



meeting	CABINET	
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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS FOR ADULT SERVICES AND HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRE PLAN

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan.

2. Information and Advice

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Following the fuel crisis and the severe flooding in the autumn and winter of 2000 the Government announced a review of emergency planning arrangements. The review concluded that existing legislation no longer provided an adequate framework for modern civil protection efforts and that new legislation was needed. This led to the **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**.

2.1.2 The Act delivers a single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Act is separated into two substantive parts: local arrangements for civil protection (Part 1) and emergency powers (Part 2).

2.1.3 The Act focuses on three types of threat:

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment
- war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to security.

2.1.4 The purpose of Part 1 of the Act is to establish a new statutory framework for civil protection at a local level and sets out clear expectations and responsibilities for responders to ensure they are fully prepared to deal effectively with the wide range of emergencies from localised incidents through to catastrophic emergencies. It divides local responders into two categories:

2.1.5 **Category 1** responders which include Local Authorities, Government agencies, Emergency Services and most NHS organisations who have duties placed upon them to:

- Assess local risks, including the development and maintenance of a Community Risk Register, and use this to inform emergency planning
- Put in place emergency plans
- Put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;

- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

2.1.6 **Category 2** organisations (utilities, transport, government, strategic health authorities) are placed under the lesser duties of co-operating with Category 1 organisations and sharing relevant information.

2.1.7 Category 1 and 2 organisations come together to form 'Local Resilience Forums' (based on police areas) which help co-ordination and co-operation between responders at the local level.

2.1.8 The **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum** is the senior management group for the co-ordination of emergency planning within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The Forum meets regularly, is led by Nottinghamshire Police, and is made up of senior managers from the principal emergency planning and response organisations, including the Service Director (Strategic Services).

2.1.9 The Forum is concerned with overall direction and policies of emergency planning and preparation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The Forum also forms the basis of the strategic multi-agency group that leads the overall response to any major emergency.

2.2 Adult Social Care and Health responsibilities

2.2.1 Adult Social Care and Health have been involved in responding to emergencies over a number of years and contribute to Nottinghamshire County Council's duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as a category 1 responder to emergencies. The Service Director (Strategic Services) is a member of the corporate Risk and Emergency Management group which ensures plans and processes are in place to fulfil the duties required of the department.

2.2.2 Over the past years there have been numerous incidents in Nottinghamshire where social care services have responded to emergencies, from the Kegworth air disaster in January 1989, the Nottinghamshire response to the Hillsborough football disaster in April 1989, extensive flooding in November 2000 and more recently in June 2007. In addition, there are numerous other smaller, but none the less significant incidents, where rest centres have been set up and business continuity issues responded to.

2.2.3 The department has clear and well tested emergency plans in place to ensure its preparedness to respond to emergencies, as well as business continuity plans with a specific plan dedicated to pandemic flu.

2.3 **Humanitarian Assistance Centres**

2.3.1 Following the London bombings in July 2005 the Secretary of State requested that each local authority put in place a Humanitarian Assistance Centre plan. A Humanitarian Assistance Centre is a focal point for information and assistance to families and friends of those missing, injured or killed and to survivors to all those directly affected by an emergency or major incident.

2.3.2 Early 2006 the Service Director (Strategic Services) in Adult Social Care and Health was asked to lead the work on the Humanitarian Assistance Centre on behalf of the County Council. A steering group was set up and the inaugural meeting took place on 7th July 2006. The multi-agency group consists of the County Council (Emergency Planners and Adults and Children's social care services); City Council (Emergency planners and Adults and Children's social care services); City Housing Department; EMAS; British Red Cross; WRVS; St. Johns Ambulance; Salvation Army; Nottinghamshire PCT; Newark and Sherwood District Council; Notts Mental Health Trust; Faith Groups; Notts Police, Health Protection Agency.

- 2.3.3 An action plan was produced and included identification of agencies to be involved and clarity on roles and responsibilities; research and lessons learnt following the London bombings and from the Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College; a series of task and finish groups; a communications and media strategy; health and safety and security arrangements; emotional and psychological support etc.
- 2.3.4 The outcome was to build an effective capability within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire for planning, establishing and managing a Humanitarian Assistance Centre in the event of a major emergency. The plan was accepted by the Local Resilience Forum in June 2007. The launch of the plan was held across the City and County (two events) and a media briefing held in October. The plan is now being tested and training against the plan is being undertaken.
- 2.3.5 It should be noted that the plan is subject to revision in light of experience, training and lessons learnt from other incidents.
- 2.3.6 During 2006 Nottinghamshire County Council were awarded Beacon Council status for its emergency planning arrangements and the work on the Humanitarian Assistance Centre contributed towards this.

3. Statutory and Policy Implications

- 3.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and users. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is however, drawn to the following:

3.1.1 Personnel Implications

The staffing of a Humanitarian Assistance Centre are outlined in this report and have to be met within existing resources. In addition to responding to such an emergency, the day to day business of statutory services such as social care has to continue which also has implications for personnel resources. The emotional and psychological impact on staff in responding to major incidents has to be addressed as part of the emergency response. Training, support and preparation for such emergencies is provided to staff.

3.1.2 Financial Implications

There is no immediate government funding for setting up and managing a Humanitarian Assistance Centre and this would have to be met from within County Council budgets.

Government funding may become available under the Bellwin Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to Local Authorities if certain circumstances are met. There is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance. Ministers are empowered to decide whether or not to activate the scheme after considering the circumstances of each individual case. Before being eligible for grant a local authority is required to have spent 0.2% of its annual budget on eligible expenditure. For Nottinghamshire County Council this threshold sum would be £1.64 million. Grant would normally be paid at a rate of 85% of eligible expenditure above this threshold.

3.1.3 Equal Opportunities Implications

The response to emergencies and the continuity of services helps to sustain a range of appropriate services to the community.

3.1.4 Implications for Service Users

The plans and processes in place help to sustain a range of service provision to meet service user needs despite major emergencies and business continuity incidents.

3.1.5 Human Rights Act Implications

The Human Rights implications have been considered. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights could be engaged in the circumstances covered by the Civil Contingencies Act. Article 8 relates to the individual's right to respect for his private and family life. This is a qualified right and interference with it by a public authority may be justified as being in accordance with law and necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, amongst other justifications. Self evidently, in the circumstances in which the Humanitarian Assistance Centre might be used there could be a need to interfere with the Article 8 rights of citizens. The Council might in such circumstances have to justify their actions in the event of claim or complaint.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) approve the Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan.

5. Legal Services' Comments (PE 01/10/07)

5.1 The proposal contained in the report is within the authority of Cabinet, not being a matter reserved to full Council. There are no other legal issues arising from the report that call for comment.

6. Strategic Director of Resources' Financial Comment (RMK 27/09/07)

6.1 The financial implications are contained in the body of the report.

7. Background Papers Available for Inspection

7.1 None.

8. Electoral Division(s) Affected

8.1 Nottinghamshire.

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