

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

8 November 2011

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am at the Emergency Planning Unit,
Aurora House, Middlesbrough

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond, Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Steve Goldswain, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor David Rose, Stockton Borough Council
Councillor Julia Rostron, Middlesbrough Borough Council

Andy Summerbell, Chief Emergency Planning Officer
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Dave Moir, Emergency Planning Officer for Cleveland Police

1. Appointment of Chair

That Councillor Julia Rostron (Middlesbrough Borough Council) be elected
Chair of the Committee

Councillor Rostron in the Chair

2. Apologies for absence

No apologies were submitted.

3. Declarations of interest by members

None

4. Receipt of the record of decision in respect of the meeting held on 20th May 2011

The record of decision was received.

5. Amended Constitution and Terms of Reference (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To present the amended constitution and terms of reference for the Emergency Planning Joint Committee and seek Member agreement to this document.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Emergency Planning Joint Committee is the governance body for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit. The Committee's constitution and terms of reference are reviewed annually and the latest version was attached for members consideration.

Decision

- I. That the amended constitution and terms of reference be agreed
- II. That members agree to accord with the constitution and terms of reference in undertaking their duties as a member of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee
- III. That the constitution be reviewed in May 2012.

6. Nomination of Governor for North East Ambulance Service (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the governor nomination to the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) Foundation Trust's Council of Governors.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

NEAS had recently been awarded Foundation Trust status and as such had established a Council of Governors. A request had been made for the nomination of a Stakeholder Governor to represent Cleveland LRF and the Chair had nominated the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Manager, Andy Summerbell for this role. Members were pleased to note this nomination and representation

Decision

That the report be noted and the LRF manager supported with future feedback upon matters relevant to the Board of Governors.

7. Performance Reporting of Emergency Planning Unit (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

Purpose of report

To inform Members of process improvements in performance monitoring and work-stream identification and prioritisation.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit's Annual Business Plan contains 26 performance indicators, a mix of internal administrative targets and delivery of service to authorities. Current indicators are determined by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer and reported annually to the Joint Committee. The Unit does not maintain a database of actions emanating from meetings or key pieces of work following national directive. Work also emanated from the LRF however they did not had a specific monitoring process. Therefore the Chief Emergency Planning Officer was currently reviewing the structure of the LRF and its working groups through the formation of a Risk Management Group which work inform of the greatest risks and threats in and to Cleveland. A series of actions would then be agreed to mitigate against these threats which would be included in an annual work plan. Also included in an annual work plan would be suggestions from the authorities' emergency planning meetings, actions required from the EPU, details of emergency plans and training requirements of EOU officers. Monitoring of the work plan would be carried out using Hartlepool's Covalent Performance Management System. A performance report would be presented to each meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee for members attention.

Members queried whether these changes would fit into the longer term work programme of the EPU and lead to additional financial pressures. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that the changes would be made to work however he could not be sure about the financial pressures.

Decision

That the report be noted.

8. Revenue Financial Monitoring Report to end September 2011 (Chief Finance Officer)

Purpose of report

To provide details of progress against the Joint Committee's overall revenue budget for 2011/2012

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided an overall picture of performance and progress of the Emergency Planning Unit against the approved 2011/2012 revenue budget.

At the moment the Unit was predicted to have a £19,000 under spend. This was a one-off due to the salary savings from the period of time the Chief Emergency Planning Officer was on secondment to the post prior to appointment and due to a vacancy which had been held in the Administrative Department for some months. Monthly finance meetings were taking place to consider future financial burdens.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted.

9. Finance Predictions for coming years *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the financial position of the Unit in the coming years and potential increased work demand and to seek Member consent to commit to reserves under spends from 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

Cleveland currently hosts around 34 top tier Comah sites with one officer employed to write the off-site emergency plan on behalf of all authorities. The officer receives support from an Emergency Planning Officer meaning Comah planning requires 1.5 full-time posts. Recently the Health and Safety Executive announced work being undertaken around Comah, with the indications being an increase in top tier sites and an increase in workloads.

In order to address a 10% budget cut for 2011/12 an Emergency Planning Officer post was deleted and the salary for the Chief Emergency Planning Officer and LRF Manager reduced. Cuts of 5% for 2012/13 and 2013/14 are planned however in order to maintain the current level of service and deal with the anticipated workload resourcing levels could not be reduced further. Budgets would provide sufficient salary funding but leave little left over. It was proposed therefore that the estimated £19,000 under spend facilitated by the reduction in Chief Emergency Planning Officer salary be placed into reserves. However it was noted that these were one-off savings and would not be repeated in the coming years.

Further projected savings included income generation by delivering national Emergency Planning courses at the EPU headquarters and free places on said courses being made available to Cleveland EPU officers. Officers had also agreed to the loss of certain benefits and increased on call duties in order to achieve further savings of approximately £9,000. The Emergency Planning Officer for Cleveland Police also gave a brief overview on attempts to make savings through their organisation, including income generation through private sector courses.

Members queried whether consideration had been given to moving to more

cost effective premises. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that the contract for the current premises was due for review in 2014 and it had been the most cost effective option at the time. The building had conference facilities which could be used for income generation and provided an invaluable geographical relationship with Cleveland Police. Members noted these advantages but highlighted the current availability of Council buildings. They also asked if funding could be provided through a reapplication for Beacon status. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that this was a possibility but he was keen to ensure that the Unit was working at maximum strength before considering an application of this kind. Based on current budget projections Members queried the likelihood of all proposed 2012/13 projects being met. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that although funding would be tight projects for the next few years would be safe thanks to reserves funding and the previously discussed savings identified through the team dispensing with certain perks. Members asked whether the reserves would need to be used in the event of a serious incident. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that this would be avoided wherever possible.

Decision

- i. That the report and prudence being applied by the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit with regard to budget management and income generation be noted
- ii. That the probable increase in workload and legislative demands being placed on the unit in the coming years be noted
- iii. That the budget under spend from 2011/12 and 2012/13 be committed to the reserves.

10 Internal Audit *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the content of the internal audit of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit conducted by Hartlepool Borough Council's Internal Audit team.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

An internal audit report had recently been carried out by the Hartlepool Borough Council Internal Audit team. The final report, which was appended to the report, showed that Adequate Assurance could be placed on the control objectives reviewed. Details were given of three recommendations which were being addressed and would be completed within the timescales requested in the report. Members would be updated upon their completion. It was also noted that similar audits carried out by Middlesbrough Borough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council had resulted in similarly positive outcomes.

Decision

That the report be noted

11 Exercise CREEK *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To inform Members of a key outcome from Exercise CREEK, highlighting limitations in the Emergency Mortuary arrangements within Cleveland.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

A Disaster Victim identification (DVI) exercise, which included testing of strategy planning and Emergency Mortuary arrangements took place in June 2011. During discussions the Coroner, Pathologist and Mortuary Manager for Hartlepool Hospital identified that the current Cleveland LRF Emergency Mortuary plan utilising Hartlepool Hospital would not be suitable based on the scenario of over 160 fatalities. This was due to the limited size of the mortuary and the time it would take to process the numbers involved. As a result it was agreed that in this circumstance the National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements would need to be called on. This would be extremely costly and officers were therefore working on an amendment to current Emergency Mortuary Planning based on partnership working between neighbouring local authorities. Alternative mortuary premises would be identified depending on where an incident occurred and on what scale and triggers would be agreed. Members queried whether national funding would be available for large scale incidents. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that it would be in the case of natural disaster but he would query the position relating to other types.

Decision

That the report be noted and the work being carried out by the EPU in progressing planning around Emergency Mortuary Arrangements be noted.

12 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 during the period 9th May 2011 to 1st October 2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

A total of 5 Met Office warnings of adverse weather conditions and 4 flood alert messages were received. There had been 22 incidents involving the EPU, the more notable of which were highlighted within the report as follows:

May 2011 – Hartlepool – a male found deceased in a car following an explosion

August 2011 – Hartlepool – an explosion at a house

September 2011 – Wilton – a fire at Sabic resulting in Toxic Release

Regarding the May incident in Hartlepool the Chief Emergency Planning Officer noted that the main debrief issues had been around communication and misinformation through social media. A protocol had now been agreed whereby only one agency would provide social media updates. Social media would be monitored and any unsubstantiated rumours responded to as quickly as possible.

Decision

That the report be noted.

13 Any Other Business

Rest Centres

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that following the May 2011 incident in Hartlepool procedures were being put in place to have all rest centre staff trained to the same level across the Tees Valley to ensure that staff could be deployed to other local authorities in the event of a lengthy incident.

Emergency Planning structure

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that current structure allowed for one Emergency Planning Officer per borough, the Stockton officer being designated Principal Emergency Planning Officer. However it was felt that the officer in question was unable to fulfil both these roles and he had therefore been removed from Stockton in order to concentrate on his principal duties. Another officer would be appointed to fulfil the Stockton role. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer was due to meet with Hartlepool HR officers to discuss a possible need to select from the redeployment register. However he was keen to avoid this and utilise one of his existing officers as to do otherwise would require additional training and associated expenses. Members queried how current workloads would be affected, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that staff would work together and

amend workloads as required . Members commented on the efficacy of advertising the vacant role outside of the Unit given the skills and training of officers eligible within it. This was compounded by the fact that should an officer from the Unit not be appointed then a redundancy would follow as an existing post would be lost upon the appointment of the Stockton officer.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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