

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

6th May 2014

The meeting commenced at 10am at the Emergency Planning Unit, Aurora Court, Barton Road, Riverside Park, Middlesbrough

Present:

Councillor: David Rose, Stockton Borough Council (In the Chair)

Councillors: Councillor Marjorie James, Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Charles Rooney, Middlesbrough Borough Council

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 Councillor John Hannon as substitute for Councillor Steve Goldswain (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

Officers: Alastair Smith, Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Stuart Marshall, Chief Emergency Planning Officer and LRF Manager
Chris Parkin, Group Accountant (Corporate)
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

45. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Steve Goldswain (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

46. Declarations of interest by Members

None

47. Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2014

Received

48. 2013/14 Revenue Outturn Report (*Chief Finance Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide details of the revenue outturn for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Joint Committee for the year 2013/2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant provided background information and made reference to the Statement of Accounts, as detailed at Appendix A. A summary of the outturn position was provided as set out in the report. A favourable variance of £19,347 on the main Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) budget had been achieved due to staff savings in relation to vacant posts and to staff being budgeted for at the top of their grade where in some instances they had not yet reached this salary point. It was proposed that this under spend be transferred to reserves as agreed by the committee on 4th February 2014.

Decision

That the revenue 2014/14 revenue outturn be approved and the under spend transferred to reserves.

49. 2013/2014 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 2013/2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant provided background information and made reference to the Audit Commission return, a copy of which was attached as an appendix to the report. The return included the Accounting Statements, Annual Governance Statement and Annual Internal Audit Report. A paper copy of the Audit Commission return was provided by the Group Accountant, which was signed by the Chair at the meeting.

Decision

That the 2013/2014 Annual Audit Return, including the Accounting

Statements and the Annual Governance Statement, be approved.

50. 2014/15 to 2016/17 Budget Projections (Chief Finance Officer)

Purpose of report

To provide details of the projected budget of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Joint Committee for the years 2014/15 to 2016/17 as requested by the Committee on 4th February 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 funding from the 4 local authorities to the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit had reduced by 25% with further reductions of 5% planned for 2015/16 and 2016/17. This would mean a cumulative budget shortfall of £35,845 by 2016/17. It was also noted that a £50 thousand grant given by the Environment Agency was only guaranteed up to 2016/17.

Members queried whether local businesses could be asked to pay more for the services provided by the Emergency Planning Unit. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that as a local authority they were not allowed to make a profit on statutory duties and could only recoup any losses incurred. A review of the true costs relating to the statutory work was being undertaken to include the support from Hartlepool, administrative and management time. Businesses and organisations could be charged for non-statutory activities undertaken by the unit at their request e.g. the provision of additional site specific training or exercises. Packages of non-mandatory services could be formulated and offered to businesses on a scale of charges. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer would bring a report detailing potential income generation activities to a future meeting of the committee. Members also suggested that Government might be lobbied regarding charges to businesses aimed at generating income.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented upon other potential ways to save money and generate income including staffing structures, movement of staff to alternative buildings and IT savings, noting that the link between the Unit and Civic Centre cost £13 thousand per annum and that as technology has developed alternative means may be possible. The Assistant Director would speak to the Assistant Chief Executive regarding potential savings in this area. A member highlighted a recent suggestion that Cleveland Police and Fire Brigade would co-locate in Hartlepool, commenting that the Emergency Planning Unit should ensure that relocation to shared premises should be considered and dialogue entered into at an early stage with partners regarding any such opportunities.. A member felt that the Unit was better in a centralised position however the Chair noted that the Local Authority were not a responder organisation and efficiency needed to be a priority.

Decision

That charges for mandatory services to businesses be increased in order to cover all costs incurred.

That a report detailing potential packages of non-mandatory services be brought to a future meeting.

That discussions be opened with Cleveland Police and Fire Brigade regarding future co-location opportunities.

51. Update on CEPU Actions 2013-14 (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the progress of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit and its achievement against the performance indicators identified in the 2013/14 Action Plan.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that 98% of the performance indicators in the 2013/14 Action Plan had been met with only 2 actions outstanding. These related to the failure to complete a training needs analysis in Middlesbrough and the failure to write a safety Advisory Group (SAG) policy acceptable to all local authorities. Both would be carried over to the 2014/15 Action Plan. With reference to the joint SAG policy officers felt it would not be possible to produce a single policy due to variations between the local authorities, however meetings were being held to identify commonality and good practice and it was anticipated that the necessary progress would be achieved within the next 6 months. It was also highlighted that although this advice was given to organisers of events in the areas covered by the Unit the organisers were under no obligation to follow it unless on council land. A member suggested training be offered to event organisers for a fee however the Chief Emergency Planning Officer felt it would be difficult to justify this particularly for small charity events and may result in reduced engagement from organisers in the training. The Assistant Director commented that the authorities did not have the power to cancel events which were not taking place on local authority land.

Decision

That the report be noted

52. Proposed CEPU Action Plan 2014-15 (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide members with the proposed action plan for the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit 2014-15.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer gave details of the proposed Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit Action Plan for 2014/15. The proposed actions and indicators were appended to the report along with proposed Local Resilience Forum actions for 2014/17, formulated during a planning day on 20th February. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed he would keep members informed of any forthcoming major incident training events which they might wish to attend as participants or observers.

A member referred to recent media reports regarding capturing gas by burning coal under the sea and the suggestion that the North-East be used as the pilot area for this. She raised concern reference the risk of explosions during the process and the possible results of that. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that should an application be made to do this the Unit would receive notification from the planning authority in charge and would then commence risk assessments and consultation based upon the risk assessments. The member was concerned that as the area in question was further north the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit might not be made aware of it. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer suggested that this risk was something which once assessed if required would be included on the LRF Risk Register.

Decision

That the report be noted

53. Reported incidents and warnings received (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To inform members of the incidents reported and warning communications received and dealt with by the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit between 22nd January and 11th April.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

Between 22nd January and 11th April 2014 the Cleveland Emergency

Planning Unit received 19 weather alerts, 1 severe weather warning and 18 flood alerts. There were no flood warnings. 11 notification blue alerts were issued but no red alerts. Details of 2 incidents of note were appended to the report. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer highlighted the recent change to an email based communications strategy as a replacement for the previous fax system.

A member queried whether any consideration had been given to recent occurrences of ticks and lyme disease. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer would ask his colleague to raise the issue at a health meeting that afternoon. A member referred to the use of Chinese lanterns. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer referred to a recent social media campaign promoting the release of Chinese lanterns as a memorial. The Fire Brigade were taking the lead on this issue in terms of education of the risks and discouragement. The member requested the committee's support on a motion he intended to put forward for the banning of Chinese lanterns. The Chair suggested that he email members individually.

Decision

That the report be noted

The meeting concluded at 11:20am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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