of understanding of emergency planning issues;
- (b) To provide a forum for the discussion of emergency preparedness issues;
- (c) To provide policy guidance on emergency planning arrangements to ensure alignment with corporate policies and direction;
- (d) To provide a link with other Members to promote resilience within communities;
- (e) To assist Cabinet with the dissemination of information to other Members during an emergency; and
- (f) To make recommendations to Cabinet about actions required to develop and maintain effective emergency preparedness arrangements to ensure that Council can support the emergency services and communities during emergencies.

Approved by Cabinet: 9 January 2011 (minute 111 refers).

DRAFT Terms of Reference – West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel

The Panel's membership will be drawn from both Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC).

The Panel will consider both authorities' emergency preparedness arrangements and who can provide guidance to support the development of executive action by officers of both authorities in times of emergency:

- To provide a group of members who can develop an enhanced level of understanding of emergency planning issues.
- To provide a forum for the discussion of emergency preparedness issues.
- To provide policy guidance on emergency planning arrangements to ensure alignment with corporate policies and direction.
- To provide a link with other members to promote resilience within communities.
- To make recommendations to the Corporate Services Committee (FHDC) and the Cabinet (SEBC) about policies and actions required to develop and maintain effective emergency preparedness arrangements and ensure that the authorities can support the emergency services and communities during emergencies.
- To assist the Corporate Services Committee (FHDC) and the Cabinet (SEBC) with the dissemination of information to other members during an emergency.
- At the discretion of the Chairman, in the event that either:
 - a) an emergency event arises which affects the area of either authority, or
 - b) the risk of an emergency that affects the area of either authority is assessed as significant by Suffolk County Council's Head of Emergency Planning, an extraordinary meeting of the Panel may be called.

Membership

To comprise 8 members, 4 from each authority.

Each authority may nominate one substitute member who may attend in the absence of any member of their authorities.

A quorum will be three, with at least one member present from each authority.

At the discretion of the Chairman, members of either Council who are not members of the panel may be invited to attend/speak.

Chairmanship

The Panel will elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from its membership. The Vice Chairman will be from the opposite authority to the Chairman.

Except if agreed otherwise, the Chairmanship will rotate between the two authorities on a two yearly basis (i.e. 4 programmed meetings).

Meetings

Meetings will be hosted alternately at the offices of the two Councils, unless an alternative location is agreed by the panel.

Meeting Frequency

Every 6 months.

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