



# Internal Audit

## FINAL REPORT

### EMERGENCY PLANNING 2007-08

**To:** **Michael Perry** **Assistant Chief Executive**

**For information:** Alasdair Bovaird Chief Executive  
Adrian Webb Acting Chief Finance Officer  
Jason Dear District Emergency Planning Officer

#### 1. Introduction

An audit of **Emergency Planning** has been carried out as part of the 2007-08 audit plan. Detailed tests have been carried out on the systems of control and the management of risk within this area.

#### 2. Findings and recommendations

The detailed findings and recommendations are set out in the attached appendices. A Management Action Plan is attached and we should be grateful if you would arrange for its completion and return by **22 November 2007**. A satisfaction survey has been sent to the Emergency Planning Officer.

#### 3. Conclusions

No significant problems were identified during our work. It can therefore be concluded that the systems of control are functioning satisfactorily. The risk of error or maladministration is therefore low

Sheila Bronson  
Acting Audit Manager  
25 October 2007

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### 1.1 AREAS COVERED DURING THE AUDIT

The key areas of **possible** risk identified at the planning stage of the audit were as follows:

- a) The Council's reaction to an Emergency in the District is slow or ineffective, or plans in place to react to an Emergency fail in practice;
- b) An incident affects the Council's accommodation, personnel, its infrastructure or its IT facilities;
- c) Key personnel needed in an Emergency are not identified or are not allocated specific roles and tasks, or are not available when needed, or have not been trained to carry out their roles and tasks;
- d) Insufficient people are prepared to volunteer to help in Emergencies or are able to attend necessary training;
- e) The Council fails to meet its responsibilities defined by legislation such as the Civil Contingencies Act;
- f) Suitable Emergency arrangements have not been made with Parish, Town and other Councils, or with Emergency and Voluntary Services, or the arrangements are not reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain viable;
- g) Insufficient funding is available to support effective Emergency Planning;
- h) Money spent on training, exercises or while reacting to a Civil Emergency is not recouped from Government or Essex County Council, as appropriate;
- i) Insurance provision for the loss of the Council's buildings covers rebuilding costs but not the cost of renting temporary accommodation;
- j) The Council fails to comply with new legislation;
- k) External agencies withdraw anticipated resources such as Rest Centres;
- l) Changes to Emergency plans are not communicated effectively to stakeholders;
- m) Information and documentation is not kept up to date and distributed to external agencies and services;
- n) The public is not given accurate information about the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements, or is not informed about its arrangements for providing key services if an incident affects the Council itself.

The methodology stated in the Terms of Reference document was used to establish and test the controls that management have in place for mitigating or reducing the above risks to an acceptable level.

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### 1.2 OVERALL AUDIT OPINION

**Subject to the matters raised below it was confirmed that effective controls are in place to support the administration of Emergency Planning. We are therefore pleased to report that the likelihood of significant error or maladministration is low.**

### 1.3 PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The last audit of Emergency Planning was carried out in July 2004. The audit report made 12 recommendations, one of which was rejected by the then Executive Manager and one a repeat of a recommendation made in the 2002-03 audit report.

Progress towards implementing the 11 accepted recommendations was reviewed during this audit. It is pleasing to report that all but two have been fully implemented, and the remaining two partially implemented. The rejected recommendation (that *“the Press & Communication Officer should be included in the relevant response teams”*) has actually been implemented.

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#### 1.4 LIAISON WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Exercises to test emergency plans and real emergencies present a learning opportunity, provided that records are kept and key learning points identified. Audit fieldwork established that the Emergency Planning team maintains such records and that the records are of high quality. However, discussions with the District Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) regarding the Council’s Business Continuity arrangements led to a suspicion that he might not be kept fully informed about plans to enhance IT backup and recovery procedures. IT is vital to the provision of all services provided by the Council and we regard it as essential for the DEPO to be kept informed. Other services may also be changing their plans and it is important that DEPO is kept informed of these too. **We therefore recommend that** suitable contacts within key services, especially the ICT department, are identified and that regular meetings are held between those officers and DEPO to ensure that the latter is kept fully informed of developments and can include them in the corporate Business Continuity plan.

#### 1.5 BUSINESS CONTINUITY / DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS

In the event a major incident affects the Council itself, essential or key services naturally have to be given priority. Emergency Planning department has prepared a corporate Business Continuity plan. An effective plan requires a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) to be undertaken, so that informed decisions can be made as to the relative priorities of services and the other facilities and services that they need to be able to function. Attempts by DEPO to organise a BIA were interrupted by recent restructuring of the organisation and the exercise is now some 2 years overdue. In the absence of a BIA the efficacy of the Business Continuity Plan is questionable. The risk to the Council is that essential services might not be sustainable if a major incident were to occur. **We therefore recommend that** the DEPOs efforts be recognised and supported, and that senior management takes steps to ensure that a BIA is carried out as a matter of urgency.

#### 1.6 VOLUNTEER STAFF

In the event of an emergency occurring in the District it is possible that the Council is required to provide temporary accommodation and suitably trained staff able to assist

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people affected by the emergency. Plans are in place to activate Rest Centres which include lists of volunteers drawn from the Council's staff. Because emergencies frequently occur outside working hours there is a risk that not all volunteers can be contacted and to counter this it is advisable to engage as many as possible. We understand that because of pressure of work and other demands on their time Council staff are less willing to volunteer. A recommendation by DEPO that some form of financial reward be offered was rejected because of cost. We consider that the risk of insufficient volunteers being available in an emergency remains significant. **We therefore recommend that** Heads of Division are asked to encourage their staff to volunteer and to facilitate their attendance at training sessions organised by DEPO.

As part of this audit's fieldwork we reviewed the Rest Centre manual and spoke with representative volunteers. We established that some of the potential Rest Centres in the District are in remote locations and that some volunteers are unfamiliar with the locations. Activation of a Rest Centre could be delayed by volunteers either having to ask Emergency Planning staff for directions, or being delayed in reaching a Centre. To reduce this risk **we recommend that** a map should be prepared for each Rest Centre and copies given to volunteers.

### **1.7 NETWORKING and LEGISLATIVE CHANGES**

It became apparent from discussions with Emergency Planning staff and from Internet searches that Emergency Planners benefit from networking with colleagues, which also ensures that details of changes to relevant legislation can be disseminated quickly. One way to facilitate this is for officers to belong to a professional body. We established that there is an Emergency Planning Society but that the DEPO is not a member. A review of the Society's website established that it offers members a forum to exchange and disseminate details of best practice, training opportunities, newsletters, etc., and that membership need cost not more than £85:00 per annum. When we mentioned this to DEPO we were impressed by his instantly referring the matter to the Assistant Chief Executive. **We recommend that** the DEPO joins the Society.

### **1.8 PARISH and TOWN COUNCILS**

Audit fieldwork established that the Council's web-pages provide advisory information for Parish and Town Councils, together with a template to help the Councils prepare their own Emergency Plans. It was disappointing to learn that less than 50% of Parish and Town Councils have provided the Emergency Planning department with copies of their plans. It is unclear whether this is because plans have not been prepared or an oversight in providing them. Emergency Planning staff told us that they welcome such plans because the smaller Councils are much more familiar with local conditions and available resources. Information such as local medical practitioners, potential additional rest-centres, rendezvous points, and farmers with cross-country vehicles and equipment which could be vital in an emergency can all reduce reaction times by the Emergency Services. We acknowledge the Emergency Planning team's initiative in involving Parish and Town Councils, **and recommend that** they press all Councils to prepare and submit their plans

We consider that would benefit the Emergency Planning team if exercises were designed to 'test' the Parish and Town Councils' emergency plans. With over 60 such Councils in the District it is unreasonable to suggest that an exercise be designed for each Council, but one could be designed for 'clusters' of adjacent Councils. If a representative of a Council which has so far failed to produce a plan were to find them self in a group where the majority have such plans it might encourage them to produce their own. **We therefore recommend that** the Emergency Planning team considers such a programme of exercises.

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### 1.9 GOVERNMENTAL and AUDIT COMMISSION EXPECTATIONS

The Civil Contingencies Act defines requirements on Level 1 responders such as District Councils. The Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat disseminates information to Councils by means of letters. One such letter indicates that the Audit Commission will assess Councils' compliance with the Act during the CPA process, as part of the 'Safer and Stronger Communities' initiative. Searching the Audit Commission's website located a self-assessment tool for help Councils prepare for such a review. We drew this to the Emergency Planning team's attention and it is pleasing to report that the officers indicated that they would download the tool and use it to assess this Council's compliance with the Act.

The Audit Commission's 'Key lines of enquiry for use of resources **2007** assessments' includes a new level 2 requirement that "*The council has a business continuity plan in place which is reviewed on a regular basis*". Apart from our concerns expressed in paragraph 1.5 above, the Council's Business Continuity Plan is too recently published to have been through the review process. The Commission's Key lines of enquiry for use of resources **2008** assessments' extends this to "*The council has a business continuity plan in place which is reviewed **and tested** on a regular basis*". To attain level 4 it is necessary that "*The council obtains assurance on a risk basis of the viability of its significant contractors' / partners business continuity plans*". **We recommend that** the Council's plan is reviewed and tested at least annually, in the same way as other emergency-related plans. In anticipation of meeting the Audit Commissions 2008 level 4 requirement, as well as ensuring continuing supply of goods and services, **we further recommend** that the Emergency Planning department advises Heads of Division to require suppliers, contractors and partner organisations to provide assurances regarding their business continuity plans.

### 1.10 BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS

During this review we considered whether adequate funding was available to pay for training and exercises. Although there are budget headings for such items as salaries, meetings and travel expenses it was difficult to identify specific provision for training. Discussions with DEPO led us to conclude that he has not received any training in the operation of a budget or in recording expenditure against the budget. We consider it would be of benefit to DEPO if such training was provided, **and therefore recommend that** arrangements be made with Financial Services to provide suitable training to DEPO

### 1.11 EMERGENCY PLANS

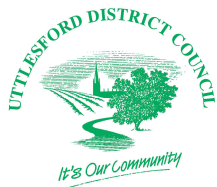
There is little value in having emergency plans if they are not communicated to staff, or if the plans are not reviewed periodically to ensure that they are up-to-date. It was pleasing, therefore, to establish that there is an Emergency Planning and Civil Protection page in the Intranet, and that it contains links to the various emergency plans. Reviewing hard copies of the plans maintained by DEPO identified examples of excellent practice, such as version control with clear evidence of revisions being made, indications as to what the document does and does not address, and evidence of the EP team's willingness and ability to learn. Having said that, we feel that a set of already high quality plans could be improved still further. **We therefore recommend that:** -

- a) The periodic review of emergency plans should include checks that identified people remain in the Council's employ, and to ensure that departmental names reflect the current organisational structure;
- b) There should be a consistent approach to the provision of private addresses and telephone numbers: as a minimum there should be a prominent warning that such details are confidential and are not to be divulged to unauthorised third parties ;

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- c) Where contact names of people in external organisations are provided, a periodic review should be made to check that the details remain current.

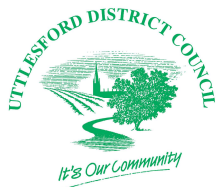
Jonathan C. Smith,  
Internal Auditor  
September 2007



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### MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Audit	<b>EMERGENCY PLANNING 2007-08</b>					
Report Paragraph	Recommendation	Significance * Low ** Med *** High	Agreed / Not agreed	Officer Responsible	Officer Comments	Implementation date
1.4	Suitable contacts should be identified in key services, especially in ICT department, to act as liaison contacts, and that regular meetings are held between those officers and the Emergency Planning Officer to ensure that the latter is kept fully informed of developments so as to ensure that they are reflected in the corporate Business Continuity plan.	***	Yes	Jason Dear		July 2008
1.5	A Business Impact Analysis should be carried out as a matter of urgency so that the Business Continuity Plan can reflect priorities and dependencies.	***	Yes	Jason Dear / HoDs		November 2008
1.6	(a) Heads of Division should be asked to encourage their staff to volunteer and facilitate their attendance at training sessions organised by DEPO.  (b) A map should be prepared for each Rest Centre to show its location and copies should be given to Volunteers.	**  ***	Yes  Yes	Jason Dear  Jason Dear		April 2008  January 2008
1.7	The Emergency Planning Officer should be encouraged to join the Emergency Planning Society.	*	Yes	Jason Dear		November 2007



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### MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Report Paragraph	Recommendation	Significance * Low ** Med *** High	Agreed / Not agreed	Officer Responsible	Officer Comments	Implementation date
1.8	(a) Parish and Town Councils should be encouraged to prepare their own Emergency Plans, and to submit copies to this Council's emergency planning team;	**	Yes	Jason Dear	This will be limited to writing to all parish clerks advising them of the advantages of planning and presentations at parish liaison meetings	March 2008
1.8	(b) Exercises should be arranged with groups of adjacent Parish and Town Councils to test their Emergency Plans.	**	No		Insufficient resources available for this exercise	
1.9	(a) This Council's Business Continuity plan should be reviewed and tested at least annually, in the same way as other emergency-related plans.	***	Yes	Jason Dear		November 2008
1.9	(b) The Emergency Planning Officer should advise Heads of Division to require suppliers, contractors and partner organisations to provide assurances regarding their own business continuity plans.	***	Yes	Jason Dear		April 2008
1.10	The Emergency Planning Officer should be trained in the operation of a budget and in recording expenditure against the budget.	***	Yes	Jason Dear/Andrea Oram		March 2008





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### MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Report Paragraph	Recommendation	Significance * Low ** Med *** High	Agreed / Not agreed	Officer Responsible	Officer Comments	Implementation date
<b>1.11</b>	(a) The periodic reviews of Emergency Plans should include checks that identified people remain in the Council's employ, and to ensure that departmental names reflect the current organisational structure;	**	Yes	Jason Dear		November 2008 (ongoing)
	(b) There should be a prominent warning that names, titles, addresses and telephone numbers of Council and external staff are confidential and are not to be divulged to unauthorised third parties;	**	Yes	Jason Dear		December 2008 (ongoing work)
	(c) Where contact names of people in external organisations are provided, a periodic review should be made to check that the details remain current.	**	Yes	Jason Dear		November 2008

Agreed \_\_\_\_\_ M.J.Perry \_\_\_\_\_ (Head of Division) Date \_\_\_\_\_ 20/11/07 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Assistant Chief Executive)