

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 JULY 2023

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

Present:

Councillor: Councillor Sue Little (Hartlepool Borough Council) (In the Chair)

Councillors: Councillor Theo Furness (Middlesbrough Borough Council)
Councillor Clare Gamble (Stockton Borough Council)

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Adam Brook (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

2. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2023

Received.

4. Emergency Planning Joint Committee Introduction Paper (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide the new members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee (EPJC) with an overview of the working arrangements and wider context of the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit to enable effective oversight of the CEPU and CLRF activities and to enable members to contribute to future direction and policy. For reference a copy of the EPJC constitution was appended to the report.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report setting out for the new Members of the Committee the role of the Committee and the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU). The report identified the legislation under which the service operated and how each local authority coordinated with the EPU.

The report also highlighted the role of the Local Resilience Forum and how that operated in partnership with the EPU. The report set out details of the standing reports that would come to all meetings together with some additional subject specific reports programmed for the forthcoming year.

Members discussed some of the major incidents that the Unit had dealt with including issues such as the high spring tides and potential for tidal surges in September and October. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that while the astronomical information was known at this time and there was ongoing monitoring and consideration, the major aspect and concern would be the weather prevailing at the time and its potential to generate a surge. He outlined that this could not be predicted with any real accuracy until about five days before the event.

Members questioned the previous incidents and how learning from them was incorporated into local plans. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that a register of incidents was kept, lessons identified through debriefs and Emergency Planning Officers from agencies ensured plans met the more frequent events and that local resilience and Community Risk Registers were up to date. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that a report could be brought to a future meeting to show how Community Resilience Plans and projects were designed and developed. Members commented that environmental and climatic changes were influencing the severity and frequency of many weather incidents and questioned how this was changing local emergency plans. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented that the focus of the LRF including risk assessment under guidance is approximately 5 years forward, however the need to start looking much further forward has been identified in a number of national reviews and the recently released UK Government Resilience Framework.

The Chair congratulated the officers involved in the recent Tall Ships event which had gone off without any reported issues. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that EPU officers had been involved in the planning for the event and on the day.

Decision

1. The Committee noted the Emergency Planning Joint Committee terms of reference and Local Government Association guidance for councillors.

2. The Committee requested that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer arrange introductory training from the Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College.
3. The Committee supported the reporting schedule, as outlined, and requested further information on the Community Risk Register and local plans.

5. Activities Report 01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023 *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To assist members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee 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 reported on the progress made to date on the EPU's 2023/24 Action Plan. While many actions had not yet commenced, mainly due to staff being involved in other activities, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that he was not concerned at this time that the action plan would be delivered. The report contained a number of examples of work completed including the update of all the contact information the Unit needed for a range of emergency situations.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer also reported that through the Government Grant Funding to LRFs, a lot of innovative work was underway in the Local Resilience Forum, though the grant regime did require a significant amount of reporting back to government.

Members discussed the emergency plans held by local companies, such as those with duties under the COMAH regulations and how the duties on the Local Authority were recharged for by the Unit. In terms of LRF funding the Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented that Category 1 and 2 agencies under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 contributed but that funding was inconsistent between partners. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer identified that there are areas of work with organisations and the private sector which cannot be recharged for but are undertaken due to the benefit of the area or need.

Members discussed some of the potential major incidents that could affect the whole region and how they were planned for. Following a query from a member the Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that events such as tsunamis whilst feasible were not as high on the local risk register in comparison to a number of other risks. Members requested that a report on the headline risks be submitted to a future meeting.

Members also referred to the recent test of the emergency cell broadcast via mobile phones and how this would be utilised in the future. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that he fully supported the system, though at present there were still issues to be resolved before it can be fully utilised. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer identified that the system is well applied to flooding via the Environment Agency and hoped that the service would be widened and adapted to cover a number of other specific risk scenarios, he identified that there would need to be an appropriate local strategic commander to authorise release of messages.

Decision

1. That the update on the Emergency Planning Unit Action Plan be noted.
2. That an update on the Risks Register and Major Incident Plans be submitted to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

6. Incidents Report 01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023 (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To assist members of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the Emergency Planning Unit 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 that had been responded to by the Emergency Planning Unit during the April to June period. A number of these incidents had been followed up with multi-agency debriefs, the learning from which was shared with agencies and where appropriate actioned via the Local Resilience Forum / agencies internal procedures.

Members noted the incidents and briefly discussed the Tees Barrage failure and outage that resulted in the loss of the national 999 service. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that an OFCOM report on the service outage was still awaited. Members requested an update be provided for a future meeting.

The meeting also briefly discussed the fire hazard issues around lithium batteries used in electric vehicles, bicycles and scooters and the potential impacts on the Teesside area especially reference the potential risks of storage and recycling of batteries at end of life. Members noted that there were a number of reported fires where batteries in electric bicycles and scooters left on charge overnight had set alight. There were issues associated with non-regulated batteries being used in some products, and

also available on the after-market, and there was a push for national guidance and awareness reference the dangers associated.

Decision

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a report be provided to a future meeting on the national 999 service outage.

7. Financial Management Outturn Report *(Director of Finance, IT and Digital and Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To provide details of the outturn for the financial year ending 31st March, 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant reported that the final outturn position for the Emergency Planning Service, was a minor adverse variance of £4,000, before the release of reserves. The variance resulted from slight reductions in recharges from external bodies, though this was largely offset by a favourable variance in staffing costs.

In relation to the Local Resilience Forum, the Group Accountant reported that there was a favourable variance of £39,000 which mainly related to underspends against non-staffing costs, as the scheme had not become fully operational until the 4 posts were filled. This would enable the contributions of partners to be carried forward in a reserve.

Members discussed the funding arrangements for the Emergency Planning Services, and the Chief Emergency Planning Officer indicated that while much of the base funding came from the four partner local authorities, there was other funding from that came from chargeable activities, particularly under the COMAH regulations and also contributions from partner organisations.

In relation to the LRF funding, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented that the government was looking to make LRF's more visible and accountable and was to engage 11 areas to trial new models of operation under a stronger LRFs programme. With Cleveland already receiving grant funding for the LRF Pilot Scheme, the LRF strategic Board indicated that 'we' would be happy to act as a comparator to those involved.

Members asked if the next financial report to the Committee could include a report on the reserves currently held for both the Emergency Planning Unit and the Local Resilience Forum.

Decision

1. That the Outturn Report for 2022/23 be noted.
2. That the next Financial Update Report include details of the reserves for both the Emergency Planning Unit and the Local Resilience Forum.

8. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 11.10 am.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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