

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

26 March 2010

The meeting commenced at 12 noon at Cleveland Police Headquarters,
Ladgate Lane, 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
Alyson Carr, Assistant Chief Accountant
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

31. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Dave McLuckie

32. Declarations of Interest

None.

33. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2009

These were confirmed as an accurate account.

34. Responding to H1N1 Swine Flu – Lessons Learned (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

Purpose of Report

To inform Members that the Swine Flu pandemic that had been ongoing for the past 8 – 9 months had subsided and whilst the immunisation programme was continuing, most other activities around swine flu had now abated.

To inform Members that the North East Regional Resilience Team had completed some work on capturing the lessons learned from the outbreak, particularly the first wave.

For Members to consider the response that occurred within Cleveland and

what lessons were learned and what needs to be taken forward for the future, either within the Emergency Planning Unit or within individual Local Authorities.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed the background to the pandemic, what had gone well in Cleveland, issues raised by the swine flu event, regional lessons learned and what conclusions had been drawn. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) reported that the immunisation programme was still continuing and that during the outbreak there had been good communication between the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the other agencies involved. One of the issues raised during the incident was that Central Government strategies were constantly changing. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document had been circulated but this was classed as a restricted document so this made information sharing difficult. An appendix to the report outlined the regional lessons learned from the outbreak. It was recognised that the virus was likely to return as next winter's seasonal flu virus. During the event numerous changes had been made to the existing anti-viral distribution plan and this was currently being re-written. There was a need to ensure that Local Authorities continued with the hygiene procedures adopted during the swine flu event.

Decision

Members: _

- noted the report
- supported the need for the Local Authorities to review their plans and arrangements for pandemic flu (swine flu)
- supported the need for Local Authorities to continue with any hygiene protocols and procedures adopted during the swine flu event
- noted that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer will undertake a review of the Local Resilience Forum Pandemic Influenza Plan and feed the revised version into the Local Authorities

35. Exercise Watermark (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of Report

This report provided a brief on Exercise Watermark, a national level exercise being organised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) scheduled to take place in March 2011. This report considered the request for the Local Authorities within Cleveland and other agencies to be involved in this exercise.

The exercise seemed to be taking a steer from a national Dutch Exercise which reached all levels from Government to town mayors. http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/dutch-news/Netherlands-kicks-off-5_day-flood-disaster-exercise_47105.html

No specific scenario had been released as yet, but it was felt that the

exercise was likely to include all types of flooding in different locations resulting in a national level incident.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background to the exercise as well as the benefits of participation in this. It was expected that the Exercise would run between 7 – 11 March 2011 and was likely that it would involve a scenario such as a tidal surge on the east coast from Whitby southwards. Cleveland would link into this and have bolt on exercises.

A Member asked why the national Exercise did not involve coastal areas of the north east and the CEPO stated that it was felt that because of past history, the area around The Wash and the Norfolk Broads was more susceptible. Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) staff had attended one meeting and were considering whether to link into the national exercise as there were benefits from doing so.

Decision

Members agreed:-

- That through the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) one of more of the four Local Authorities, participate in Exercise Watemark.
- That Cleveland involvement in this exercise is limited to either a “bolt on” exercise or “plug and play” exercises with key local groups (e.g. industry around the estuary, communities and/or groups identified as vulnerable in the Multi-Agency Flood Plan).
- That Local Authority / EPU involvement is managed through the existing Exercise Planning Group

36. Multi Agency Exercise Calendar *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of Report

To provide Members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee with:-

- An overview of the multi-agency exercises which have taken place during 2009-2010.
- A summary of the significant lessons learnt and areas of concern identified as a result of the exercises conducted.
- The proposed multi agency exercise and training calendar for 2010-2011.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided the background to the planning and protocol of exercises as well as details of exercises which had taken place and were planned for the coming year. Although the report outlined that 41 exercised were planned for 2010 – 2011 this had now risen to 57. Certain issues had

been identified as a result of the exercises held and these were outlined in the report.

The CEPO explained how a number of exercises had been planned with industries but these had been shelved or scaled down because of financial pressures on the companies involved. Details were given of the Tall Ships training day and apologies were given that Members had not been invited to this event.

A Member asked what involvement the regional flood defence committee had with exercises and were informed that this was via the Environment Agency. Cleveland was now covered by the Newcastle office rather than York. It was clarified that the Environment Agency would be involved with the Watermark Exercise, detailed in the previous report.

A Member asked whether voluntary sector involvement was mandatory and was informed that it was totally voluntary although there was a Service Level Agreement with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS). There was a voluntary agency sub group which met on a 3 monthly basis and was very helpful. Details were given of voluntary sector help with the Tall Ships 2010 races.

Decision

Members:-

- supported the schedule of exercises for 2010 –11.
- noted the excellent work that undertaken in ensuring plans are tested and exercised as appropriate
- supported the Wider Exercise Planning Group and a joint Civil Contingencies Act exercise matrix.
- noted that further information is available via the Exercise Planning Group /Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (EPU)

37. 'Prepare' – Part of the National Contest Strategy *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the need for the Cleveland EPU to become involved with the national CONTEST (counter-terrorism) strategy through the "Prepare" strand of the strategy.

To inform Members of the broad outline of the CONTEST strategy and how it is considered that the EPU will become involved in both the overall CONTEST strategy and fulfil the requirements of the "prepare" strand.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background to the Counter Terrorism Strategy and how the plans in place within Cleveland although not specific to terrorism

incidents, reflected the risk and impact from a terrorism impact. There were four workstreams 'Pursue', 'Protect', 'Prevent', and 'Prepare'. Members were reminded that responses to counter terrorism incidents/attacks would be similar to other 'natural' disasters although the Major Incident Plans would need to be modified slightly in order to conform to the CONTEST Plan.

Decision

Members :-

- noted the report
- noted that the Chief Emergency Planning officer would ensure that the plans and procedures mentioned within the report were amended as proposed to reflect the CONTEST strategy and 'Prepare' aims.

38. Civic Contingencies Act 2004 – The Fit with Other Legislation: Guidance to Complement Emergency Preparedness – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

To inform Members on the consultation document issued by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) as part of the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme.

To inform members that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer had prepared a response to the document on behalf of both the four Local Authorities and the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The response has been forwarded to the CCS as the closing date for responses was 26 February 2010.

Issues for Consideration

The Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit response to the Cabinet Office review in relation to ensuring effective alignment and consistency between the planning and response arrangements established by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other civil protection legislation was contained in the report. The main focus of the guidance document was how the CCA duties interfaced with site specific legislation concern with industrial emergency planning and safety at sports grounds and events. Initially the act had excluded links to Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH), Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations (REPPIR) and Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSR). However the response prepared by the CEPO indicated that the four Authorities already had plans in place which were aligned and consistent.

Decision

Members :-

- Noted the report, particularly how Cleveland fitted with the proposed

guidance.

- Noted the response sent to CCS on behalf of Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit and Local Authorities.

39. Revision to Chapter 3 “Information Sharing” of the Statutory Guidance “Emergency Preparedness” – *Chief Emergency Planning Officer*

Purpose of Report

To inform Members on the consultation document issued by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) as part of the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme.

To inform member that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer had prepared a response to the document on behalf of both the four Local Authorities and the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The response had already been forwarded to the CCS as the closing date for responses was 19 February 2010.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed the background to the consultation document from the CCS and how the Chief Emergency Planning Officer had prepared a response to the consultation. The proposed changes to the statutory guidance should have little effect on the workings of emergency responders within Cleveland due to the current working practises whereby close co-operation and information sharing already exists. In order to comply with the requirement to hold a list of vulnerable persons the CEPO had a contact list giving details of agencies to contact to obtain details of vulnerable people.

Decision

Members:-

- Noted the report
- Noted the response sent to CCS on behalf of the Local Authorities and Local Resilience Forum.

40. National Resilience Planning Assumptions and Local Risk Assessment Guidance 2009/2010 – *Chief Emergency Planning Officer*

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the implications of the new National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPA) and Local Risk Assessment Guidance (LRAG) 2009/2010 issued by the Cabinet Office (Civil Contingencies Secretariat)

To inform Members of the implications of these new planning assumptions and national risk assessments for the Cleveland area.

To inform members that the changes to the national and local risks identified in the NRPA would be taken forward by the Emergency Planning Unit's Assessment Working Group.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the two changes to the planning assumptions which related to Major Flooding affecting parts of more than two UK regions as well as Displaced Person (in a Coastal Flooding Scenario affecting more than two UK regions). There were 26 changes in the Lrag and the report outlined the principal changes which would be considered by the Cleveland Risk Assessment Working Group. These included risks in relation to pipelines and the transportation of hazardous chemicals

Decision

Members:-

- Noted the report.
- Noted that changes to the national and local risks identified in the National Resilience Planning Assumptions and Local Risk Assessment Guidance to be taken forward by the EPU Risk Assessment Working Group and reflected in a revised Cleveland Community Risk Register.

41. Potential to Increase Warning and Informing Capability – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the letter shown at appendix A of the report from the Director of Capabilities at the CCS.

To inform Members of the local risks that might benefit from the potential expansion of the Floodline Warnings Direct Service and emerging technology such as cell broadcasting.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the proposal to expand the Floodline Warnings Direct system for other hazards and work being done with telecommunications companies to roll out the opt-out telephone flood warning scheme to all homes and businesses liable to flooding with a landline. This was expected to go live in mid 2010. At present only 50% of people living in local risk areas had opted in to be warned of any hazards and it was hoped that the opt-out system would increase the numbers of households and businesses

who were able to be warned of any hazards. Work was ongoing to involve cell broadcasts i.e. to send a short text messages to all mobile telephones in an affected area.

Members thought that this system would be welcomed by those living in areas susceptible to flooding. Members also cited similar schemes in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool namely Communi-K and Ringmaster.

Decision

Members:-

- Noted the report.
- Noted that the report would be taken forward by the Cleveland Media Emergency Forum to monitor progress on this issue and adopt necessary procedures once the systems go live.

42. Revision of Chapter 2 “Co-operation” of the statutory guidance “Emergency Preparedness” (Under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) enhancement programme) – Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the consultation document issued by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) as part of the CCA Enhancement Programme.

To inform Members that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer prepared a response to the document on behalf of both the four Local Authorities and the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum. The response had been forwarded to the CCS as the closing date for responses was 19 February 2010.

Issues for Consideration

The proposed changes should have little effect on the workings of emergency responders within Cleveland due to the nature of present working practices. Cleveland already has an Information Sharing Protocol and there is good representation evident at the Local Resilience Forum and its sub groups. The CEPO advised Members that he was collaborating with the Health and Safety Executive to produce guidance for emergency planning.

Decision

Members:-

- noted the report
- noted the response sent to CCS on behalf of the Local Authorities and Local Resilience Forum

43. Reported Incidents/Cleveland Communications Strategy - Chief Emergency Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee of the incidents reported, severe weather and flood risk warnings received and communications strategy faxes received and dealt with by the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit. The report covered the period between 1 December 2009 and 28 February 2010.

Issues for Consideration

There had been a total of 57 warnings relating to adverse weather conditions during this period. In relation to the Communications Strategy, 31 blue faxes had been received and dealt with. An appendix to the report detailed a number of incidents which had affected the general public.

Decision

Members noted the report.

44. Auditor's Report from BDO Stoy Hayward – 2008/09 Annual Return – Assistant Chief Accountant

Purpose of Report

To enable Members to approve the Annual Return now that the audit opinion had been given and to present the Issues Arising Report from the appointed auditors and to enable Members to approve the proposed Action Plan.

Issues for Consideration

The Committee had been required to complete an annual return which had been audited by BDO Stoy Hayward and recommendations arising from this return and subsequent action plan were outlined to the Members. The recommendation in relation to the Model Publication Scheme for Freedom of Information had been queried by the CEPO as the Committee adopted the model used by Hartlepool Borough Council as host Local Authority. A report in relation to this would be presented to Members at a future meeting.

A Member queried figures on the statement of accounts with those on the revenue financial monitoring report and it was explained that reporting was different in accordance with the statutory guidance.

Decision

Members:-

- Noted the report
- Approved the 2008/09 Annual Return detailed at Appendix A of the report which incorporated the audit opinion of the external auditor
- Noted the Issues Arising Report detailed at Appendix B of the report
- Instructed the Chief Finance Officer to implement the actions detailed in Appendix C of the report

45. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit – Assistant Chief Accountant

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the outcome of the review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Audit including a review of risk, in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2003 as amended 2006.

Issues for Consideration

There was a requirement for an annual review of the effectiveness of internal audit. The Assistant Chief Accountant demonstrated how this had been undertaken and that she was satisfied that this was operating effectively.

Decision

Members noted the report.

46. Revenue Financial Monitoring Report to End December 2009 – Assistant Chief Accountant

Purpose of Report

To provide details of progress against the Joint Committee's overall revenue budget for 2009/10.

Issues for Consideration

The Assistant Chief Accountant presented the report which outlined the financial position as at 31 December 2009 with the variance to date. The projected outturn was also detailed in the report.

It was established that the Beacon Status expenditure was funded from reserves. There were no major issues although there was an underspend due to staffing which would be carried forward to the next financial year.

Decision

Members noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 pm.

CHAIR