

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE
MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD
21 NOVEMBER 2023

The meeting commenced at 10.30 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
Asiya Dawood, Emergency Planning Officer (Community Resilience)
Jon Hepworth, Group Accountant (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

21. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Adam Brook (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

22. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

23. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023

Received.

24. 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 31st March, 2024.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant reported that the latest forecast for the budget outturn showed an improved a slight reduction in the call on reserves, down from £21,000 to £16,000 due to some reductions in employee costs since

the last report, due to pension savings and a vacant post which was anticipated from December, 2023.

The latest forecast outturn for the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) budget showed a favourable variance of £18,000. Employee costs were slightly higher than budgeted as a result of the recent pay award. There was a favourable variance in relation to non-employee costs as there had been less grant awarded than anticipated. Income was higher than anticipated as a result of additional contributions received in relation to training. The favourable variance will be transferred to reserves and expenditure re-phased into future years.

Decision

That the latest outturn forecast for 2023/24 for the Emergency Planning Unit and the Local Resilience Forum be noted.

25. Industrial Emergency Planning (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide EPJC members with an awareness and understanding of the duties on placed on Local Authorities under a range of legislation, the relevance to the Cleveland area and how these duties are met by the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU).

To inform the members of the work undertaken by the CEPU in connection with the statutory requirements relating to industrial emergency planning.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Emergency Planning Officer (Industry) outlined the background to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 (COMAH) and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996 (PSR) and the duties placed upon local authorities to produce appropriate emergency plans and regularly test those plans.

The Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit is undertaking a review of the current COMAH External Plan layout and structure. The Cleveland area currently has 26 Upper Tier COMAH sites accounting for approximately 10% of the UK total. Across Cleveland there are numerous areas containing both businesses and residential properties which fall within COMAH Public Information Zones, these are predominantly in areas around Billingham and Wilton chemical complexes. Due to the nature of the Cleveland area there are also numerous occasions where one COMAH site sits within the Public Information of another, in these cases operators have been assigned into “domino groups” to allow them to better understand shared potential impacts and improve response.

In addition to the above COMAH establishments there are also 68 major accident (MAH) pipelines. This is approximately a minimum of 350Km of pipeline to which the major accident hazard section of the Pipeline Safety Regulations (1996) apply.

There are a number of proposed COMAH sites being proposed in the Cleveland area, the HSE has advised of another potential 10 proposed developments comprising a mixture of Upper and Lower Tier COMAH sites, however at this time these are proposals and no formal notification has been issued, on issue of this notification the CEPU will work with the operators, emergency services and other partners to develop emergency plans.

The Redcar Hydrogen Community Project to 2000 properties in the Coatham Ward of Redcar may see an additional three new COMAH sites being developed on the Teesworks site The trial date has been set for June 2025 and will run for a two year trial period. The project is a collaboration between Northern Gas Networks, BP and EDF. The CEPO advised that liaison with the emergency services and NGN was ongoing.

The Chair raised the issue of the gas odour that had been occurring across a wide area from Seaton Carew, Seals Sands, Billingham, and recently in Middlesbrough. The Chair was concerned that there was the potential that the regular occurrence of the odour could lead to people accepting it and not reporting actual gas leaks in or around their property. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that he had been in contact with Northern Gas Networks (NGN) who had reported they were dealing with a significant increase in the number of gas reports.

Information from NGN and the Met Office had been used to try and provide some detail to the origination of the odour and it was likely from the Seal Sands / Cowpen Bewley area, and investigations are continuing reference the possible sources including industry, waste processing, landfill and natural processes. NGN were, however, quite certain this wasn't a mains gas leak. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer did comment that people still needed to report the odour as the more reports would lead to a quicker identification of the source and the ongoing risk of genuine gas leaks.

The meeting also discussed some of the future risks that were likely from the developments within the area as a result of the changing industrial processes, including the potential of a plant for the recycling of lithium batteries and the importation of raw lithium. Some of the issues around disposable vapes and their dangers in waste collection were also highlighted.

Decision

That the report be noted.

26. Training and Exercising (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide EPJC members with an overview of the processes in place to discharge the expectations on the Local Authorities and wider LRF agencies to train and exercise and CEPU's role in facilitating this.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the Cleveland LRF Training and Exercising Group (TEG) is a multi-agency co-ordinating group which is responsible for determining the annual exercise and training calendar and providing advice and guidance in respect of all forms of multi-agency training and exercising. This was carried out in conjunction with the North East Training and Exercising Group and the other TEG's in the region.

The TEG is not responsible for the planning and delivery of each exercise / event unless specifically agreed at the outset. This responsibility lies with the sponsoring LRF Group, agency or planning team established for this purpose. The group reports to and is overseen by the LRF's Tactical Business Group. Every year the TEG facilitates a training needs analysis across all partner agencies. This process enables the coordination of training and exercising, ensuring value for money, reduced duplication and coherence in the training programme that agencies access.

It was highlighted that in the previous financial year: -

- Over 40 training events and courses were undertaken supporting a range of subject areas including Public Safety, Log Keeping, Public Events, Strategic Training, Multi-agency Information Cells, Radiation Transport Incidents, Storm Surges, Health Structures, Cell Broadcast, Disaster Victim Identification / Mass Fatalities, Scientific and Technological Advice Cell and Major Accident Hazard Pipelines.
- Over 15 multi-agency exercises were held including themes such as: Power outage, Industrial incidents, Flooding, Heatwave, Water supply disruption, Pipeline, maritime pollution, public safety at events.

The Officer also indicated that the Cleveland LRF TEG had developed a number of innovations including the Training Needs Analysis and exercise bidding process now undertaken on a regional basis. The ability to analyse common patterns across multiple exercises was proving beneficial as was the use of technology to increase the access of LRF agencies staff to online briefings and virtual observation of exercises.

Decision

1. That once confirmed by the strategic board, Committee members be issued with a copy of the Exercise Calendar for 2024-25 to enable them to have appropriate oversight.
2. That the Training and Exercising Group continue to monitor actions to ensure lessons arising from exercises and training events are completed by the most appropriate agency.
3. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer examines how future reporting to Members can incorporate the learning from exercises and incidents as a means of assuring Members that active learning and embedding is being undertaken.

27. **Whole of Society Resilience, WOSR** (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide members with an overview of the National appetite to build Whole of Society Resilience (WOSR), outline what WOSR means within the Cleveland area and outline the activities undertaken and future planning.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Emergency Planning Officer (Community Resilience) reported that within the UK Government's Resilience Framework, (UKGRF) released Dec 2022, there are 3 core principles for building resilience these are:

- A developed and shared understanding of the civil contingencies risks we face is fundamental;
- Prevention rather than cure wherever possible: a greater emphasis on preparation and prevention;
- Resilience is a 'whole of society' endeavour, so we must be more transparent and empower everyone to make a contribution.

WOSR aimed to harness the strengths and infrastructure of existing structures e.g. organisations, assets, academia, and businesses in society to enhance their role within their communities and provide additional resources. The intention being that communities understand their needs, thereby allowing emergency responders to focus their efforts on those most in need and recognising the contribution that local communities play in managing their own resilience. The Government is already demonstrating far greater sharing of information with the public, the National Risk Register, for example, provides a level of detail that previously would not be in the public domain.

There were challenges, however, WOSR by definition can be too big / too broad and the boundary between the LRF and resilience focused work can become blurred. Therefore, as a LRF and community, it was necessary to

focus in on what we wish to and can realistically achieve. A single LRF wide strategy was seen as enabling this through agreed an agreed ambition. How this was being undertaken through areas of focus, Community Workshops and the development of future Community Resilience Work was set out in further detail in the report.

The Officer indicated that one of the areas being looked at was the dissemination of information particularly to younger people who sourced their information from the internet and particularly social media. There was concern around the dis-information that too frequently accompanied major incidents. There was also to be a further workshop in January and an invitation to that would be circulated to Members.

Decision

1. That members support the work on Whole of Society resilience being undertaken within the Emergency Planning Unit and wider Local Resilience Forum in line with HM Governments resilience Framework.
2. That Members support the developing work around whole of society resilience both in terms of the strategy and how the role of elected members can be integrated and support the development of Whole of Society Resilience.

28. Activities Report 01/09/2023 - 03/11/2023 (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To assist members of the Emergency planning Joint (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 submitted a summary of progress made against the Unit's 2023/24 action plan and the 2023/24 LRF Action Plan for the Committee's information.

Decision

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Chief Emergency Planning Officer continue to develop the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit Annual Action Plan and the standard report to provide assurance to Members that the key considerations continue to be met and that Members are updated at the quarterly committee meetings in relation to any amendments or additional actions.

29. Incidents Report 01/09/2023 – 03/11/2023 (*Chief
Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To assist members of the 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 of note for the period 1 September to 3 November 2023 for the Committee's information. It was noted that Storm Babet had not caused the disruption that had initially been anticipated.

Decision

That the report be noted.

30. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 19 March, 2024 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 11.30 am.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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