

# **EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

20 May 2011

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm at the Emergency Planning Unit at Aurora Court, Riverside Park, Middlesbrough

### **Present:**

Chair            Councillor Terry Laing, Stockton Borough Council

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond, Hartlepool Borough Council  
Councillor Julia Rostron, Middlesbrough Borough Council

Officers:        Denis Hampson, Chief Emergency Planning Officer  
                  Andy Summerbell, Acting Chief Emergency Planning Officer  
                  Chris Parkin, Group Accountant  
                  Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the business of the meeting the Chair announced that following the recent local elections this would be his final meeting as a member of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee. In light of this he asked if members were happy for him to continue to chair the meeting. This was confirmed. The Chair also highlighted possible issues of quoracy in the event that his successor was unable to attend every meeting. Members noted this and thanked the Chair for his work on the Committee over the previous 4 years.

### **53 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Dave McLuckie, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

### **54 Declarations of interest by Members**

None

### **55 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2011**

The minutes were received

## **56 Ambulance Service** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

### **Purpose of report**

To consider the concerns of elected members and members of the public on the operation by the North East Ambulance Services (NEAS) particularly following the transfer of the Tees Control Room to Tyneside.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

At their previous meeting the Committee had discussed the operation of the NEAS in light of the transfer of the Tees Control Room to Tyneside. They had agreed at that time to report feedback from their respective local authorities on the current service. Details were given within the report of factors which might impact upon the Cleveland area and associated risks. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that NEAS had given training to their telephone operators and felt they understood the differing risks across the Cleveland area and were particularly aware of the feedback from Health Scrutiny meetings across the Tees Valley. They were also fully aware of Corporate Manslaughter legislation and would do all they could to ensure they did not fall foul of it. Representatives from NEAS had indicated their willingness to discuss these issues with the Committee and any other councils or committees in the Tees Valley area.

Members submitted feedback from their authorities, a general theme of which was anecdotal evidence of ambulance drivers being unable to find their way around and emergencies therefore not being attended to in a timely fashion. They felt promises had been made to improve the service but they were not convinced this had happened. Members felt that the service should continue to be monitored, something which Middlesbrough's Scrutiny Panel would also be doing.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and that the Emergency Planning Unit should monitor the response provided by NEAS to major incidents.

## **57 Review on EPU Performance Indicators 2010/11** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Committee of the results and progress made on achieving the performance indicators set in the 2010/11 Annual Plan of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The report detailed the progress made towards achieving the performance indicators previously set in order to monitor and review progress and performance.

There were a total of 24 performance indicators for 2010/11, all had been achieved in full or in part. Details were given of those targets which had not been fully achieved as follows:

- To conduct one call out/contact after hours exercise in each local authority – exercises had been conducted in 3 out of the 4 with the final exercise due to take place in the first quarter of 2011/12
- To assess the regional impact on all plans produced or reviewed for COMAH establishments – officers were still waiting new information from the Health and Safety Executive and assessment of the impact of changes to the regional resilience structure
- To increase awareness of emergency planning and the Civil Contingencies Act within local authorities through the attendance of elected members at seminars and training days – despite invitation there had been limited take-up

Notable achievements were highlighted including the provision of an effective Duty Officer Scheme. It was also noted there had only been 61 days of sick leave taken by the Team throughout the year.

Members asked whether the performance indicators had been audited. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that an audit had recently been carried out by Hartlepool Borough Council as the lead local authority on the Joint Committee. A report on their findings would be brought to the next meeting but they appeared to have identified nothing of any great concern.

### **Decision**

That the report and the notable achievements of the Emergency Planning Unit be noted.

## **58 CEPU Annual Plan 2011-2012** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Annual Plan for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit for 2011-12

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

This plan was prepared to give the four Local Authorities an overview of the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU), its work-streams and priorities over the next

12 months, and how it would measure its performance against a number of performance indicators. 14 significant themes had been identified upon which the EPU would focus during the year.

Members were advised that due to current budget pressures there would be a 10% decrease in the Emergency Planning Unit budget for 2011/12. Identified within the plan were efficiency savings which would be taken to meet the reduced budget. Notable achievements during the year were reported including 2 large table-top exercises and a nuclear level 2 exercise. The complete annual plan was appended to the report.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and the 2011-2012 Annual Plan be endorsed including the performance indicators and budget provision.

## **59 Strategic Business Plan 2011-2014** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Strategic Business Plan for 2011-2014.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted the Strategic Business Plan for the three years 2011-2014, prepared to inform the four unitary local authorities of the services that the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit intends to deliver on their behalf over the forthcoming three years. The business plan also included the proposed budget provision for the unit. This had seen a reduction of 10% from the local authorities to the EPU budget for 2011/12 with a further 5% reduction in contributions proposed for each of the following 2 years. These reductions would be met through efficiencies, but the Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated these reductions were not without risk and may leave the local authorities vulnerable to not meet legislative requirements or have robust plans in place. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer also noted that the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit had recently appeared in a list of best practice areas of Emergency Planning published by the Local Government Association, specifically for their work in relation to partnership working, communications procedures and strategies.

Members considered utilising some of the reserves to offset the anticipated budgetary pressures. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that he would seek approval from the Committee should such a situation arise. With reference to questions about the Beacon Status the Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that while the status itself did not run out, the funding attached to it did. In addition the Beacon scheme had been stopped by the Coalition Government so there would be no more funding available.

In terms of the constitution members referred to committee attendance

concerns. They highlighted that the new representative for Stockton Borough Council worked and therefore might be unable to attend every meeting. This could lead to quorum issues in the future. They suggested that something be written into the constitution of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee requiring members to attend a minimum number of meetings per year. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer noted these comments and confirmed he would bring an amended form of the terms of reference to the next meeting. Members also queried whether consideration had been given to ways to maximise revenue to the Emergency Planning Unit. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that they had already begun charging organisations for room hire at the Emergency Planning Unit premises and that the possibility of charging for seminars and training which had previously been free could be considered.

### **Decision**

- I. That the report and the Strategic Business Plan for 2011-2014 be endorsed.
- II. That the constitution for the Emergency Planning Joint Committee be amended requiring members to attend a minimum number of meetings per year.

## **60 2010/11 Revenue Outturn Report** *(Chief Finance Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the revenue outturn for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Joint Committee for 2010/11.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 require accounts to be approved by 30<sup>th</sup> June each year. At the end of each financial year an annual revenue outturn report is submitted to the committee, details of which are included in the Statement of Accounts. Whilst the 2010/11 projected outturn variance had been expected to be favourable by £10,500, in fact the final outturn position showed an adverse variance of £8,000. This overspend had been funded through reserves and was the result of the accrued costs of funding the early retirement of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer. Those costs had accrued earlier than expected. Members were asked for their retrospective approval for this use of reserves.

The 2010/11 Statement of Accounts for the PJC was appended to the report. The Group Accountant highlighted there was £22 thousand remaining from the Beacon grant, £21 thousand remaining of LRF funds and £63 thousand in general reserve. The Chair asked whether the remaining LRF monies could be drawn on by the EPU but the Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that this funding was held by the EPU on behalf of its multi-agency partners to pay for LRF assistance and events and therefore could not be utilised for

other purposes.

### **Decision**

- I. That the 2010/2011 revenue outturn be noted
- II. That retrospective approval be given to the utilisation of reserves funding to cover the accrued costs of the early retirement of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer.

## **61 2010/11 Annual Audit Return** *(Chief Finance Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the Annual Audit Return to the Audit Commission for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Joint Committee for the year 2010/11.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 require all smaller relevant bodies in England to complete an annual return summarising their annual activities. This must be approved by 30<sup>th</sup> June, signed by the appropriate responsible officers and Members and sent to the Audit Commission for auditing. A copy of the return was appended to the report, covering accounting statements, an annual governance statement and an annual internal audit report. The Group Accountant commented that despite recent announcements the Audit Commission was still active for 2 years and officers anticipated that something similar would still need to be produced after that time. He acknowledged that officers were unsure if the audit return was required at this time but they felt it was preferable to prepare the document in case it was needed.

The Chair and Democratic Services Officer duly signed the 2010/2011 Annual Audit Return.

### **Decision**

- I. That the 2010/2011 Annual Audit Return be approved.
- II. That the 2010/2011 Accounting Statements and Annual Governance Statement be approved.

## **62 Exercise Watermark Initial Findings** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To inform members about the Exercise Watermark which was the national exercise to test flood response plans organised by Defra

To inform members of the initial findings from the Exercise Watermark which was conducted in Cleveland on 10<sup>th</sup> March as a 'bolt-on exercise' to the one held nationally.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

At the request of Cleveland LRF the Exercise Planning Group had recently taken part in Exercise Watermark, a national exercise testing flood response plans. As part of this Cleveland had agreed to hold a bolt on exercise to the national exercise whereby all exercise involvement was within the Cleveland boundary with no involvement from Central Government. The aims were to test the local multi-agency flood plan and its accompanying plans and procedures. Over 70 delegates from most responder agencies attended together with representatives from the industry and voluntary agencies.

Comprehensive findings would be addressed and taken forward by either the LRF Exercise Planning Group or the Flood Risk Group and a comprehensive action plan was being prepared by the Emergency Planning Unit. Details of the key findings were given in the report. Overall it was felt that the exercise was a valid test of the flood plan which was of benefit to the vast majority of participants and provided clarity on roles and responsibilities of responders.

### **Decision**

- I. That the report be noted
- II. That it be noted that a detailed action plan was being prepared that would be implemented via the Flood Risk Working Group and CEPU lead officers as appropriate
- III. That it be noted that the Exercise Planning Group would review said action plan at 6 and 12 months post exercise.

## **63 Reported incidents / Cleveland Communications Strategy** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To inform members 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 between 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011

and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer presented a report which highlighted that the Emergency Planning Unit had received a total of 4 warnings from the Met Office relating to adverse weather conditions, mostly 'out of hours'. Further details of warning received were included within the report. It was noted that there had been six incidents of note in which the Emergency Planning Unit had become involved and these were detailed in Appendix A.

Members referred to an incident in Hartlepool earlier in the week. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that a debrief would be held for Local Authority and Multi-Agency staff in due course. He praised the commitment of the staff at the EPU during the incident and felt the successful resolution was a credit to his officers and to the plans which were in place.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **64 Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance** (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

### **Purpose of report**

To inform members of the new strategic guidance on Humanitarian Assistance published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance seeks to provide a framework to assist responding organisations build an effective Humanitarian Assistance capability. It provides an agreed definition of humanitarian assistance and suggests how to meet the needs of people affected by terrorist attacks and major emergencies, both in the immediate aftermath and the months and years that follow. Cleveland has had a Humanitarian Assistance plan in place for the past 3 years which is reviewed annually. It was felt unnecessary to undertake an urgent review in light of the new legislation however any additional points officers identified would be included as part of the scheduled annual review.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and the Lead Officer for Humanitarian Assistance consider the new guidance at the next review of the Cleveland HAC plan in 2011.



## **65 Keeping the Country running – natural hazards and infrastructure** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

### **Purpose of report**

To inform members of the new guide to improving the resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services issued by the Cabinet Office for consultation.

### **Issues for consideration by the Committee**

The National Security Strategy (NSS) identifies as a priority the need to improve resilience of the UK infrastructure with the top risks including those from natural hazards. This newly released guidance aims to encourage groups to work together to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services. Whilst this document is currently a consultation paper it is extremely likely to become adopted as strategic guidance within the next 6 months. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer had sent a response to the consultation to the Cabinet Office prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> May deadline. A copy was appended to the report.

### **Decision**

- I. That the action at 5.3.1 (that individual category 1 responders should design, implement and review resilience at Senior Management level and embed it in their own corporate governance process if they do not already do so) be taken forward by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer to the Tees Valley Chief Executives Group
- II. That a greater involvement with 'unregulated industry' to encourage and pre-define collaboration during emergencies be agreed
- III. That the creation of an 'organisational resilience strategy' setting out how local authorities and other Category 1 responders identify, assess and manage the changing risks that support the delivery of resilience be noted
- IV. That the development of 'local planning assumptions' linked to the risk register and driving in-place planning be agreed
- V. That it be noted that the recommendations in Guide 3 on Information Sharing and Co-operation are being adequately addressed through having a joint Emergency Planning Unit on behalf of the 4 local authorities
- VI. That the Emergency Planning Unit continue to involve utilities, industry and infrastructure operators and owners in exercises such as Watermark and Nemo to help build effective working relationships and

utilise the knowledge and experience of industry representatives in exercising and reviewing emergency plans

- VII. That it be noted that the consultation response document appended to the report was completed by the Emergency Planning Officer and returned to the Cabinet Office by the deadline of 6<sup>th</sup> May.

## **66 Retirement of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer**

The Chair noted that this was the Chief Emergency Planning Officer's final meeting. He thanked him for all his work over the years noting the many accolades the Emergency Planning Unit had received during his tenure. He also wished the new Chief Emergency Planning Officer the best of luck in his new post.

As this was the Chair's final meeting he also took the opportunity to thank everyone who had played a part in the Emergency Planning Joint Committee over the previous 4 years for their help and support.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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