

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

7 JANUARY 2025

The meeting commenced at 10.00am at the Stockton Baptist Church,
Bishop Street, Stockton-on-Tees

Present:

Councillor: Councillor Karen Oliver (Hartlepool Borough Council) (In the Chair)

Also Present: Councillor Sue Little (Hartlepool Borough Council)

Officers: Stuart Marshall, Chief Emergency Planning Officer
Jon Hepworth, Group Accountant
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

21. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Clare Besford (Stockton Borough Council) and Theo Furness (Middlesbrough Borough Council)

22. Inquorate Meeting

The Chair expressed concern that despite efforts to ensure attendance the meeting was inquorate again and indicated that this would be discussed following the meeting. It was agreed that the items on the agenda could be considered given they were for information.

23. Declarations of interest by Members

Councillor Oliver declared a personal interest (family member works in Emergency Planning Unit)

24. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2024

Received.

25. Emergency Plans and Protocols (*Principal Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To assist members of the EPJC in oversight of Emergency Plans and procedures that the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit is author or custodian of and provide assurance reference the systems in place regarding emergency planning.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that as a category one responder as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 there was a duty on Local Authorities to “put in place emergency plans”. A non-statutory resilient standard #4 Emergency Planning identified desired outcomes, legal duties, good practice and leading practice. In addition to the CCA 2004 there was other legislation for specific risks that were more prescriptive in both content and time scale of review. The main ones that fall into this category and require planning from a Local Authority were the Control of Major Accident Hazards (2015) (chemical sites with a threshold of dangerous substances) REPPiR (Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information 2019) and MAHP (Major accident Hazard pipelines 1996). In addition, there were a number of other risk specific plans where a risk (identified on the risk register) specific plan would be beneficial (i.e. flooding, maritime pollution, etc.).

It was reported that the production of the plans was not an end in itself with an eight step approach referred to as the emergency planning cycle being used to develop and embed the plans, as set out in Appendix 1. Members were referred to a summary of the key emergency plans as detailed in an appendix to the report.

All plans were kept both on the Hartlepool Borough Council internal server and Resilience Direct (a government web based portal that allowed storage up to official sensitive documents). In addition to this Major Incident Plans for the respective councils were kept on their own systems. Finally all-time critical plans had paper copies in Police HQ as well as paper copies being made available for council emergency control centres.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted and that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer continues to develop emergency plans and monitor these plans covering legislative duty, government guidance and best practice.

26. Learning from Exercises, Incidents and Inquiries (Chief Emergency Planning Officer)

Purpose of report

To provide EPJC members with an overview of the processes in place to support the identification and management of lessons identified.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the Cleveland LRF and EPU had several processes in place to aid the learning of the lessons identified in exercises, incidents and from inquiries. The report aimed to provide members with assurance that the systems were in place, whilst highlighting the challenges associated and further development required. Significant efforts were being made by the team to ensure that effective systems were in place although several more areas for development had been identified which were hoped to be in place within the next twelve months.

The Committee was referred to a table set out in the report which provided a summary of learning from incidents as at December 2024. Whilst there was a backlog of actions that were being worked through, the background to the reasons some actions had been agreed as redundant was provided as set out in the report.

In the discussion that followed the Chair commended the work of the Unit and welcomed the arrangements around developing and sharing good practice. It was noted that the reasons for a number of actions being redundant were as a result of a change in process as opposed to a backlog.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer responded to a number of queries raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to ongoing work with international partners in terms of sharing good practice and learning from exercises, incidents and inquiries as well as the process and powers available in relation to managing events.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted and that the Chief Emergency Planning Officer continues to develop the systems, reduce the backlog of learning and report back to the Committee in 12 months time.

27. Activities Report 1st September 2024 – 18th December 2024 (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 2024/25 action plan and the 2024/25 LRF Action Plan, details which were included in the report. The report included information in relation to additional pieces of work by the CEPU relating to local authorities in the reporting period not included within the annual plan.

In the discussion that followed, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer responded to issues raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to rest centre processes and procedures including responsibilities following major incidents. The challenges around securing community support to assist neighbourhoods following incidents were discussed including the support arrangements in place following the fire at the Odeon and recent flooding incidents in the Tees Valley. The Chair highlighted the importance of staff retention, the option to seek support from the town's MP and agreed to explore this issue following the meeting.

In response to a query raised, examples of the developments and testing of a new protocol with Public Health colleagues were provided. The links to public health and limited powers available under the licensing objectives were also debated.

The Chair welcomed the work undertaken by the Emergency Planning Unit in terms of staff training arrangements and progress on actions to date.

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.

28. 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 financial year ending 31st March, 2025.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant provided the forecast revenue outturn for the current financial year ending 31 March 2025. There was a favourable variance of £15,000 in the main emergency planning budget as at 30 November 2024. There was a favourable variance of £30,000 on employee costs as a result of a vacant post and pensions savings, which was partly offset by an adverse variance of £10,000 on non-staffing costs, details of which were set out in the report.

The revenue outturn for the Local Resilience Forum was also reported with the Group Accountant explaining that the latest forecast was an £8,000 favourable variance, details of which were provided.

The Chair commended the team for good financial management.

Decision

That the latest outturn forecast for 2024/25 be noted.

29. Incidents Report 1 September 2024 – 18 December 2024 (*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 that staff had been involved in or notified of during the reporting period which included evacuation due to unsafe structure, flooding, fire and storm issues, details of which were set out in Appendix 1.

Members noted the incidents reported and sought further information in relation to a number of aspects of the report to which the Chief Emergency Planning Officer provided clarification in terms of the support provided by the team and other agencies as a result of the incidents. Clarification was

provided in relation to the evacuation procedures and the arrangements in place to support residents following the fire at the Old Odean Cinema. Following concerns raised in relation to the fire risks associated with lithium batteries and electric car charging mechanisms the Chief Emergency Planning Officer agreed to explore this issue with the Fire Brigade following the meeting.

Decision

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the issues raised around the fire risks associated with lithium batteries and electric car charging mechanisms be explored with the Fire Brigade following the meeting.

30. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

PUBLICATION DATE: 13 January 2024