

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, 12 OCTOBER, 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Clark, Jordan and T. Wright.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N. Forbes, Renton and Scaplehorn.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

9. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6 July 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU) Business Plan 2009-2010

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update to Members on the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU) Business Plan for 2009/10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The report outlined changes in the preparation of the TWEPU Business Plan that had occurred as a result of a review of preparedness across the whole of Tyne and Wear.

The way in which the TWEPU Business Plan was set had fundamentally changed. The strategic priorities that underpinned and informed the TWEPU Business/Work Plan were now set by the Strategic Management Board (SMB) which then enabled supporting actions to be developed in order to populate the Business Plan. This would enable the Plan to align more closely with the strategic priorities that the SMB had identified across Tyne and Wear, and should ensure that it aligned more closely with the business plans within each Council and that of the Tyne and Wear Resilience Officers Group (TWROPS).

At the SMB workshop in October 2008 activity focused on creating Terms of Reference for the SMB and copies were tabled at the Committee meeting.

The new approach was intended to ensure a more effective use of resources both at Tyne and Wear and at individual Council level, through co-ordinated tasking of TWEPU and TWROPS which should also enable the identification of issues that needed to be referred to the Local Resilience Forum for multi-agency treatment.

These changes had resulted in later publication of the Business Plan than usual, which was mainly due to the fundamental improvements and changes made to the way that SMB worked, which needed to set against a background of Councils dealing with the Pandemic Influenza outbreak. It was usual to expect a period of transition with any new way of working, and it was anticipated that future business planning activity would be delivered within normal timescales. The learning from this year's new process would be taken forward to inform the Business Plan from 2010 onwards.

10. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the changes in the Business Plan setting process be noted;
- (ii) the forthcoming changes to the performance reporting be noted; and
- (iii) the TWEPU Business/Work Plan for 2009-2010 be agreed.

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Review

The Committee considered a report (copy circulated) by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) on an important review being undertaken of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The LRF was an extremely important process that provided the strategic direction for all emergency planning, training, exercising and response activities in Northumbria.

The recently launched review of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA), known as the 'CCA Enhancement Programme' was likely to see the role and responsibilities of the LRF further strengthened; and so this review was particularly timely, as fundamental to ensuring that arrangements remained fit for purpose.

As confirmed by the Audit Commission Review undertaken in 2006, the current LRF process and supporting arrangements had integrity, and it was intended that the review should build upon and improve these good arrangements to ensure that robust co-operation arrangements remained in place at every level.

Councillor Bell thanked Kate Cochrane for her work on the review.

11. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the role of TWEPU in leading this important review be acknowledged; and
- (iii) further reports be received on the outcomes once the Review Team had concluded its work.

Pandemic Influenza Update

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) on recently released planning assumptions in relation to pandemic influenza.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The LRF Pandemic Influenza Working Group (PIWG) had been working to incorporate the new planning assumptions into the LRF Multi Agency Pandemic Plan.

Kate Cochrane, Resilience Manager (Community), reported that since the last week of July the rate of new cases had slowed considerably, nevertheless growth could resume again for example as schools and higher education establishments re-opened in September or as the expected second wave of the virus developed. At present the health sector had activated their response arrangements (including anti-viral collection centres), but there had not been a significant impact on the Fire Authority.

Councillor Charlton asked how residents could receive advice/help on swine flu and Kate Cochrane explained that if they rang the Swine Flu Information Line (0800 1 513 513) they could receive automated information and by ringing 0800 1 513 100 they could access an assessment process. During the assessment process, people would be asked to describe their symptoms and then they would be advised on appropriate further action.

It was confirmed that the Fire Authority needed to learn lessons from the unfolding pandemic waves from the H1N1 virus and they also needed to continue to plan for many different strains of the influenza virus. The threat of new emerging strains of influenza on a global basis would remain. Version 3 of the LRF MAPIP still focused on the original planning assumptions issued by the Department of Health. These assumptions were based on a strain similar to H5N1 (known as Avian Flu), which was a more aggressive form of the virus than the Swine Flu.

In order to address the specific characteristics of Swine Flu, an annex specifically about the H1N1 strain of flu had been added to the LRF Multi Agency Pandemic Influenza Plan.

12. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received on this important issue as the situation develops.

Pandemic Influenza H1N1 Awareness Training

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) on an update on multi agency awareness training activity in relation to pandemic influenza.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Joe Walton, Senior Resilience Officer reported that a Pandemic Influenza H1N1 training event had been held on 16 July 2009 to “raise awareness of partner agencies of the ongoing planning in the Northumbria LRF area regarding Pandemic Influenza”.

The Pandemic Influenza Awareness training sessions were considered to be particularly successful. They provided an opportunity to focus on the work in progress to ensure effective multi-agency co-operation in this important area of resilience response. Both events were well attended by both Category 1 and Category 2 organisations. Of particular note was the effectiveness of the Plenary Sessions which allowed for greater in-depth information to be accessed from the lead health organisations.

The event also provided a greater insight for delegates into the role of the Northumbria LRF and the sub-groups and highlighted the effectiveness of the LRF and reinforced its position as the strategic driver behind the well established multi-agency working arrangements that existed within the Tyne and Wear and Northumberland areas.

At a time when the H1N1 outbreak was stretching resources across all partner organisations the commitment and professionalism shown by the Northumbria LRF Exercise and Training Sub-Group to provide these awareness sessions in a very

short period of time with minimum impact on an already busy Exercise Calendar was to be commended.

Tyne and Wear EPU provided the lead within the Exercise and Training Sub-Group throughout the inception, planning, organisation, delivery and evaluation of the Pandemic Influenza Awareness events.

13. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Resilient Telecommunications Update

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) on an update on the Mobile Telecommunications Privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS) and the National Resilience Extranet (NRE).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

David Turnbull, Resilience Manager (Critical Services), explained that these initiatives would enable organisations to both plan, and respond to emergencies effectively, by providing an effective means of communication through the MTPAS scheme, and access to a wide range of useful information through the NRE.

It was important that LRF members should subscribe to the NRE (collaboration package) in order that effective communications with partners could be maintained in future, and in particular to ensure that any sensitive information could be shared safely and securely.

14. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) TWEPU should participate in the National Resilience Extranet.

Flooding Issues Update

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) on the significant developments in relation to flooding and Government progress on implementing some of the key recommendations arising from the Pitt Report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported on the Government six-month Pitt Progress Report, Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Flood Plan, Anniversary of the 2008 Floods, a Severe Weather Workshop held in June 2009 and the Draft Flood and Water Management Bill. There continued to be significant activity in relation to flooding, both locally and nationally. The multi-agency LRF Flood Plan Group continued to develop response arrangements, to address further flooding. The

exercises held in Northumberland in September were an important element in the development of these arrangements.

In reply to a question from Councillor Clark relating to planning for flash flooding, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the Meteorological Office usually gave several hours of warning and provided maps of hotspots.

Councillor Bell stated that the flood defences for Morpeth and other areas in Northumberland were expected to be completed by 2013.

Councillor T. Wright referred to an example in York whereby a Fire Authority had been involved in pumping water back into a dry river bed and asked if Tyne and Wear Fire Authority had been involved in such a scenario. Joy Brindle undertook to investigate.

15. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Government six monthly Pitt progress report and the current status of the flood and Water Bill be noted;
- (ii) the work of the Local Resilience Forum Flood Working Group to further develop local arrangements to mitigate the effects of any future flood emergencies be noted; and
- (iii) the Committee continue to receive further progress reports on national and local developments in relation to flooding and related issues.

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the outcome of a Commonwealth Scholarship Commission visit in November 2007.

16. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Emergency Planning Annual Conference and Exhibition 15 – 17 June 2009

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Emergency Planning Annual Conference and Exhibition held from 15 – 17 June 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Bell thanked Joe Walton, Senior Resilience Officer (Training and Exercising) for facilitating a session on the approach taken by TWEPU in implementing the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in its internal Training and Exercising Policy and the impact of NOS for civil contingencies on multi-agency training and exercises within Northumbria LRF, which had been very well received.

The CEPO had been asked to form part of the judging panel which considered nominations for a range of National awards.

The CEPO had recommended to the LRF that consideration be given to submitting a nomination for next year's Emergency Planning Society's (EPS) Awards.

17. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the significant contribution to the Annual Conference from Officers of Tyne and Wear EPU be noted;
- (iii) consideration be given to submitting a nomination for next year's awards.

(Signed) J. BELL,
Chairman.