

# Briefing Paper

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

15 July 2014

Rotherham Town Hall

**Purpose of paper:** To provide Members with a general update on key issues affecting the development of the EPSS in 2014/15 and beyond

**Background information:**

See next section

**Key issues:**

- **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. Members will be aware that the Shared Service has been leading the LRF's Task & Finish Group taking forward this work. This has been a complex and difficult task with a number of stakeholders with divergent views. In addition, elements of it were exercised as part of Exercise Rutland earlier in the year. This was a 'live' multi-agency exercise involving some 200 participants based on a reservoir inundation scenario.

However, the plan is now ready for 'sign off by both Coroners for South Yorkshire. In essence, the plan has three components:

- Plan A – A temporary expansion of the capacity of the Medico Legal Centre (MLC) Public Mortuary in Sheffield to act as the primary EM site. The MLC provides an effective and VFM option to deliver an EM for a significant number of bodies and is acknowledged as both providing better facilities and being substantially less expensive than using an option based on demountable structures
- Plan B - In an incident involving 300 to 600 bodies, the National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements (NEMA) will be instigated. NEMA is a government measure to supply a large demountable

EM to cover such incidents. However, the floor plans for these structures are so large that, presently, South Yorkshire has only identified one suitable site in Doncaster

- Plan C. In the eventuality that neither the MLC nor NEMA is available a purpose built demountable site will be constructed. Two sites have been identified – one in Doncaster and one in Barnsley. It has been agreed to adopt an emergency waiver procedure for assigning a contractor to fulfil the requirement.
- **Reservoir Grant** – Members will be aware from previous reports that, under new DEFRA criteria in relation to reservoir inundation, nine reservoirs in Sheffield now have to have their own off site 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:
  - The plan is now being re-drafted as part of the lessons learnt in Exercise Rutland, as mentioned above
  - The dissemination of a comprehensive Warning & Informing strategy to inform all members of the public at potential risk from a reservoir inundation will commence in the Autumn
- **Business Continuity Management** – Resilience Management groups in both Rotherham & Sheffield have agreed deadlines for all departmental Business Continuity arrangements to be updated and migrated to BCMShared. A challenge and verification process can now commence both across departments, and with corporate functions such as ICT provision
- **Staffing matters** – Members will be aware that, as a result of recent budget decisions, coupled to the retirement of one member of staff, the Service has reduced from 1.0 FTE post to a 0.6 post. A selection process was undertaken and the post was filled for the commencement of the current financial year.
- **Training & Exercising**
  - **Exercise Cygnus** - A national flu pandemic exercise is taking place on 14/15 October and our LRF is one of eleven LRF's participating. The exercise itself will commence some six weeks into a typical pandemic wave and will, therefore, examine a multitude of associated impacts that will undoubtedly incur, including an additional number of excess deaths; multi-agency cooperation in delivering integrated health & social care and data reporting etc. Both councils will 'play' at strategic, tactical and operational levels on both days and contribute to the overall LRF involvement on a national platform. Participants are at present being identified and local planning is being worked up

with multi-agency partners to ensure the scenario is applicable and proportionate to our local community

- **Exercise Neptune** - In May, the team tested RMBC's emergency response arrangements in Riverside House, including the Emergency Operations Rooms and the Directorate Control Rooms. This was the first large scale emergency exercise since the move to Riverside House and raised a number of learning points which were collated in a report following a structured debrief. The EPSS will now ensure these learning are put into action. As a result of this exercise, a number of staff have now been allocated new roles in an emergency and a training program is being developed
- **SCC Training** - A number of PA's from SCC were trained earlier this year in Log Keeping to enable the authority to keep accurate records of key decisions made during an emergency. These officers are in addition to a list of previously trained staff in both SCC and RMBC. The team also carried out Emergency Planning training for the whole of SCC's Communications Team and have since carried out similar training for the RMBC Comms staff involved in Exercise Neptune.
- **Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Matters)**
  - The LRF has undergone a Peer Review process by Nottinghamshire's LRF against the criteria in the Act and Cabinet Office guidance. The outcome was generally favourable and the LRF's Business Management Group are progressing the areas identified as warranting further development
  - Members will be aware that the LRF underwent a change to its structure some 18 months ago. At that time, the Shared Service raises concerns over the support provided to maintain an efficient and effective structure and a paper was supplied to that effect by the Shared Service Manager. Currently, there is no progress on this issue and existing support arrangements remain in place.
  - The LRF has now addressed the Community Resilience issue at a strategic level and it has part of the Strategic Overview. A pilot project on two sites will commence in 2015 and the EPSS has bid for one of them to be in Sheffield.
  - The annual Gold Symposium for strategic and tactical 'players' was held in May and was led by the local authorities on the themes of Business Continuity, Community Resilience and Recovery & Restoration. The EPSS working with its counterparts in Barnsley and Doncaster to devise the

programme and positive feedback was subsequently received from the participants

**Conclusion:**

Notwithstanding significant budgetary reductions, 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 note this report.