Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Council Meeting

Summary Sheet

Council Report
Improving Places Select Commission – 20th September 2017

Title
Scrutiny Review: Emergency Planning

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?
No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
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Ward(s) Affected
All

Executive Summary

The scrutiny review report (attached at Appendix 1) outlines the findings from the scrutiny review into the Emergency Planning process for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. The determining factors for undertaking the review were that the existing Emergency Plan was considered to be out of date and this, coupled with high turnover of both officers and Members, warranted a review as it called into question the resilience of the existing plan.

A Task and Finish Group was established from Members of the Improving Places Select Commission to carry out the review, which was undertaken by interviewing relevant Members and officers from the Council, along with a fact finding visit to Stockton-on-Tees to learn how their Emergency Planning Service is provided.

The legal context governing the provision of the Emergency Plan is covered in the report, together with basic details covering the Joint Service Agreement which exists between Rotherham and Sheffield Councils to provide the Emergency Plan.

Running in parallel to this review was a refresh of the Emergency Plan, which has now been renamed the Major Incident Plan. The 15 recommendations resulting from

this scrutiny review are set out on pages 28 and 29 of the review report in Appendix 1. Subject to approval these will be incorporated into the Major Incident Plan.

Recommendations

1) That the Improving Lives Select Commission approve the report and the recommendations from the review.

2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission agree to forward the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for their consideration.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Scrutiny Review: Emergency Planning

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Title: Scrutiny Review: Emergency Planning

1. Recommendations

1.1 That the Improving Lives Select Commission approve the report and the recommendations from the review.

1.2 That the Improving Lives Select Commission agree to forward the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for their consideration.

2. Background

2.1 The legal framework governing the Emergency Plan is the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

2.2 A Joint Service Agreement is in place between Rotherham and Sheffield Councils to provide the Emergency Plan.

2.3 The primary factors influencing this review being undertaken were:-

- The current Emergency Plan was considered to be out of date, having been written in September 2013.
- The significant turnover of both officers and Members within the Council recently brought into question the resilience of the existing plan.

3. Key Issues

3.1 The main findings from the review are summarised below:

- How the Emergency Plan, as a controlled document, is being shared and managed.
- Lack of joint meetings between Rotherham and Sheffield under the Joint Service Agreement.
- Overall management of the Emergency Planning process due to changes in officers and Members.
- Primary operations room is not exclusively used for Emergency Planning purposes but also as a training facility.
- The secondary operations room at Clifton Park provides limited resources.
- Requirement to recruit and train more volunteers.
- Lack of a corporate exercise for the service.
- Lack of information sharing between partner organisations
- The need to provide training to Parish Councillors on the Emergency Plan.
- No dedicated 4x4 wheeled drive vehicle.
- Procurement staff have been excluded from the Emergency Planning process over time.

- When the Emergency Plan is operational, the Council effectively becomes an emergency service, a fact to be made known to the Council's suppliers of goods and services.
- A Corporate Risk Manager is employed by the Council and is available to provide a "critical friend" support to the Emergency Planning Team when rewriting the plan.
- Attention is given to improving community resilience in the time of an emergency.
- Ward Councillors need to receive training on the Emergency Plan and to understand their role in the process, along with supporting the Cabinet Member.
- The types of risk in the Borough could change – e.g. having the Advanced Manufacturing Park within its boundaries; this could be seen as a target for terrorism.
- All members of the Communications Team are proficient in dealing with all media types and have access to all documents on a shared drive.
- All the Managers in the Communications Team have received training in the Emergency Planning process.
- A member of the Communications Team is on call at all times, working closely with the Borough Emergency Co-ordinator in when the Emergency Plan is operational.
- The system currently in use in the Borough Emergency Operations Rooms (BEOR) is unsupported and further work needs to be done to establish the access codes for the system.
- Overall the IT systems relating to the Emergency Plan need to be examined and ultimately systems need to be based in the Cloud, eliminating the need for a BEOR.
- The IT systems are not part of the shared service agreement with Sheffield.

3.2 The review group formulated 15 recommendations, as set out on pages 28 and 29 of Appendix 1, covering a range of strategic and operational issues.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 Options available to the Improving Places Select Commission were:-

a) To allow the refresh of the Emergency Plan / Major Incident Plan to be undertaken by officers. Considering the Emergency Plan was last updated in September 2013 it was agreed by officers that not updating the plan could potentially provide a significant risk to life if the Emergency Plan was not fit for purpose in an emergency situation.

b) Not to undertake the scrutiny review of Emergency Planning. This was an option with the Task & Finish Group available to agree another topic from the Improving Places Select Commission work plan to scrutinise.

c) Undertake the scrutiny review alongside the updating of the Emergency Plan. This was the preferred option as it provided the additional benefit of

scrutiny making recommendations to enhance the work of the officers updating the Emergency Plan.

5. Consultation

5.1 No external consultation was required but a fact finding visit to Stockton-on -Tees took place to explore how the Emergency plan operates in the area.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 The findings and recommendations from the review have been submitted to Improving Places Select Commission for discussion and agreement.

6.2 The final report will be forwarded to the Overview and Management Board for their consideration before being submitted to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations.

7. Finance and Procurement Implications

7.1 Any financial and procurement implications will be considered by Cabinet in their response to the recommendations.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The legal framework governing the Emergency Plan is the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and any changes to the plan or emergency planning arrangements will need to comply with the legislation.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 The response to the review recommendations will explore any implications for human resources arising from the review.

10 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 Any changes to Emergency Planning arrangements following the review need to take account of the needs and requirements of all groups in the community.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 As 10.1.

12 Implications for Partner and Other Directorates

12.1 The Council works in partnership with Sheffield City Council through the joint agreement and all directorates are involved in the emergency planning arrangements.

13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The review and refresh of the Major Incident Plan and the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements will ensure future resilience and enhance readiness to deal with emergency situations.

14 Accountable Officer(s)

14.1 James McLaughlin, Democratic Services Manager

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- N/A

Director of Legal Services:- N/A

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

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