

## **CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE ON SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESILIENCE**

### **DEVELOPING THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN CO-ORDINATING NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper analyses the implications of the lessons identified from recent emergencies for the Scottish Government's role in co-ordinating national emergency responses. The Cabinet Sub-Committee is invited to:

- ♦ Agree that plans should be developed for enhancing the SGoRR response function in collaboration with key stakeholders.

#### **Timing**

2. For discussion at the Cabinet Sub-Committee meeting on 14 April.

#### **Factual Information and Analysis**

3. The requirement for SGoRR to be activated has increased over the last 3 years, e.g. the fuel shortages in 2008, the flu pandemic activity during 2009-10, and an increasing number of weather related incidents.

4. The parallel papers on lessons identified from the response to the pandemic (*Paper CSC-SGoR(10)10*) and severe weather (*Paper CSC-SGoR(10)09*) have shown that, while in many respects the arrangements worked well, there is recognition in all quarters that the procedures for collecting information in an emergency, analysing it and acting on it need to be streamlined. Stakeholders generally acknowledge that the Government has a key role to play but do not feel that the SGoRR machinery as currently constituted is entirely fit for purpose. Many of these latest lessons have also been identified previously following exercises, incidents or reviews.

5. Scottish Ministers have been seeking a more explicit and overt leadership role in wide area emergencies which are beyond the remit and capacity of any single local responder or group of responders but not sufficiently serious to trigger (reserved) Emergency Powers. Their views were summarised at the Cabinet Sub-Committee on 21 January 2009 (*CSC-SGoR (09)1<sup>st</sup> Conclusions*), when it was noted in discussion:

"During a national emergency in Scotland it would be the Scottish Ministers who would be perceived as accountable for Scotland's response. Accordingly, there was a strong argument for more political authority and formality to come from the Scottish Government. In order to provide such authority there was a

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need for the Scottish Government's role to be properly acknowledged and given a higher priority".

6. Audit Scotland in its 2009 report on civil contingencies planning in Scotland flagged up inadequate arrangements for co-ordinating mutual aid, particularly among local authorities, as a major area for development.

7. At the last routine Cabinet Sub-Committee meeting on 11 March 2010 (*CSC-SGoR(10)18<sup>th</sup> Conclusions*), it was agreed in principle that a consultation paper should be drafted for publication in autumn 2010 to enable a debate on possible options for change to the civil contingencies planning and response framework in Scotland.

### **Towards an Enhanced National Decision Making Function**

8. The concept of SGoRR goes beyond the room itself and the individuals staffing it. It encompasses all Scottish Government Directorates and performs its role through a number of integrated groups. The role can be summarised as providing strategic direction in an emergency, coordinating activity, and ensuring the effective collation and dissemination of information to those who need it. The role, as set out in the Scottish Government's Civil Contingencies framework, *Preparing Scotland*, is more fully described at **Annex A**. **Annex B** describes the steps we have taken in recent years to enhance SGORR and the outstanding issues that need to be addressed.

9. Scottish Resilience will begin a significant review of SGoRR's capacity and its capability to support enhanced national decision making in the light of the lessons identified. This will examine options for improvements in accommodation, IT, training and staffing.

10. We believe that the lessons identified from pandemic flu and the severe weather now also give the Government an opportunity to develop SGORR as a national emergency information analysis and decision making hub – very much in line with the shared services agenda and the national performance framework. We plan to begin discussions with COSLA, ACPOS and Chief Fire Officers' Association (Scotland) about the option of at least co-locating mutual aid co-ordination centres for police, fire and local authorities with SGORR. This would not only enable organisations to share resources, but should enable a more streamlined approach to the collection and analysis of information, give greater clarity to the Strategic Co-ordinating Groups and the organisations that make them up about who will do what in an emergency, and enable speedier, joined-up decision-making about issues such as national mutual aid (building on the recent Scottish salt cell experience), public communication and engagement with the UK Government.

11. We will also look at how national crisis centres operate in other small countries and seek to build international good practice into new arrangements.

12. Subject to initial discussions with stakeholders we propose to develop the concept of a national decision-making hub for inclusion in the civil contingencies consultation paper in the autumn.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

13. The Cabinet Sub-Committee is invited to:

- ◆ Agree that plans should be developed for enhancing the SGoRR response function in collaboration with key stakeholders.

**Scottish Resilience  
April 2010**

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NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**PREPARING SCOTLAND: DEFINITION OF SGORR'S ROLE**

- ◆ Provide strategic direction for Scotland in response to an emergency;
- ◆ Coordinate and support the activity of Scottish Government Directorates;
- ◆ Collate and maintain a strategic picture of the emergency response with a particular focus on consequence management and recovery issues;
- ◆ Brief Ministers;
- ◆ Identify if it is appropriate for a particular Scottish Government Directorate to lead in a relevant area of response;
- ◆ Ensure effective communication between local, Scottish and UK levels, including the co-ordination of reports on the response and recovery effort;
- ◆ Mobilise Scottish assets and release them to support response and recovery efforts as appropriate;
- ◆ Determine public information strategy and co-ordinate public advice in consultation with SCGs and other key stakeholders;
- ◆ Advise on the relative priority to be attached to multi site or multiple incidents and the allocation of scarce Scottish resources;
- ◆ Co-ordinate and disseminate information for the public and the media at a national level;
- ◆ Raise at UK level any issues that cannot be resolved in Scotland;
- ◆ Ensure that UK strategies and input to response and recovery are co-ordinated with the Scottish and local efforts.

## DEVELOPING THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN CO-ORDINATING NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### SGoRR Development Project & Outstanding Constraints

A SGoRR Development project began in early 2009 with the aim to implement lessons learned from previous crises, in particular the fuel disputes of 2007 which were the first sustained tests of the then Civil Contingencies Unit emergency response systems and procedures. Its objective is to deliver enhanced operational, technical and staffing arrangements in order to provide a high quality, robust and consistent service to Ministers and to internal and external stakeholders for the duration of any reasonable foreseeable unplanned event. It aims to optimise the current business model for SGoRR. The key elements needed to enable this are set out below. Excellent progress has been made on this project and this assisted in the effective response to various incidents over the last year. The project was expected to be delivered at end March 2010.

- ◆ **SGoRR Operational Guidance** - Developing operational protocols and guidance for the core SGoRR process;
- ◆ **Technical Support and Development** - Securing enhanced technical (IT) support for SGoRR including development of systems solutions where appropriate e.g. to support better information management and collaboration across SG;
- ◆ **SGoRR Staffing** – Developing and implementing improved recruitment, retention, training and deployment arrangements to maintain a fit for purpose pool of trained staff available for deployment to SGoRR in sufficient numbers.

The delivery of these aims is supported by a set of clear outputs:

- ◆ Operational protocols and desk instructions for each of the SGoRR functions and cells;
- ◆ Enhanced IT support for SGoRR including securing best practicable during and out of hours IT support and contact arrangements, and developing systems solutions to meet SGoRR information management needs;
- ◆ An Emergency Support Team (EST) of 100 officers (volunteers from across the Scottish Government), with a commitment to participating in SGoRR training events and activations including design and delivery of an agreement for the release and activation of EST members for both training events and for activation during and outside of business hours, the design and delivery of a robust recruitment and appointment process and design and delivery of a fit for purpose ongoing training package.

### Outstanding Issues

However, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in order to enable SGoRR to function even more effectively, as follows:

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- ◆ **Staffing.** The SGoRR development programme has delivered a pool of 100 volunteer officers. There is a more fundamental question of whether a more ambitious and operational SGoRR can be effectively staffed by an army of willing, but non-professional and part-time, volunteers;
- ◆ **Scottish Government Business Areas.** There can be a tendency for Directorates to expect SGoRR to take over the emergency aspects of their policy areas. This can lead to confusion in the early days of an emergency. Preparation and response should be undertaken as an extension of normal day to day activities perhaps moving physically to SGoRR as part of the response.
- ◆ **IT.** This is continually developing. Steps have been taken to have good IT resources within SGoRR and this is shown in excellent but basic VC and TC facilities and the development of SharePoint rather than Outlook. Despite improvements, the current arrangements are basically a slightly more advanced package of the basic Scottish Government capability;
- ◆ **Facilities** – The SGoRR facility itself is extremely limited in space and availability of PCs. During the recent severe weather activation, part of the response team had to be relocated elsewhere within SAH. The environment within SGoRR is not good for sustained working (e.g. no natural light). There is a meeting room within SGoRR but more breakout areas or smaller meeting rooms are needed. It might be useful too to see an enhanced SGoRR as a corporate resource, which – outwith emergencies – could be used by a much wider group of people;
- ◆ **Alternative SGoRRs** – There are alternative arrangements at Atlantic Quay and Saughton House, but both need upgrading.