

EMERGENCY PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

25 March 2025

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

Present:

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

Councillors: Councillor Adam Brook (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Councillor Clare Besford (Stockton Borough Council)

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Peter Gavigan (Middlesbrough Borough Council) was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Theo Furness.

Officers: Stuart Marshall, Chief Emergency Planning Officer
Jon Hepworth, Group Accountant
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

31. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Theo Furness (Middlesbrough Borough Council).

32. Declarations of interest by Members

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

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2025

Minutes received

34. Incidents Report 19/12/24 – 09/03/2025 (*Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To assist members in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the EPU and its value to the 4 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 reporting 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. On occasion lessons were shared nationally on the Joint Organisational Learning platform.

Decision

That the report and incidents listed be noted.

35. Activities Report 19/12/24 – 09/03/25 and future CEPU and LRF priorities *(Chief Emergency Planning Officer)*

Purpose of report

To assist members in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of the EPU and its value to the 4 Unitary Authorities.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported on progress made to date on the EPU's 2024/25 Action Plan and the 2024/25 LRF Action Plan. The report contained a number of examples of work completed, additional pieces of work by the CEPU relating to local authorities in the period not included in the annual plan as well as significant pieces of work undertaken as part of the Local Resilience Forum annual action plan. Any actions on the CEPU and LRF action plans which had not yet been completed would be assessed as to the reason for this with the potential to remove them from the list if appropriate. A large number of actions on the LRF related to external training objectives and it had already been decided that these would be removed from the LRF action plan as they were dependent on agency availability which was not something the EPU could control, the list of objectives would be maintained but external to the LRF action plan.

CEPU and LRF priorities for 2025/2026 were also outlined.

Members queried how the activation system works in actuality. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that each Council has allocated Borough Co-ordinating Officers who can be contacted day or night. The EPU use an automated system to contact partners in the event of a major incident, whereby staff can monitor response rates and follow up with required agencies where the message has not been acknowledged. The CEPU hold contact information for relevant agencies control rooms, that is used in the event of a key agency not responding to the automated alert.

A member queried whether external developers would usually consult with the EPU on developments in known flood risk areas, even if the local planning authority was not involved. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer assumed that the same planning requirements for development in flood risk based on national guidance would apply regardless of planning department but advised he would follow up.

Members queried whether the LRF report and reports on general planning exercises were made available. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that following exercises debriefs were held and that reports were produced for individual emergency planning exercises and made available to each authority and it was up to them how far learning was shared. There was a discussion on the representation on the Committee and the portfolios in councils that may also have an interest in the work of the CEPU / LRF and emergency management. If members felt this needed to be shared wider he was happy to contact individual authorities about this and happy to provide more information. The Chair indicated she would raise this issue with Hartlepool's leader.

A member raised concerns around flooding in the Norton area and queried whether a flood plan was in place for Leven Road due to issues with raw sewage in gardens. The member offered to provide further information for the Chief Emergency Planning Officer to follow up with relevant partners.

The Chair requested further information on work around funding for the VIPER project in order to make Hartlepool's MP aware. She thanked the Unit for the national and regional work they had carried out, praising their hard work and innovation. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer gave credit to the EPU officers.

Decision

That the report be noted.

36. Financial Management Update Report (*Director of Finance, IT & Digital and Chief Emergency Planning Officer*)

Purpose of report

To provide details of the forecast outturn for the current financial year ending 31st March 2025 and;

To propose the budget for 2025/2026 and contributions to be requested from Councils.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Group Accountant reported that the final outturn positions for the main Emergency Planning and LRF Budgets showed small favourable variances as at 31 March 2025 which will be transferred to ringfenced reserves.

In relation to the 2025/26 budget, it was reported that the Emergency Planning Unit was self-financing and mainly determined by the Local Authority partners and income from fees and recharges. For the 2025/26 financial year the recommended Local Authority contributions were £364,000 which was a 2% increase compared to the previous year.

The proposed LRF budget was outlined in the report but it was highlighted that any future HM Government grant funding from April 2025 was uncertain. Contributions from partners had been increased by 2%.

Members were assured that based on these expected figures the budget would balance, however should government funding decrease the were monies in the reserves to cover this eventuality

Decision

- I. That the latest outturn forecast for 2024/25 be noted
- II. That the 2025/26 budget for Emergency Planning be approved including the 2% increase in the Contribution for each Council.
- III. That the 2025/26 Local Resilience Forum budget be approved.

37. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

The Chair noted this would be Councillor Besford's final meeting. She thanked her for her contributions over the past year and wished her the best with her future portfolio.

The Chair paid tribute to the current clerk, Denise Wimpenny, who was retiring this week and welcomed the new clerk, Jo Stubbs.

The Chair also noted an interest in potentially visiting unfamiliar flood sites with EPU officers in future. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer suggested this might be facilitated or actioned in conjunction with the Regional Flooding and Coastguard Committee.

The meeting concluded at 11am.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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