

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING NATIONAL REVIEW**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Government published a consultation paper on 1 August about a national review of emergency planning procedures. A copy of the full consultation paper is in the Members Room at the Civic Suite. Responses are requested by 31 October 2001. This item is intended to highlight key areas that could affect Rochford.

### **2 EMERGENCY PLANNING REVIEW**

- 2.1 The national review of Emergency Planning stems from the large number of events that have affected society within the past decade or so. In particular, following the fuel crisis and severe flooding in the autumn and winter of 2000, the Government announced a review of emergency planning arrangements in England and Wales.
- 2.2 The first three sections of the consultation document outline the consultation process, the terms of reference for the review and the purpose of the document. Sections 4 and 5 identify, respectively, areas where the Government is confident of the way forward and issues where proposals for the future have still to be determined. In both sections, respondents are invited to make their comments.
- 2.3 The Government has concluded that the Civil Defence Act, 1948, no longer provides an adequate framework for the delivery of emergency planning in England and Wales. In Section 4, initial proposals are outlined for introducing, when parliamentary time allows, new emergency planning legislation. The new duty would cover a range of partner organisations at the planning stage, under the community leadership of the local authority. The Section also highlights proposed changes to funding arrangements that may logically accompany new legislation.
- 2.4 The proposals give rise to a number of subsequent issues, which require further consideration. These are identified in Section 5 and include:
- Announcement of the new policy, providing an opportunity to bring to the public attention any new practices and structures arising from legislative changes.
  - Guidance and Monitoring, where it is suggested that the production of guidance and the sharing of best practice is formalised to ensure a more

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consistent approach with opportunities for agreed and clarified monitoring of performance.

- Partnership and Community Leadership, recognising the changing focus and role of local authorities under the Government's modernising agenda, the impact of recent legislation, and the potential change this may have on the delivery of emergency planning services, not just within local authorities but also partner agencies
- National and Regional Relationships, which, following recent events, may need redefining, and require further clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Devolved Administrations - there is an issue about whether the responsibility for the administration of emergency planning in Wales should be moved from the Cabinet Office to the National Assembly for Wales.
- European Derived Legislation, where some current requirements and procedures are inconsistent with other emergency planning arrangements, which may need harmonisation
- Prevention, Response and Recovery, which identifies a potential need to broaden out the remit for emergency planning to include not just planning, preparation, maintenance and response, but also prevention and recovery aspects.

### **3 KEY ISSUES**

3.1 Key issues can perhaps be summed up as follows:

- a). A Bill is likely, with greater duties and obligations in relation to emergency planning falling to second tier authorities. Community leadership forms a central plank in that. Duties will fall to partners in order to ensure consistency of response. There are implications concerning relationships with, for example, the blue light services.
- b) Central Government has yet to determine whether SSA, perhaps ringfenced, or specific grant, perhaps audited, is the funding method. Now, emergency planning is funded via a specific Home Office Grant paid to the County Council.
- c) A re-branding of Emergency Planning is likely, with a change of name. Emergency Planning was formerly dealt with by the Home Office, but is now dealt with by the Cabinet Office. This higher profile may well roll out to local government.
- d) National guidance, monitoring and Performance Indicators will appear. No further comment can be made until drafts are circulated.

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- e) Within realistic expectations, some clarity should emerge as to the roles of Central and Regional Government tasks and responsibilities. Several telling points, made during the fuel and Foot and Mouth Disease crises, appear to have been taken on board, at least by GO-EAST, such as one way communications upwards with little or no real leadership and guidance downwards.
  - f) The position of a local authority concerning prevention, response and recovery is of some concern, particularly that of prevention. This area is likely to receive considerable debate, affecting as it could, liability.

#### **4 NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Manager has attended a briefing seminar on the Consultation proposals. If available in time, information of this will be circulated to Members before, or at, the Committee meeting.
- 4.2 Further reports will be made to Members as appropriate as more details of the review emerge.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 If the District Council is to play a much greater role in Emergency Planning, then clearly this will have resource implications. This issue must be emphasised in any response to Central Government

#### **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That Members comments be invited on the National Emergency Planning Review.

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