

# EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

**7 January 2026**

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am at the Emergency Planning Annex, Stockton Police Station, Bishop Street, Stockton-on-Tees.

### **Present:**

Councillor: Owen Riddle (In the Chair)

Councillors: Councillor Theo Furness (Middlesbrough Borough Council)  
Councillor Nigel Cooke (Stockton Borough Council)

Officers: Gemma Ptak, Director of Housing and Communities  
Stuart Marshall, Chief Emergency Planning Officer  
Claire McPartlin, Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer  
Jo Stubbs, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

### **13. Apologies for Absence**

None

### **14. Declarations of interest by Members**

None

### **15. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2025**

Minutes received

### **16. Financial Management Update Report** *(Director of Finance, IT and Digital and Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

#### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the forecast outturn for the current financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer provided the forecast revenue outturn for the current financial year ending 31 March 2026. There was a favourable variance of £27,000 in the main emergency planning budget as

at 30 November 2025 before the release of reserves. There was a favourable variance of £28,000 on employee costs due to more staff costs being chargeable to the LRF.

The revenue outturn for the Local Resilience Forum was reported as a nil variance. This was due to an overall underspend of £74,000, £20,000 of which was underspend of the current LRF grant allocation.

Government is now providing £211,000 of in-year grant on the condition that 90% of this is spent in year and the £189,000 unspent grant held in reserves is fully utilised. This meant only £21,000 could be retained. A large amount of staff time had therefore been allocated to LRF activities in order to ensure appropriate spending. This had resulted in the underspend on the main emergency planning budget.

### **Decision**

That the latest outturn forecast for 2025/26 be noted

## **17. Function and Operation of Cleveland LRF** (*Cleveland LRF Chair / LRF Manager*)

### **Purpose of report**

To provide members with background information on the structure and operation of Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and an opportunity to seek clarification and assurance on the support provided by Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU) to the LRF.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer gave an overview of the structure and operation of the Cleveland LRF. This is a non-statutory body which was implemented following the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. It is funded through government grants and contributions from member agencies. The Chair is the Director of Housing, Growth and Communities at Hartlepool Borough Council, supported by 3 Vice-Chairs. A work plan is developed each year based on priorities identified by members, working groups and the government. Details of the priorities identified for inclusion in the 2026/27 workplan were given within the report. It was also highlighted that the Government is currently trialling Stronger Local Resilience Forum pilots across areas including Manchester, Cumbria and Northumbria. These 'trailblazers' would include increased funding to support permanent Chief Resilience Officer roles and an enhanced team of LRF officers, aiming to support longer term strategic resilience and enhance transparency and community oversight within LRFs countrywide.

The Director of Housing, Growth and Communities advised that she had become LRF Chair in July and was part of the emergency response team at Hartlepool Borough Council. One of her priorities was to make the work of

the LRF more accessible by humanising the approach and language used by responders. People needed to be made aware of the need to prepare for emergencies without alarming them unduly and ensuring that the messaging was proportional to any risk. This could be done by capitalising on other services working with vulnerable communities and considering how we talk about emergencies beyond the LRF. She noted the increases in pressure on the LRF and paid credit to the team for their hard work.

Members found the report thorough and reassuring. Responding to their queries the Chief Emergency Planning Officer cited the biggest threats for the region as pandemic flu, flooding and terrorism. Cyber threats remain a concern. He confirmed that Cleveland regularly collaborate with other Local Authorities and LRFs on issues surrounding the power station and chemical industry

### **Decision**

- I. That the report be noted and members continue to seek assurance on the operation and effectiveness of the LRF
- II. That the LRF action plan for 2026/27 be shared with members when completed with regular updates on actions taken

## **18. Activities Report 24/08/2025 – 12/12/2025** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

### **Purpose of report**

To assist members in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the EPU and its value to the four unitary authorities.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a summary of progress made against the Unit's 2025/26 action plan and the 2025/26 LRF Action Plan, details of which were included in the report. This included pieces of work contained within each plan and significant work which had been completed in addition to each plan.

### **Decision**

- I. That the report be noted and members continue to seek involvement and clarification on the plans where appropriate
- II. That quarterly updates continue to be provided to members
- III. That the final LRF action plan be presented to members following sign off by the LRF Strategic Board

**19. Incidents Report 24/08/25 – 12/12/2025** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

**Purpose of report**

To assist members in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the EPU and its value to the four unitary authorities through provision of a list of incidents within the reporting period

**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported on the incidents of note that had been responded to by the Emergency Planning Unit during the reporting period, details of which were set out in Appendix 1.

Members highlighted concerns around incidents of wildfire during the Summer months. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer acknowledged this saying they were looking at a range of longer term chronic risks and how these may impact short term acute risk (i.e. climate change increasing the risk of wildfire across a longer period).

**Decision**

That the report and incidents listed be noted and any additional information sought by members.

**20. Updated LGA guidance for Councillors** *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

**Purpose of Report**

To draw members attention to the recently issued “A Councillor’s guide to civil resilience” issued by the Local Government Association.

**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer provided members with a hard copy of the guidance which had been updated from 2018. It provides an overview of the role of the Local Authority Councillors and how officers can support Councillors in their role. Also included are a number of questions and case studies. The guidance will be incorporated into future annual workplans by the CEPU.

The Director of Housing, Growth and Communities praised the positive work and learning opportunities arising from the response to the Summer civil unrest, a case study of which was included in the LGA Guidance.

## **Decision**

That the guidance be noted, reviewed by members and shared with colleagues

That the key elements be incorporated into the CEPU action plan and progress be reported back to the committee

## **21. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

The Chair thanked the previous Chair, Councillor Karen Oliver, for her contributions to the work of the Committee

The meeting concluded at 11.05am.

**H MARTIN**

**DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

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