

## HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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### REPORT OF THE PROTECTION COMMITTEE 9 JULY 1999

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NOTE: Full copies of the report mentioned below have been sent to all members of the Protection Committee and other members who have requested it. Any queries on this report to: Joan Blake, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Tel: 01992 555560)

#### STANDARDS FOR CIVIL PROTECTION

In the autumn of 1997 the Home Office began a consultation exercise, as part of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review, to consider the future role and funding of local civil protection in England and Wales. Despite overwhelming support for the introduction of a clearer legislative base for emergency planning, the Home Office decided against new legislation but announced that national standards for the emergency planning service would be introduced on 1 April 1999 and a revised grant distribution formula would be introduced on 1 April 2000.

Earlier this year the government decided to implement a further period of consultation before announcing the national standards, and delay implementation until 1 April 2000. The County Council made representation to the Home Office and the Local Government Association suggesting deferral of the new grant distribution formula until the national standards had been finalised. There was full agreement within both the Local Government Association (LGA) and the wider emergency planning community that the correct process would be to define the function, introduce new legislation, develop national standards and then consider funding requirements.

The Home Office sees the Civil Defence Grant as a contribution towards the cost of a local authority's emergency planning service. It is currently distributed on the basis that each county council receives a core allocation of 5 units, plus 0.5 units for each district council, thus providing Hertfordshire with a grant of £255,000 for the current financial year. Under the new distribution mechanism, whilst the overall level of grant nationally is expected to remain stable for the next two financial years, the allocation to Hertfordshire will reduce to £229,824 for 2000/01 and to £212,432 for 2001/02. The cut in grant for Hertfordshire will have a potential impact on the ability of the emergency planning service to maintain its programme of work in supporting county council services, the various HESMIC (Hertfordshire Emergency Services Major Incident Committee) working groups and local emergency planning forums. Over the two year period it would result in the loss of two posts from a service that is already operating at peak capacity and which will be expected to meet the requirements of the proposed national standards.

The Committee are concerned at the government's decision to press ahead with reductions in grant to shire emergency planning services and have requested them to confirm that in future years the grant will include an allowance for inflation. Support of Hertfordshire MPs, the LGA and the County Councils Network is being sought to promote the need for a satisfactory national legislative and financial framework for this essential service.

Bernard Lloyd  
Chairman  
County Hall  
Hertford

9 July 1999