

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 December 2008

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm in the Emergency Planning Unit,
Fire Station, Middlesbrough

Present:

Councillor Barry Coppinger, Middlesbrough Borough Council (In the Chair)
The Mayor, Stuart Drummond, Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Terry Laing, Stockton Borough Council

Denis Hampson, Chief Emergency Planning Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

18. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Dave McLuckie, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

19. Declarations of Interest by Members

None.

20. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 September 2008

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

21. Internal Audit Report – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform the Joint Committee that the Internal Auditor of Hartlepool Borough Council had performed a comprehensive internal audit review of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit.

Issues for Consideration

A review of arrangements, structures, systems and processes within the Emergency Planning Unit had been conducted in accordance with

the 2008/09 Internal Audit Plan of Hartlepool Borough Council in September 2008 by members of the internal Audit Department. The object of this was to test and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems and to ensure that appropriate control measures were in place.

The conclusions of the Audit were positive and in all areas examined the assessment grading was satisfactory. A copy of the Internal Audit Report had been circulated to Members. No follow up or remedial action was required.

Decision

Members noted the report.

22. Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Handbook/Guide – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

The report had been produced in order to inform the Joint Committee of the revision and production of the LRF Handbook/Guide which had been produced by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer.

Issues for Consideration

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer in his role as the Manager and Secretariat to the LRF, considered it would be beneficial to produce a single reference document containing:-

- ❖ Details of the LRF, including its terms of reference and membership
- ❖ Details of all Category 1 and 2 Responders in the Cleveland area
- ❖ Details of the Local Resilience Working Group and Cleveland Media Emergency Forum which facilitate integrated emergency and contingency work on behalf of the LRF including terms of reference, aims and objectives and membership details
- ❖ Details of sub groups which work to the 2 multi agency groups

An initial handbook had been produced in 2006 but had been amended to produce the current guide which had been endorsed by the LRF. Although the document was primarily for the LRF Members it was considered that it would contain information useful about the groups and sub groups undertaking work on emergency planning and resilience issues. It was suggested that this document should be placed on the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit website although it would be de-personalised so as to comply with the Data Protection Act.

Decision

Members acknowledged the handbook as a useful guidance tool and approved the insertion of it on the Emergency Planning Unit website.

23. Humanitarian Assistance Centre Event – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform Members that the Emergency Planning Unit was currently in the process of organising an event on Humanitarian Assistance scheduled to take place on 18 March 2009 at the Wynyard Rooms, Wolviston.

Issues for Consideration

Guidance issued by the Cabinet Office states Local Authorities had a duty under the Civil Contingencies legislation to produce a plan to co-ordinate practical and emotional support to those affected by an emergency. Following this an Humanitarian Assistance Centre plan covering all four Local Authorities had been produced.

The event being organised would provide the opportunity for multi-agency training and sharing of best practice. Four speakers had already confirmed their attendance. There would not be a charge for the 100 – 120 delegates who were expected from the four Local Authorities and the voluntary sector. An invitation had been extended to the Members of the Joint Committee. Councillor Coppinger had agreed to open the Conference.

Decision

The report was noted.

24. Pitt Review – Flooding (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform Members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee that the interim report written by Sir Michael Pitt was published in December 2007 following his review of the severe floods in 2007 and his final report was published in October 2008. The final report was presently being considered by central Government although it was expected that it would be fully endorsed

Issues for consideration

The EPU had been working with the Environment Agency to identify

what action was required and how it could be satisfactorily met. An action plan had been circulated to members which identified the progress being made on each recommendation and outstanding work across multi-agencies. The final report made 92 recommendations, including the 15 urgent recommendations made in the interim report.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer had identified the suggested lead departments for the recommended actions and informed them of the recommendations to be taken up within each Authority. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum multi-agency response to adverse weather guidance and protocol which was first produced in October 2005 had allowed the Cleveland area to meet some of the recommendations of the Pitt Review.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that he would inform the lead departments of their responsibilities following the Pitt Review via the Local Resilience Forum.

Decision

Members noted the report and endorsed the actions being pursued on behalf of the four local authorities by the Emergency Planning Unit.

Members also noted the recommendations where actions outside the remit of the Emergency Planning Unit were required of local authorities.

Members endorsed the Adverse Weather Protocol which would be activated in the event of serious adverse weather including flooding should the 'triggers' be reached.

25. Multi-Agency Flood Plans (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of Report

The report had been presented in order to inform Members that the EPU were progressing a multi-agency flood plan in line with the national checklist and templates issued by the Environment Agency and also to request support from the Joint Committee to progress a Cleveland wide multi-agency flood plan rather than an individual plan for each local authority.

Issues for Consideration

Members were informed that work had commenced on a draft plan which initially would have a generic front section but would include specific detail relating to Redcar and Cleveland. On completion of this plan, it would be circulated for initial comment to members of the

multi-agency Flood Risk group. It was envisaged that by June 2009 area specific details for the other Local Authorities would be added to the plan. There were also more specific details for the various Agencies i.e. Police, Fire and Ambulance, so the whole plan would be much more comprehensive.

It was clarified that this was Best Practice endorsed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environmental Agency.

Decision

The Members endorsed the report and agreed to support one multi-agency flood plan covering the four local authority areas.

26. Pandemic Influenza Planning (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform members of the present situation in respect of the Cleveland Strategic Plan for pandemic influenza and that it has significantly increased the workload of the EPU. The plan had to be submitted for auditing to the Cabinet Office by 31 December 2008 although several issues were still being worked on by sub groups to ensure that it met Government requirements.

Issues for Consideration

Pandemic influenza is the top risk identified by central Government and through the Cabinet Office and Civil Contingencies Secretariat it sought to ensure that plans and procedures were in place to mitigate this risk. A plan would also be produced for each of the four Local Authorities to personalise for their area.

Audit processes and guidance recently produced identified gaps in the Cleveland Strategic LRF plan. Amendments had to be made for plans for anti-viral distribution, mass vaccination, social care as hospitals had indicated that patients would be sent home to allow hospitals to deal with the potential influx of patients and data collection to Government Office. The EPU was working with a number of agencies regarding the managing of excess deaths. Cleveland is to host the North East testing and exercising of the LRF Pandemic Influenza plan on 11 February. The exercise would focus on communications between the member LRF organisations as well as externally to staff and the public.

Decision

Members noted the report and acknowledged the workload of the EPU

staff generated by the need to have the strategic pandemic influenza plan and associated plans in place. Whilst the strategic plan needed to be submitted to the Cabinet Office by the end of December 2008, work on the other subsidiary plans would continue. The strategic plan would also be subject to regular reviews and updates.

Members noted the planned regional exercise which would be reported on at a future meeting of the Joint Committee and that ongoing work would take place in the respective local authorities.

Members noted that the final Cleveland Strategic Plan for Pandemic Influenza would be circulated to them once completed.

27. Reported Incidents/Cleveland Communications Strategy *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform Members of the incidents reported, severe weather and flood risk warnings received and communications strategy faxes received and dealt with by the EPU between 1 August 2008 and 30 November 2008.

Issues for Consideration

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer informed the Joint Committee that a total of 14 warnings relating to adverse weather conditions, 14 flood warning messages received from the Environment Agency and 16 flood watch messages.

During this period the EPU had received and dealt with 85 'blue' faxes issued by Operators or Agencies involved with the Communications Strategy. This made a total of 161 blue faxes received in the first 8 months of 2008/09 and was already more than the total for the whole of the previous year. Almost half of these received and dealt with were outside normal office hours. In the past four months there had been 9 incidents of note in which the EPU had been involved and on some occasions had seen the deployment of staff to the scene or Incident Command Rooms. A number of other incidents of a minor nature had also been reported, some of which had been dealt with by the Duty Officer, out of hours.

Decision

Members noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 2.05 pm.

CHAIR