

CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE held in the Authority Rooms, Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston Mere, Washington on MONDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Clark, Cooney, Heron and Renton.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor T. Wright.

Minutes

11. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 7 July, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The PITT Review : Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods : Final Report – DRAFT

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) highlighting the key findings of Sir Michael Pitt's final report 'Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods'.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Bowman outlined the report to Members drawing attention to the two annexes to the report that showed the great deal of work that needed to be done in respect of the 90 recommendations that came from the report. Members were advised that a considerable amount of work was being undertaken by Local Resilience Forum members including the Local Authorities and the Fire and Rescue Services to respond to the requirements of the Pitt report. Ms. Bowman reported that the Emergency Planning Unit was heavily involved in the co-ordination of and support for the arrangements which were being developed.

Following the outline of the report attention turned to the recent flooding that had occurred in the region. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that it had been a lively weekend in Tyne and Wear with many properties being affected all over the county. Members were informed that the situation had not been as bad as in neighbouring Northumberland who made a request for mutual aid. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer was pleased to report that the Emergency Planning Unit were able to provide this support.

Following the outline of the report, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Clark, with reference to the floods, queried whether it would be a worthwhile exercise for smaller, close knit communities like Morpeth to establish a register which people could sign up to who were willing to offer accommodation to those affected by these types of incidents. Ms. Bowman agreed that it would be something worth looking at and would refer the suggestion to colleagues in Northumberland to consider as part of their debrief.

In response to a query from Councillor Heron, Ms. Bowman advised that buildings were identified as part of the pre planning agreements that were in place with the contact details of who would open the building in the event of an emergency.

With reference to the Pitt report, Councillor Renton queried if anything was to be done in relation to Planning Authorities regarding building applications that were on flood risk areas. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer replied that it was a recommendation of the report to promote a presumption against building in high risk areas.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

12. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the work of the LRF to further develop local arrangements to mitigate the effects of any future flood emergencies be endorsed; and
- (iii) further progress reports be received as appropriate.

National Emergency Plan – Fuel (NEP-F) Update

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update of progress following the release of Version 2 of the National Emergency Plan – Fuel (NEP-F).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Bowman advised that this was a brief report providing an overview of the planning that was ongoing following the last fuel crisis and the work going on behind the scenes. Members were advised that the detailed arrangements of the Plan could not be published due to the Plan having 'Protect' status but in broad terms the plan outlined provision for communicating information to the public about any disruption, including messages about conserving fuel, using public transport, and also how the emergency services would ensure access to fuel.

With reference to the invite of relevant fuel retailers to attend a briefing session on the plan, Councillor Clark pointed out that many of the filling stations in the region were owned by people who lived hundreds of miles away. He stressed the importance of these people participating in such an exercise. Ms. Bowman responded that the industry had been invited to identify who should attend the briefing from their organisation to ensure the correct level of representation. Members were advised that the briefing had been very well attended, the roles and responsibilities of local responders and operators were clarified, and some minor issues requiring further clarification identified.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

13. RESOLVED that the report be noted and further updates be received as appropriate.

EPU Performance Report – 1st Quarter 2008

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with a progress report on the analysis of performance against targets for the first quarter (April – June 2008) as detailed in the EPU Business Plan 2008/10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Bowman outlined the report to the Committee stating that the progress reports were produced five times per year but to date had not been routinely reported to the Committee. She proposed that the Committee considered the regular receipt of the quarterly reports in order to form a general overview of the EPU's performance.

Upon consideration, it was:-

14. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted; and
- (ii) the information relating to performance targets be formally reported to the Civil Contingencies Committee on a quarterly basis.

Pandemic Influenza Excess Deaths Workshop

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an overview of the Pandemic Influenza Excess Deaths (PIED) Workshop on Friday, 18 July, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. L. Horwood, Deputy Chief Emergency Planning Officer, was in attendance to outline the report to Members. The Committee were advised that the government guidance collectively suggests different ways of working and was defined in three phases:-

- Phase 1 – Business Continuity plans for individual organisations should be in place
- Phase 2 – Would see the relaxation of some regulatory areas of the death management process
- Phase 3 – This phase would see changes in the law. For example, the 14 day Coroners rule would be stretched to a 28 day rule. This applied to the requirement for the deceased to have seen a medical doctor 14 days before death thus generally ruling out the need for a post mortem/inquiry.

Members were provided with an outline of the workshop event and Ms Horwood advised that the evaluation report was awaiting agreement from the PIED Group. She stated that this could be distributed to Members once approved if required.

Members were also advised that a representative from central government attended the workshop, who commended Northumbria LRF for holding the workshop, being the first LRF in the UK to address this important topic. It was also stated that the outcomes of the workshop would help to inform the development of central policy and guidance relating to the management of Excess Deaths.

Ms Horwood advised that it was proposed that further similar events would be held to look at the issues raised in more detail.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Heron queried what contingency plans were in place to back up the need for doctors, nurses, and funeral directors etc. who would be on the front line should an outbreak occur. Ms. Horwood responded that business continuity plans were in place and in terms of front line staff any potential shortages would be addressed by training staff and bringing recently retired people back to assist with providing services. She also stated that the plans were working on the assumption that some areas would be affected worse than others so mutual aid could also be relied upon.

Members having considered the report, it was:-

15. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the next steps outlined in the report be agreed; and
- (ii) the report be noted and further updates be received as appropriate.

Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) Workshop

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members about the Northumbria Local Authority (LA) Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) Gap Analysis Workshop which took place on Friday, 27th June, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that the Workshop was well attended and that the Tyne and Wear EPU was given the responsibility for writing and disseminating HAC Guidance.

Upon discussion, it was:-

16. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the progress made in the area be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Emergency Planning Society Conference 2008

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the matters discussed at the Emergency Planning Society Conference 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Bowman having outlined the report to Members, it was:-

17. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) J. BELL,
Chairman.