

# Briefing Paper

## Emergency Planning Shared Service Joint Committee – Rotherham and Sheffield

11 June 2013 at 2:00pm

Rotherham Town Hall

### **Purpose of paper: Item 8**

To provide Members with a general update on key issues affecting the development of the EPSS in 2013/14 and beyond

### **Background information:**

See next section

### **Key issues:**

- **Revision of the Borough Emergency Plan (RMBC) and Major Incident Plan (SCC)** – Following the refresh of the plans in June 2012, the Shared Service has conducted a further review of both to identify any areas for improvement. Whilst it is believed that, in essence, both are sound documents some areas for development have been identified which can only enhance their value as sources of guidance for both authorities. Some of these identified areas stem from recent 'lessons learnt' from incidents and exercises, as well as the professional judgement of Shared Service members. At the same time, the Shared Service is cognisant of the severe financial constraints affecting public sector organisations, as well as the downsizing of the organisations. Nevertheless, the authorities still have clear statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) and must prepare for such emergencies and the plans are the base documents to achieve this purpose. However, both authorities have undergone structural changes in recent months and this will necessitate a further refresh of the plans to take note of these changes, now that they are finalised. In addition, the Recovery & Restoration section of the plans will be removed, as this important issue merits being a plan in its own right. The Recovery & Restoration plans for both authorities will complement the respective Borough Emergency Plan and Major Incident Plans, but will be significantly enhanced to reflect the statutory duty of local authorities to 'lead' the multi-agency response on this issue. To a significant extent, Recovery & Restoration is the 'Cinderella' aspect of the entire civil contingencies spectrum, as it tends to be overshadowed by the attention given to the initial response and life

saving elements of any incident. Yet, in many ways, it is the most difficult part of the overall management of the incident and is certainly the most prolonged aspect as, in some cases, it can last for months if not years. These plans are nearing completion and the further refreshing of the Borough Emergency Plan and Major Incident Plan will commence in due course. This refresh will incorporate more robust arrangements to support the Forward Liaison Officers (FLOs), particularly involving 'out of hours' incidents.

- **The Shared Service concept** - There continues to be little appetite elsewhere to take forward the wider development of this concept at this time.
- **Emergency Mortuary (EM) Arrangements** – Local authorities have the statutory duty to provide EM facilities in the event of a major incident resulting in a large number of fatalities that the normal day-to-day arrangements for such matters cannot deal with for capacity and other reasons. In addition, certain matters require more detailed arrangements to be made. Currently, there is a South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) plan covering these arrangements but it requires significant updating and, at the instigation of the Shared Service, the LRF has set up a Task & Finish Group to take forward this work. Through consultation with HM Coroners (Sheffield & Barnsley and Rotherham & Doncaster), work has begun on arrangements for a temporary expansion of the capacity of the Medico Legal Centre (MLC) in Sheffield to act as the primary EM site. A number of companies have provided proposals on how best this could be achieved. The Shared Service is leading the work with these companies and will produce a plan for the MLC, in conjunction with colleagues in the other South Yorkshire authorities. The MLC provides a cost effective option to deliver an EM for a significant number of bodies and it is acknowledged as both providing better facilities and being substantially less expensive than using an option based on demountable structures. Once the planning for the MLC has been completed, work will then commence on sites that could be used for an alternative EM (in case the MLC is unavailable), including operating the National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements (NEMA). NEMA is a government measure to supply a large demountable EM to cover incidents involving 300 to 600 bodies. However, the floor plans for these structures are so large that, presently, South Yorkshire has only identified one suitable site in Doncaster. Other proposed sites have been rejected due to size, gradient and other issues. The planning is well advanced but there are a number of ancillary and complementary issues that will require further detailed work. Whilst there is still much to do, we are confident that we will have robust plans in place to deal effectively with this responsibility.

- **Reservoir Grant** – Members will be aware from the report at the previous meeting that, under new DEFRA criteria in relation to Reservoir Plans and grant monies, nine reservoirs in Sheffield have to have their own site-specific Emergency Plan. This would detail actions to be put in place following a reservoir being compromised and SCC received a grant to meet this criterion. An update on the current position is as follows:

  - A part-time Emergency Planning Assistant has been employed since January 2013 to work on this and other issues
  - The plan has been finalised following multi-agency consultation with LRF and other partners
  - The Shared Service is now developing a major exercise to take place in Autumn 2013, with the support of the Emergency Planning College, to verify the plan
  - The development of a comprehensive Warning & Informing strategy to inform all members of the public at potential risk from a reservoir inundation is ongoing.
  
- **Transfer of Public Health functions to local government** – Members will be aware that under changes to the NHS, Public Health Teams transferred into Local Authorities in April 2013, albeit both authorities took different approaches as to how this process was managed. The limited amount of work to be undertaken by the Shared Service has been completed and, at this time, no significant issues have been identified. However, it is early days and we are still monitoring the integration process.
  
- **The RMBC Health & Safety Team's role in civil contingencies** – For some while, the RMBC Health & Safety team H&S has acted as the 'unofficial' backup to the Shared Service, as its members have complementary skills to the EPSS team; have demonstrated both an awareness and interest in civil contingencies issues and some have actually performed the role of FLO or Assistant FLO. Given the limited resources of the Shared Service, team, there can be little doubt that the performance of this 'back up' role by the team is essential to ensuring the emergency response of both authorities. Accordingly, this unofficial position is to be formalised following the agreement of the RMBC Senior Emergency & Safety Management Team. Health & Safety staff have been provided with appropriate training in civil contingencies matters and other measures will be put in place to support this arrangement. Of necessity, it should be acknowledged that, in performing this role, the Health & Safety team will, occasionally, be supporting the Shared Service in meeting its responsibilities in respect of SCC. It is suggested that the benefits RMBC accrue from its relationship with SCC in the Shared Service outweigh any direct/indirect costs that may incur as a result of any support to Sheffield.

**Conclusion:**

Notwithstanding future budgetary restrictions, the Shared Service concept is still providing a good level of service to both authorities and is engaged in a number of areas to support the civil contingencies provision of both authorities.

**Recommendations:**

Members are asked to:

- (1) To note this report.