

# EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

1 DECEMBER 2021

The meeting commenced at 10.20 am at the Emergency Planning Annex, Stockton Police Station, Bishop Street, Stockton-On-Tees, TS18 1SY.

### **Present:**

Councillor: Councillor Mike Smith (Stockton Borough Council) (In the Chair)

Councillors: Councillor Cameron Stokell (Hartlepool Borough Council)  
Councillor Julie Craig (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

Officers: Stuart Marshall, Chief Emergency Planning Officer  
Jon Hepworth, Group Accountant (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **10. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Eric Palano (Middlesbrough Borough Council)

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

None.

### **12. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2021**

Received.

### **13. Activity Report** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

#### **Purpose of report**

To assist members of the EPJC in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the Emergency Planning Unit and its value to the four unitary authorities.

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

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer updated the Joint Committee on the activity of the Emergency Planning Unit over the past quarter and for the year to date. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer highlighted that due to Covid restrictions most exercises were being held online in Microsoft Teams which was providing both solutions and problems. Teams allowed

many officers and outside representatives to join exercises often from home but the physical on-site element of exercises was a significant gap. Some sites and responder organisations had proved more adaptable to live exercises within Covid restrictions but some were unable to support live exercising. The Chief EPO assured members that the Competent Authority (Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency) were aware and supportive of the approach undertaken by the Unit.

The Emergency Planning Unit was moving on from a position where around 90% of all its activity was Covid focussed but it still formed a significant part of their workload. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that a Senior Emergency Planning Officer was leaving the team to take up a similar role within the Civil Service and a replacement officer had been recruited from within the existing staff.

The report also updated Members on the support provided to the Local Resilience Forum and the Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented that once the Covid restrictions allowed there would be a transition from online training to in-person events which would allow more focussed and interactive training to take place.

Members expressed their concern at the reticence of some organisations to allow in persons exercises considering the relaxing of general Covid restrictions elsewhere.

### **Decision**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Chief Emergency Planning Officer continues to develop the Emergency Planning Unit Annual Action Plan and the quarterly report to provide assurance to members that the key considerations continue to be met and that members are updated at Joint Committee meetings referencing any amendments / additional actions.

## **14. Financial Management Update Report** (*Director of Resources and Development and Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the forecast outturn as at 31st October, 2021 for current financial year ending 31st March, 2022.

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

The Group Accountant reported that the latest forecast outturn for the Emergency Planning Unit's budget indicated a potential favourable variance of £7,000 which would be transferred to the Unit's reserves.

The latest position for the Local Resilience Forum reflected the expectation that a £100,000 of the £208,000 Section 31 grant awarded by government to enhance LRF capabilities will be spent in the next financial year and therefore transferred into an earmarked reserve at year end. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that much of the additional LRF funding had been utilised to address the response to HM Governments resilience review and a forthcoming LRF Strategic Board meeting would be looking at potentially using some of the funding to enhance community resilience in response to emergencies.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **15. Key themes in the response to the call for evidence** (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

### **Purpose of report**

To assist members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee (EPJC) in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the Emergency Planning Unit and its value to the four unitary authorities.

To inform members of the EPJC of the ongoing dialogue and activities to support the national resilience review being led by HM Government.

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

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the government's paper "Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy" significant attention was paid to the future and changing demands of ensuring the UK is resilient. Subsequently an open call for evidence was made to shape the National Resilience Strategy. The Local Resilience Forum had considered the issues and responded to the consultation and the key elements of that response were set out in the report. The response focussed on the issues of duplication among LRF's and the need for central guidance on the expectations of LRF's.

Members were concerned at the lack of national guidance for LRF's and also that the current inquiry into the Manchester Arena bombing was likely to lead to recommendations around preparedness for such emergency incidents. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer also highlighted the fact that the Inquiry had called the Chair of the Local Resilience Forum in Manchester to give evidence at the inquiry. LRF's were not originally seen as 'response' bodies but as 'preparedness' forums to enhance local resilience through inter-agency cooperation and planning. Any potential move to them being more responsible for emergency response would need both guidance and support to make that change. This concern was also shared by 'our' LRF.

Members requested that a report be submitted to the Joint Committee once the Chief Emergency Planning Officer had some substantial guidance from government.

A Member raised the concerns being expressed among the coastal communities and the local inshore fishing fleet at the large numbers of dead crustaceans being washed ashore. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that he had no specific details on cause of the incident but was aware it was being investigated by the Environment Agency and undertook to obtain some further information for Members for the next meeting.

### **Decision**

That the ongoing review of resilience being undertaken nationally be noted and that an update report on the implications of any changes be received in due course.

## **16. Incident Report (14th August – 12th November 2021)** (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

### **Purpose of report**

To inform members of the EPJC of the incidents reported and responded to by the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU). The report covers the period between the 14th August – 12th November 2021.

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

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted details of the incidents that Emergency Planning Unit staff had been involved in over recent months.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

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

None.

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 2 March 2022 commencing at 10.00 am at Emergency Planning Annex, Stockton Police Station.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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