

**REPORT TO:** Safer Policy and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> September 2012  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Policy and Resources  
**PORTFOLIO:** Community Safety  
**SUBJECT:** Risk & Emergency Planning Update  
**WARDS:** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Board of the roles and responsibilities of the Risk and Emergency Planning Team.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Board notes the report.**

## **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 The Emergency Planning Team currently consists of three staff (Principal Emergency Planning Officer (currently vacant due to a recent retirement) and two Emergency Planning Officers). The team provides services to the whole Council and is the initial contact for any Major or Serious Incident within Halton. When a call is received from Cheshire Police, the Emergency Planning Officer (EPO) on call makes an initial assessment of the situation and then contacts what is known as a First Responder if necessary. First Responders are essentially all Operational Directors (OD) and Divisional Managers (DM) from across all departments who take it in turns (on a monthly basis) to be on-call to respond to the EPO and subsequently instigate various processes to enable the Council to respond positively and quickly to the incident. During office hours this can be the most appropriate OD or DM for the incident, but outside of office hours this will be from the list of available First Responders. Strategic Directors also take it in turns to be available for calls from the EPO. In consultation with the First Responder a decision may be taken to open a Local Authority Emergency Centre (LAEC) to respond to the incident.

3.2 The Risk Management Team prepares, co-ordinates and monitors all the Risk Registers for the Council, highlighting particular risks to the Authority to ensure approach measures are implemented.

## **4.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

4.1 The Emergency Planning team prepares and implements plans as required by statutory duties. One of the main duties is in relation to the Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Regulations, which apply mainly to the chemical

industry, but also to some storage activities, explosives and nuclear sites, and other industries where threshold quantities of dangerous substances identified in the Regulations are kept or used. One of the requirements under these Regulations is the preparation of "Off Site" plans (Statutory Duty) which detail the co-ordinated response from all the Emergency Services and other Responders (e.g. Environment Agency, Statutory Undertakers, etc.) and details the arrangements for dealing with an emergency. The plans detail and cover all scenarios and ultimately protect the communities and the environment in and around Halton. The COMAH plans need to be completed for Top Tier sites, which are designated such because they hold larger quantities of dangerous substances and are therefore subject to more onerous requirements, within six months of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) issuing official notification that a site has been designated as a Top Tier site. The plans require input from several organisations, which take some time to coordinate and collate. They then need to be reviewed/updated and tested regularly and certainly within every three years maximum. If these timescales are not met then there could be a fine from the European Union (EU) for failing to meet them.

- 4.2 Currently there are five sites that are classified as Top Tier COMAH within the Borough. The former ICI sites in Runcorn are now classed by the HSE as three sites, due to them being operated by different companies (Ineos Chlor-Vinyls / Ineos Enterprises / Mexichem Fluor, all at the Runcorn Site). HSE have informed us that two current lower tier sites are to be re-classified as Top Tier, although the official notifications have not yet been received. There has been no change in operations at these sites; it is due to a re-classification by the HSE of the materials held on site.
- 4.3 The team prepares and maintains the Corporate and Directorate Business Continuity Plans for the Council. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated to take account of incidents that may have occurred since their implementation and, for example, incorporate lessons learnt from incidents such as buildings being flooded. They were used most recently to consider the potential impact of the Olympic Torch Relay when it passed through the Borough.
- 4.4 There are now two Local Authority Emergency Centres (LAEC) within the Borough (Runcorn Town Hall and the Municipal Building in Widnes) which are used to co-ordinate our response in the event of a Major/Serious Incident being declared. Each month (more frequently if possible) an EPO visits each centre to check the operation of the equipment (computers, etc.) and ensure everything is available to respond in the event of an incident.

In addition, a number of rest centres are maintained to respond in the event of an incident requiring properties to be evacuated. These centres provide shelter and, if necessary, refreshments for people who are evacuated. A reassessment of the capabilities of the rest centres has taken place due to a number of secondary schools becoming Academies. This has resulted in there now being 10 designated rest centres across the borough, which are mostly community centres; previously we had 16 rest centres. More work is

scheduled to take place with smaller establishments such as parish church halls, social clubs, etc. in an effort to support the community and enhance community cohesion.

4.5 The team produce and maintain a number of emergency response plans, which are updated annually or following a major incident (when a structured de-brief is undertaken by the emergency planning team); some of the key plans are listed below:

- Liverpool John Lennon Airport (Cross Border Plan)
- Silver Jubilee Bridge
- Infectious Diseases (Swine Flu, Avian Flu, etc.)
- Creamfields
- Severe Weather (e.g. wind, snow, etc.)
- Disruption to Fuel Supply
- Flooding of areas of the Borough
- Potential failure of Reservoirs
- Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) Plan

4.6 The team is actively involved in the work of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which is a statutory body, on behalf of the Council. The LRF is led by Cheshire Police and consists of representatives from the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance, and coastguard), local authorities (Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Halton & Warrington), government departments, statutory undertakers (gas, water and electricity companies) and the voluntary organisations (co-ordinated by Red Cross representative). The LRF co-ordinates the statutory response to incidents and plans for response to incidents. We contribute to the LRF plans, where we do not have our own and ensure our own plans dovetail with the Cheshire plans, where necessary.

4.7 The Risk Management Team prepares and maintains the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers for the Council. These registers are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that potential risks are identified and managed.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no policy, legal, resource or financial implications in noting and commenting on this report.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications for this priority.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no direct implications for this priority.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

There are no direct implications for this priority.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The work of the Risk and Emergency Planning Teams contribute to keeping Halton Safer and being prepared for any incidents that may occur.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

There are no direct implications for this priority.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The work of the Risk and Emergency Planning Teams contribute to planning for dealing with emergencies that may occur throughout the Borough and identifying potential risks.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act