

05 November 2020**Agenda Item:4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES****EMERGENCY PLANNING TEAM STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to add 2.4 FTE posts to the establishment of the emergency planning team in order to address increased routine service demand and to fulfil new burdens.

Information

2. Nottinghamshire County Council's preparedness for emergencies is facilitated by a small, well established and well regarded Emergency Planning Team. Responsibilities undertaken by the team have increased substantially over recent years, and a business case exists for an increase in the size of the team. Additional resources in this area represents an investment in the resilience of the County Council to respond well to the demands of future emergencies.
3. It is proposed to increase the emergency planning team from 1.6 to 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager posts, and from 4.0 to 6.0 FTE Emergency Planning Officer posts, bringing the total establishment to 8.0 FTE plus 0.5 FTE Group Manager position.
4. The proposals detailed in this report are separate to those brought forward by the Director of Public Health (and agreed by the Adult, Social Care and Public Health Committee) for the use of COVID-19 Test and Trace Grant. This included a temporary 12-month fixed term Emergency Planning Officer position to work in support of Public Health.

The Work of the Emergency Planning Team

5. The Emergency Planning Team aims to ensure that the County Council and Nottinghamshire communities are as resilient as possible to the impact of emergencies of all kinds. The team is also responsible for ensuring the safety of spectators and others attending sporting events.
6. The work of emergency planning team includes specific actions to:
 - Assess major risks affecting Nottinghamshire communities.
 - Develop and maintain appropriate statutory, incident-specific and generic Emergency Plans to respond effectively to any emergency.
 - Provide appropriate emergency response training courses to assist County Council staff to prepare themselves to carry out their role in an emergency.

- Prepare and deliver appropriate exercises to effectively challenge the appropriateness of plans and the preparedness of staff.
- Cooperate and share information with Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners, maintaining and developing effective liaison and facilitating the work of specialist multi-agency groups.
- Plan to warn and inform the public regarding emergencies.
- Facilitate the development of effective Business Continuity Management for the County Council and fulfil the statutory duty to promote business continuity.
- Maintain a 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year emergency response capability.
- Be the lead service for the safety of sports grounds including facilitating the work of Safety Advisory Groups in respect of Safety at Sports Grounds and Events Safety Planning.
- Provide emergency planning and business continuity support, guidance and advice to District and Borough authorities through a Service Level Agreement with each authority (including an enhanced service for Rushcliffe Borough Council).
- Support local community resilience activities.

County Council Preparedness for Major Emergencies

7. The Emergency Planning Team maintains a comprehensive suite of emergency plans for the County Council's part in the response to major incident. These fulfil the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act and other legislation.
8. Plans are currently reviewed on a four-year cycle, which is commensurate with the resources currently available of this work. However, this review period is proving to be too long to sustain when key structures and resources change at a greater pace. Similarly, in recent years it has been increasingly difficult to sustain appropriate schedules for completion of appropriate training and exercises associated with County Council and LRF emergency plans.
9. Emergency response plans for major flood emergencies have been used on a frequent basis over recent years. The outcomes from post-incident debriefing are fed into plan reviews and training events, internally with the County Council and in concert with LRF partners. This is one specific area of work that will benefit from additional emergency planning resources.

Increased Expectations and New Burdens

10. Experience gained through the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of being well prepared for business continuity and emergency response challenges. Emerging national and local work to learn lessons from the pandemic has pointed towards increasing expectations in respect of the resilience of public services. This adds to a range of pre-existing pressures on the emergency planning service, as follows:
 - The threat of terrorism is ever-present in the UK, and there is a heightened expectation by government and the public that local authorities will respond well when attacks such as the Manchester Arena bombing occur, and that they will have specific arrangements in place for occasions when the UK Threat Level increases to 'Critical'.
 - The Grenfell Tower Fire demonstrated that the local authority emergency response needs to be swift, visible and effective. This tragedy also illustrated that authorities need to be

ready and able to engage with affected communities and embrace the contributions of spontaneous volunteers and people wishing to make donations.

- Nationally, there is an expectation that local organisations will use 'Resilience Direct' to manage their response to emergencies, in collaboration with Partners. Members of the emergency planning team are conversant with this system but there is a need to build the County Council's wider capacity to take full advantage of its benefits.
 - A specific example of increased burdens on the emergency planning function is provided by the publication of revised Sports Ground Safety Authority guidance, which is the subject of a section later in this report.
11. The emergency planning team facilitates the County Council's contributions to the LRF and internally it facilitates the 'Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board' (RSEMB). Over recent years there has been an increasing frequency of RSEMB meetings. Also, an increased number of occasions when the emergency planning team has been called in to assist with service incidents and challenges that fall short of being emergencies but which benefit from the emergency planning approach to crisis management.

Changes in UK Guidance on the Safety of Sports Grounds

12. In early 2017, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) reviewed its understanding of the primary legislation that sets out how safety at sports grounds should be regulated and the remit of local authorities. The review led to a change in interpretation of the legislation and (following a public consultation) revised guidance was published in October 2017. This widened the definition of safety in relation to sports grounds, and thereby expanded the remit of the County Council as certifying authority for sports grounds in the county.
13. In previous guidance, only risks to the safety of spectators were considered, and matters relating to counter terrorism, crowd disorder and antisocial behaviour at a sports ground were not explicitly addressed as they were considered to be largely the remit of the police. The SGSA now considers that the matters which should be considered within the purview of a Safety Certificate include anything which may pose a danger of physical harm. This explicitly includes risks from terrorist activity, crowd disorder and antisocial behaviour. In addition, the SGSA considers that a Safety Certificate should now ensure that all people present at a sporting event are protected, not just spectators.
14. These changes led to a review of County Council policies, procedures and documentation relating to safety at sports grounds. This has led to an increase in the work of the emergency planning team to engage with a wider range of stakeholders, hold additional meetings, routinely scrutinise a wider range of documentation provided by sports grounds, and undertake more wide-ranging and frequent inspections.
15. In addition to the safety certification role, the emergency planning team is often called upon to provide specialist advice and assistance to sports grounds and event organisers in the county, often at short notice. Examples include the Tour of Britain cycle race, Mansfield Town Football Club hosting an U19 International match, and Nottingham Forest Football Club hosting an international rugby match. Such events benefit the economy of Nottinghamshire and rely on the ability and capacity of the emergency planning team to support their safety.

Contribution to the Work of the Local Resilience Forum

16. The County Council is a principal contributor to the routine work of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and leads on some key strands of the LRF Work Plan. The capacity of all LRF partner agencies has reduced over recent years, including that of the County Council. As a consequence, the Work Plan for the LRF has included fewer development objectives than in previous times. This is now affected by emerging lessons from the COVID-19 experience and LRF partners will all face increased resilience work.
17. The risks identified in the LRF Community Risk Register are broad and varied. Multi-agency emergency plans have been developed and have matured to respond to a variety of potential incidents. Local authorities have a range of lead roles in the response and recovery phases of a major incidents. For example, LRF plans for disruption to critical services (Gas, Electricity, Water) and to an outbreak of an exotic animal disease (e.g. Avian Flu) all identify lead roles for the County Council. This brings with it the expectations that under certain circumstances the County Council would chair and support strategic, tactical and recovery coordination structures.

Capacity for Research and Development

18. Currently, the emergency planning team has limited capacity for research and development work that would enable a more pro-active approach to service improvement. Also, the team is able to undertake a minimal amount of business continuity promotion work. There is scope for more beneficial work on this front, particularly working with care homes, care providers and schools to increase their resilience to emergencies.
19. Very large scale disasters such as the Grenfell fire require resources beyond what any single authority is capable of providing, even if well resourced. Under these circumstance, it is vital to have effective mutual aid arrangements in place with neighbours. Wide area incidents, such as those caused by severe weather, necessitate cooperation, liaison and sharing of resources beyond county borders. All these require regular planning, training and contact between neighbouring areas.

Financial Information

20. The following table compares the current resources with the proposed increase.

Current establishment	Proposed addition	Nature of the proposed change
0.5 FTE Group Manager	No change	No change.
1.6 FTE Team Managers	0.4 Team Manager	To increase the establishment so that there will then be two FTE Team Manager posts
4.0 FTE EP Officer posts	2.0 FTE Emergency Planning Officers	Each Team Manager would then line manage three emergency planning officers.

21. The proposals would add an estimated £105,000 to the annual cost of the emergency planning function (with salary, NI and pension costs included), plus ICT and other equipment costs.
22. The proposal can be fully funded for the next two years at least through the use of permanent staffing savings available elsewhere under the Group Manager together with funding provided by central government for EU Exit and Covid-19 response. The Registration Service has assessed the need for the currently vacant (Hay Band C) Registration Service Development Manager position. The service was able to return a cost-neutral position in financial year 2019

– 2020 and has therefore concluded that the post is no longer necessary. The salary costs associated with a Hay Band C post equate to £49,000 per year. Funding beyond two years will be incorporated in the work to implement lessons from the COVID-19 response.

Risks and Opportunities

23. Additional resources for the emergency planning function represents an investment in the resilience of the County Council to respond well to the demands of future emergencies. This will enhance the ability of the authority to sustain an effective response to a large scale disaster or business continuity incident. Also, the authority will be better able to undertake the work needed to fulfil new responsibilities in a timely manner.
24. Investment in additional capacity will increase the opportunity for training County Council staff for their role in Emergency Centres and at the scene of an emergency, including for example the use of Youth Centre facilities and staff in emergency accommodation plans. It will also enhance the opportunities for the professional development of members of the emergency planning team, which will enhance the capabilities of the function overall.
25. Lessons from recent UK major incidents such as the Grenfell Tower fire and terrorist attacks in Manchester and London have highlighted the need to be ready to coordinate offers of help from spontaneous volunteers and for accepting for donations from the public. The team and LRF partners are aware of the need to be prepared and plan for this as part of our overall response but current capacity has limited progress. Similarly, although a great deal has been done to support resilience initiatives in local communities, there is scope to do more of this in the future.

Other Options Considered

26. It is considered that the options of no-change or of a smaller increase in establishment of the emergency planning team will not provide the opportunity to implement lessons from recent UK emergencies. A larger increase has not been considered at this time due to uncertainty regarding future funding for local government generally.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

27. To address increased routine service demand and to fulfil new burdens.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:

- 1) Invest in an increase in the size of the Emergency Planning Team by 2.4 FTE posts.
- 2) The disestablishment of the Registration Service Development Manager post – Band C.

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Constitutional Comments (SG 24/09/2020)

28. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Communities & Place Committee to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to emergency planning has been delegated.

Financial Comments (RWK 07/10/2020)

29. The report proposes increasing the Emergency Planning team by 2.4 FTE posts at an estimated cost of £26,250 in 2020/21 and £105,000 in a full year. The additional costs in 2020/21 can be met from savings from the vacant Service Development Officer post in the Registration service. The annual saving from not filling this post is estimated at £49,000.

30. The additional costs in 2021/22 can be met from savings from this post together with additional funding provided by central government for EU Exit and Covid-19 response. In the longer term the additional costs will be met from savings from the Registration post and from other funding from within existing departmental budgets.

HR Comments (JP 30/09/2020)

31. Recruitment to the additional established posts will be in line with HR policies and procedures including the Authority's recruitment procedure.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All