

Report to: Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14th March 2013

Lead Member: Lead Member for Public Realm

Report Author: Corporate Director for Economic & Community Ambition

Title: Proposed Regional Emergency Planning Service

1. What is the report about?

Work has been underway among the 6 North Wales Councils since 2010 to evaluate the benefits of establishing a regional Emergency Planning service. The report summarises that work and sets out the recommendations of the final business case to move to establish a Regional service.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A report with the final business case for a regional emergency planning service will be presented to Cabinet for approval on 19th March. Partnership Scrutiny is invited to consider the recommendations and make comment to assist Cabinet in its decision.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers the information provided and comments on the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet.

4 Report details

- 4.1 At its meeting on 19th March 2013, Cabinet will be asked to endorse the recommendations of a final business case on the creation of a Regional Emergency Planning service.
- 4.2 Emergency Planning is a discrete but essential service. A summary of the current arrangements is set out in Appendix 1. Given growing responsibilities over recent years the services have come under strain. Resilience and best use of resources are challenges to be met.
- 4.3 With this in mind, 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.
- 4.4 The Welsh Government – Local Government Compact has since included emergency planning as a recommended regional collaborative service.
- 4.5 The final business case (attached at Appendix 2) is based on a full analysis of the costs and benefits of establishing a Regional Service, and recommends adopting a regional service with: -

- a sub-regional structure – two hubs covering 3 Councils each
 - one hub led by a Regional Manager and the other by a Deputy
 - an Emergency Planning Officer in each local authority
 - common policies, processes and plans and shared resources in a single management structure.
- 4.6 The locally placed officer would be responsible for: -
- a) Engagement with managers, employees and elected members in their host authority
 - b) Supporting risk identification locally
 - c) Putting emergency plans into action
 - d) Developing local business continuity plans
- 4.7 The sub-regional hub officers would:-
- a) deliver plans
 - b) provide training
 - c) develop and deliver test exercises
 - d) work with the Local Resilience Forum
 - e) provide administrative and management support.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The business case identifies that the new model will bring greater resilience and improved specialisation, more consistency, better sharing of best practice, capacity and capability. It will also allow better liaison with other key responders through the Local Resilience Forum and will provide more capacity for working with service managers across each local authority to strengthen response arrangements.
- 4.10 The proposals suggest overall savings ultimately 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.
- 4.11 The proposal needs to take account of the Compact agreement to establish a local authority shared service in 2013 and consider the establishment of a joint service serving local authorities, Police, Fire and other partners by September 2015.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 Cabinet will be asked to support the recommendation to establish and join a Regional Emergency Planning service on the basis that:-
- a) the new service will be established on a cost neutral basis and will aim for annual savings of around 5% – 10% on existing costs (£35-£75,000 per annum)

- b) 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
- c) Flintshire will lead the transition to and will host the new service
- d) the cost of the new service will be recovered from the partners on the basis of population
- e) implementation will include transitional arrangements to ensure that no authority pays more than the current cost of the service
- f) the employment model will be decided as part of the transition plan
- g) 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.
- h) the Implementation Team will protect competition for the senior posts within the framework of prior consideration.
- i) each Local Authority will nominate a representative to an Implementation Team. The Implementation Team will assist in the appointment of the temporary Project Manager.

4.14 The project is working 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 during February 2013
- each Council to nominate to an Implementation Team by February 2013
- a project manager is appointed to deliver the project by end March 2013
- Regional Manager and Deputy appointed 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 confirmation of employment with the new entity made by September 2013
- new service operational from October 2013.

4.15 Cabinet will also be asked to delegate authority to approve the detailed transition arrangements to the new service and undertake all necessary tasks to establish the new service to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Lead Member.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

This proposal contributes to the overarching intention for Denbighshire County Council to be an Excellent Council, Close to the Community. The recommendations will provide a more efficient, effective and resilient Emergency Planning service.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 There may be some Human Resource impact in managing transfers. Staff currently providing Emergency Planning in Denbighshire are employed by Flintshire County Council under the current shared service arrangements.
- 6.3 It is possible that a small number of employees across the 6 Councils may opt for early retirement or redundancy on a voluntary basis as a consequence of the re-organisation of this service. Any costs will be met from future savings.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

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.

8. What consultations have been carried out?

- 8.1 The Business case was developed with the Heads of Emergency Planning Services. It has been shared with the Chief Executives of the six North Wales Local Authorities. The North Wales Police and Fire Services and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have also been consulted.
- 8.2 The Business Case has been shared with the Public Service Leadership Group which oversees the national Compact.
- 8.3 Consultations will be held with Trades Unions within each local authority as relevant as the new service model is implemented.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The proposal aims to provide a more effective and resilient Emergency Planning Service for the people of Denbighshire at no additional cost.

Modest annual savings of 5-10% have been targeted which will initially be used to meet possible set up costs relating to staff.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Section 10 of the Final Business Case includes a critical risk assessment.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Regulation 8 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) Regulations 2005

Articles 6.1, 6.3.1 and 6.3.2(a) of the Council's Constitution sets out the Committee's powers and role with respect to this area

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