

Proposal to Develop a New Local Government Resilience Resourcing Model

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

The aim of this paper is to seek agreement from elected members to endorse a new local government resourcing model for the civil contingencies function. The paper aims to provide background to the development of the local government civil contingencies function, detail the changing environment of multi-agency arrangements and outlines the subsequent need for a new local government resourcing model for this function. This new resourcing model will ensure that the multi-agency planning and response arrangements allow Northern Ireland and our communities to remain a safe and secure place to live and work, by effectively identifying and managing the risk of emergencies, and maintaining multi-agency capabilities to respond to and recover from emergencies.

The paper recommends the actions that require agreement for the implementation of the proposed local government resourcing model. These include the agreement of a single employing authority and the need for the development of a service level agreement between this council and the other 10 councils.

2.0 SETTING A CONTEXT

2.1 Background

In 2007, the four legacy Environmental Health Groups employed Emergency Planning Co-ordinators to resource this requirement. Belfast City Council employed this resource since 2004. The background to the legislative requirement placed on councils and the multi-agency arrangements that have developed in Northern Ireland since this time is included in the attached Addendum.

3.0 DEVELOPMENTS POST THE REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Impact of Review of Public Administration

In light of local government reform in April 2015, SOLACE appointed the Business Consultancy Service of the Department of Finance and Personnel to undertake an independent review of the local government civil contingencies arrangements in Northern Ireland. The terms of reference of this review was to clarify local government's role in relation to civil contingencies at an individual council, sub-regional and regional level and to identify a suitable framework for delivery of the emergency planning function by councils. The recommendations from this report aimed to provide direction for local government to ensure fit for purpose, collaborative multi-agency working arrangements could be implemented for the good of the people and communities of Northern Ireland. All councils endorsed the recommendations emanating from this review.

To ensure the recommendations were actioned, a business case was submitted to DFC seeking funding from 2016-2021. This would allow a continued support to district councils in their delivery of robust civil contingencies arrangements with multi-agency partners on a sub-regional and regional basis. This business case was successful and funding drawn down in April 2017 for £680,000. This funding has been approved, in principle to 2021.

3.2 Strengthening of Multi Agency Arrangements

In August 2017, a Regional Officer was appointed to co-ordinate and oversee the delivery of local government's civil contingencies work programme following the priorities set by SOLACE. The remit of the officer is also to ensure that appropriate cross council emergency planning arrangements and protocols are in place to enable local government to respond together in a coordinated and effective manner to manage the consequences of a major emergency affecting more than one council area.

In 2016, PSNI advised that the model of five Emergency Preparedness Group areas (EPGs) did not fit well with how PSNI co-ordinate their response. A disconnect existed between the planning areas and the police area co-ordination tiers and consequently the PSNI response model. Furthermore, there was significant resource required to support the five EPGs with some duplication of effort, therefore the reduction in the number of EPG would allow for greater efficiency. In consultation with all relevant stakeholders, it was agreed to reduce to three co-ordinating areas. This structure is illustrated in Annex 1.

One of the first priorities for the Regional Officer was to ensure a seamless transition to this new model, which came into effect in January 2018. The new EPG structures are jointly chaired by the PSNI and local government, with representation from all the emergency services, health sector, Department for Infrastructure, NI Water, NI Housing Executive, Met Office, Utilities, Voluntary sector and other relevant organisations essential to ensure an integrated approach to emergency planning, e.g. airports, ports.

4.0 WAY FORWARD

4.1 The need for a new Local Government Resourcing model

The introduction of this multi-agency EPG model requires a new local government resourcing model to provide adequate programme management of these new areas and sufficient resources to enable an effective response to emergencies. The desired outcomes of this new model are to:

- Provide confidence and assurance for CEOs that multi-agency plans are in place which complement arrangements existing within councils;
- Include sufficient resilience to provide adequate cover, particularly during response to emergencies;
- Embed adequate governance arrangements to ensure consistency and performance management across all EPG areas;
- Align as best as possible with other organisations planning and response structures to allow for effective planning and response.

To enable these outcomes to be achieved, it is recommended that any proposed model be based on a regional service hosted by a single council, where all officers would be employed through and DFC funding drawn down. This would prevent the current duplication of financial and HR resources across the five legacy employer councils and enhance accountability and governance arrangements. This concept

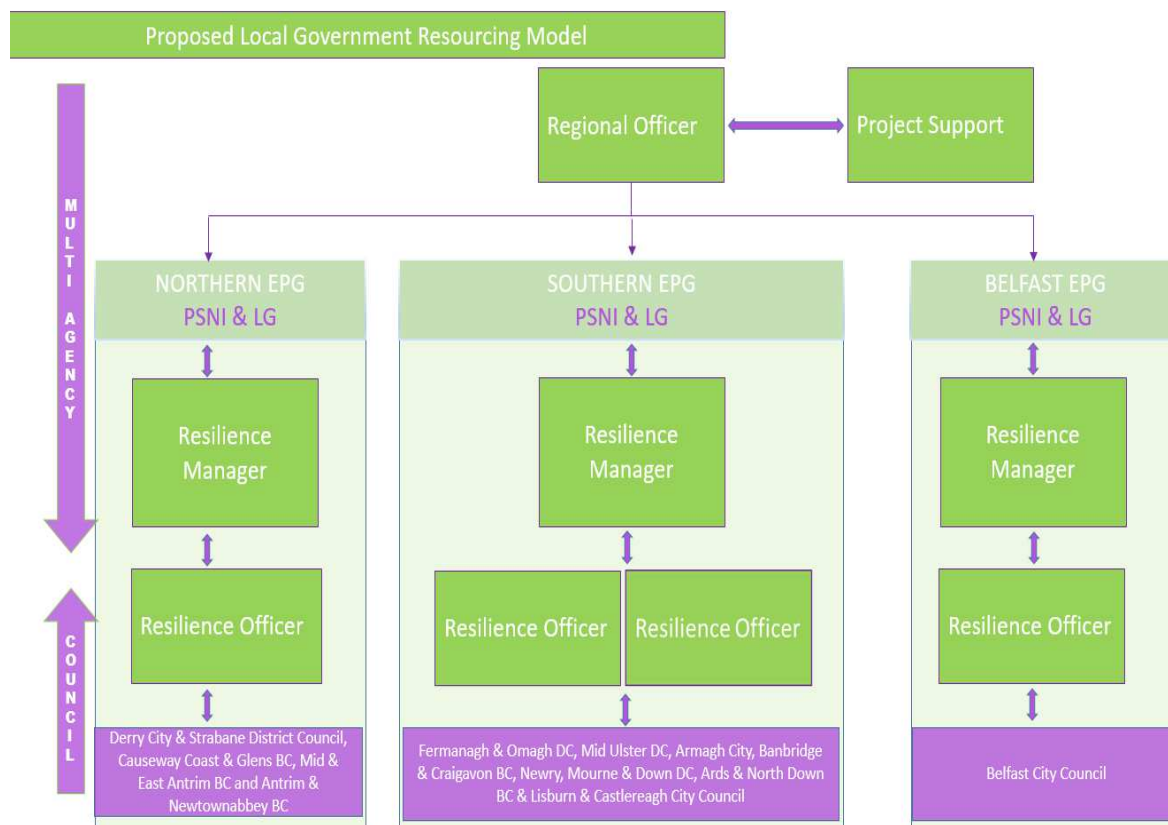
has been successfully employed for other shared service functions, e.g. Animal Welfare and potentially the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) function.

4.2 Proposed Local Government Resourcing Model

A new function name has been proposed to both help rebrand this area of work whilst also making the distinction from a “blue light” response. The title; Local Government Resilience is proposed. This terminology is both outcome and citizen focussed.

Consultation with the councils and other key partners has been undertaken in tandem with a risk to resource assessment. This considered the risk categories as detailed within the 2013 NI Risk Assessment and cross-referenced these with the geography and demography of the new EPG areas. The model outlined in Diagram 1 details the optimum resourcing model. To summarise, this model establishes a regional team, employed through a single council and reporting to the Regional Officer, whilst working across the three EPG areas. The Regional Officer will report to a relevant Director within the employer council and an executive steering group consisting of CEOs from the three EPG areas and the SOLACE lead for this function. Each EPG will have a Resilience Manager, who will be responsible for the programme management of the EPG and co-ordinate planning, response and recovery activities across this area. A Resilience Officer who will be responsible for taking forward specific work streams, including training, exercising and task and finish functions will support them. Each EPG will require one Resilience Officer, with the Southern EPG requiring an additional officer, as evidenced by the risk to resource assessment.

Diagram 1



4.3 Proposed Way Forward

These changes are essential to develop a new approach to resilience, which will enable the delivery of local government's role in sub-regional and regional multi-agency civil contingencies arrangements. SOLACE continue to work with DFC to ensure a sustained funding stream for this function continues which will allow for the restructuring to the proposed model. This new model will enable councils to work with the support of central government and others in a co-ordinated and joined up way for the good of the people and communities of Northern Ireland.

To implement these changes, the following actions will be required:

- All councils to have a shared understanding and vision of the outcome of implementing this model.
- Agreement by all councils to work to the new resourcing model, which will include one council becoming the employing authority.
- There are complex staffing arrangements associated with the legacy structures and there will be a cost to councils to implement this new model.
- A Service Level Agreement will be required between the employing authority and the other 10 councils.

Annex 1: Multi-Agency Emergency Preparedness Groups Areas from January 2018

Police Areas

Northern Emergency Preparedness Group

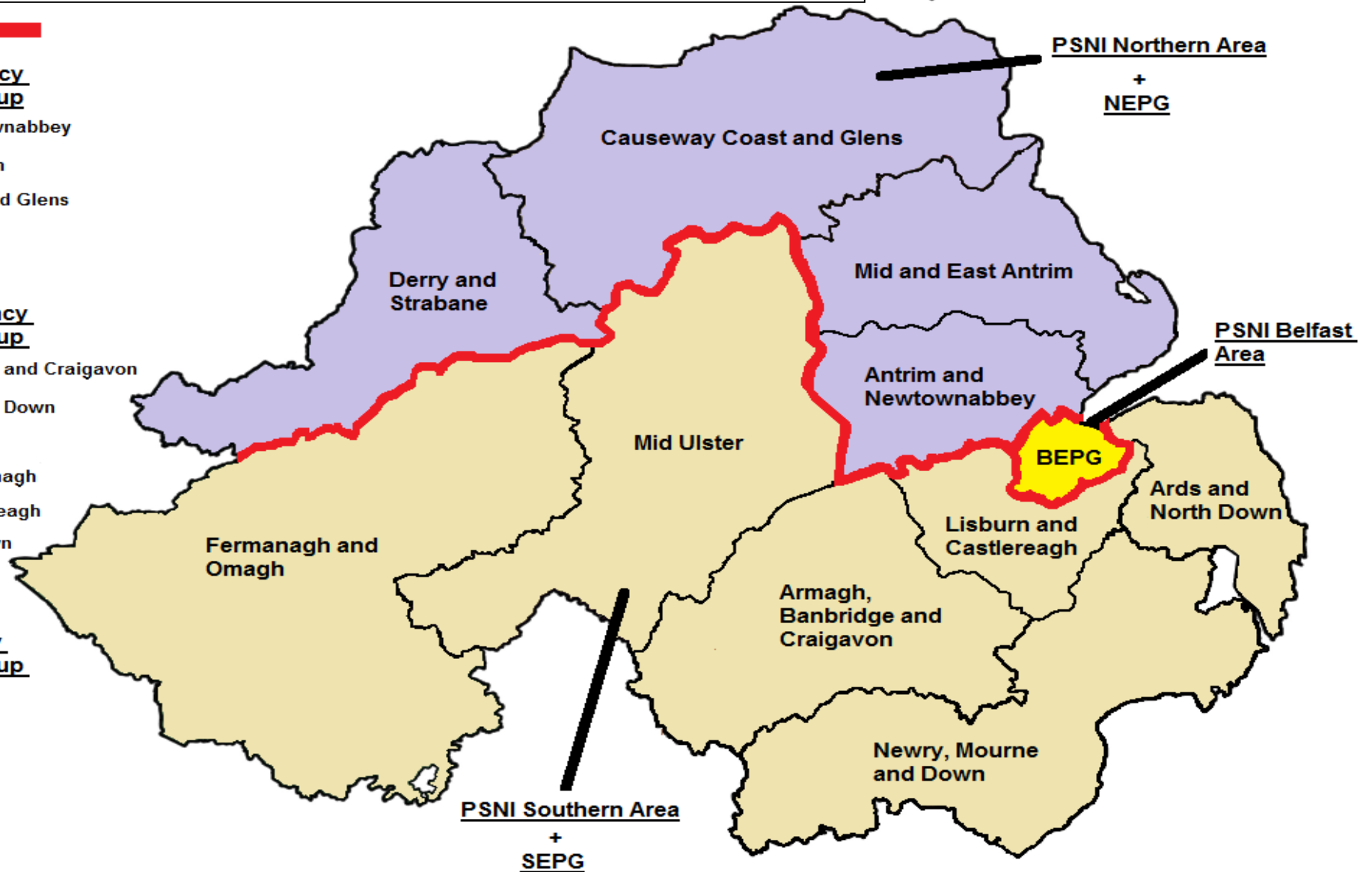
- Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Mid and East Antrim
- Causeway Coast and Glens
- Derry and Strabane

Southern Emergency Preparedness Group

- Armaqh, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Newry, Mourne and Down
- Mid Ulster
- Fermanagh and Omagh
- Lisburn and Castlereagh
- Ards and North Down

Belfast Emergency Preparedness Group

- Belfast



Addendum: Background Information

The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework 2005 (refreshed 2011) sought to ensure that a similar level of protection was provided to the public in Northern Ireland as exists under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) in Great Britain. This Act introduced a statutory framework identifying the duties of public service organisations in relation to civil emergencies. For a range of practical and constitutional reasons, Part 1 of the Act did not extend to organisations delivering transferred functions in Northern Ireland. The responsibilities under Part 1 are currently only applicable to the Police Service of Northern Ireland and HM Coastguard as Category 1 responders and to telecommunications providers as Category 2 responders. Part 2 of the Act in relation to the use of emergency powers applies across the United Kingdom.

The NI Civil Contingencies Framework introduced a framework for all other NI public service organisations to fulfil their civil contingencies responsibilities. The aim of the Framework is to ensure that the public in Northern Ireland receive a level of protection and emergency response that is consistent with their counterparts in the rest of the UK. As the Framework provided guidance, rather than legal duties it was adopted to varying degrees across the public sector organisations and the resources and time allocated to this work varied across organisations and geographically within Northern Ireland.

Local Government has contributed to emergency preparation, response and recovery in Northern Ireland for many years. This contribution was previously undertaken on a voluntary basis with no legal power or organised structure for delivery.

Article 29 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 provided local authorities with discretionary powers to engage in emergency planning and allowed them to assist other organisations in leading local recovery. Following the issuing of the Civil Contingencies Framework, DoE issued Departmental Guidance to district councils in Relation to Emergencies (LG 07/06). This provided councils with a policy and legislative framework in which to undertake emergency planning, set out their powers in relation to emergencies and identified Chief Executives as responsible for advising their councils on the development and adequacy of their council's emergency planning and recovery arrangements. It also confers discretionary powers on district councils to make arrangements for reducing, controlling and mitigating the effects of any emergency, which may occur, and to prepare plans in co-operation with other organisations.

In 2007, the four legacy Environmental Health Groups employed Emergency Planning Co-ordinators to resource this requirement. Belfast City Council employed this resource prior to this date.

Since 2007, the Local Government Division of the DoE (now the Department for Communities, DFC) contributed to the funding of this work by providing an annual grant for cross-council and individual council preparations. Prior to 2015, this

funding was 50% match funded by local government and managed by the legacy Environmental Health Groups and Belfast City Council.

Since this time, there has been an increasing number of emergencies, which required multi-agency input in response and recovery, and the lessons learned from these needed to be incorporated into subsequent planning arrangements. These have ranged from extreme cold, ice and snow in December 2010, followed by a thaw resulting in loss of water supplies to widespread flooding events in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016 and most recently the flooding to large areas of the North West in August 2017. In 2014, coastal flooding threatened thousands of homes, businesses and infrastructure around the NI coastline and led to significant damage in Eastern and Southern areas. In addition to the above severe weather events, there has been various accidents involving multiple casualties on buses and other vehicles, an airplane crash and fires on two ships in Belfast Harbour, a collision between two ships entering Belfast in 2012 and fire in large industrial sites. All of these emergencies required a multi-agency response as it is widely acknowledged that no individual agency can respond to emergencies alone and that planning and responding together is critical.

Due to the increase in frequency of such emergencies and the clear need for co-ordination of such situations, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to enhance civil contingencies arrangements at a sub-regional and regional level in 2014. To enable this, District Councils were requested to enhance their involvement in civil contingencies and there was agreement in principal that additional funding would be provided to enable councils to support the administrative function of the new multi-agency Emergency Preparedness Group (EPG) structure. A business plan submitted in 2016 to DFC sought full funding for the implementation of this function. £680,000 per annum has been approved until 2021.

This structure aimed to ensure an appropriate level of preparedness was developed on a multi-agency basis to enable an effective response to emergencies, which have a significant impact on the local community. At this stage, there were five EPG areas, as illustrated below. Governance arrangements were embedded into this structure, with the strategic tier, the Civil Contingencies Group, NI (CCG, NI) chaired by the Head of the Civil Service.

Numerous reviews and debrief reports have identified the need for Civil Contingencies legislation for Northern Ireland and the scoping of this legislation is currently a work stream of the Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG(NI)) alongside a task to identify and formalise the civil contingencies role of District Councils.

Emergency Preparedness Group Areas 2014-2017

