

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, 15 MARCH 2010 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

31. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 January 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Tyne Tunnel Exercise

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on Exercise 'Start' held at the Tyne Tunnel on 10 February 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Exercise 'Start' had been a well attended event and had provided a timely opportunity for Tyne Tunnel and Category 1 responders to consider the procedural changes to the operational emergency response arrangements that the new tunnel would require.

Those considerations would be utilised within the new tunnel response procedures in readiness for the forthcoming Tyne Tunnel Validation exercises in September 2010 and January 2011.

In reply to a question from Councillor Jordan, Mr Joe Walton, Senior Resilience Officer reported that the new Tyne Tunnel was scheduled to open in March 2011 and the existing tunnel would then be closed for refurbishment until 2012.

32. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

National Telecommunications Exercise "White Noise"

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on the local outcomes of a national telecommunications exercise that had been held on the 11 and 12 November 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Alan Jolly, Senior Resilience Officer, reported that Exercise White Noise was a Tier 1 national exercise and formed part of the National Preparedness Programme and annual exercise series. It was also a Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) led exercise but the scenario had impacts and consequences across all sectors and Departments of Government, including Local Government.

Representatives from the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Telecommunications Sub Group (TSG) had participated in the exercise.

A loss of telecommunications had been considered in the Government produced 'National Risk Register'.

Exercise White Noise had been designed to enable relevant organisations to consider the implications of a major loss of general communications systems, and to evaluate the impacts on local communities and services. The second day of the exercise had looked at how long it would take to isolate a possible virus and bring the systems back up that had failed.

It was noted that as long as the air wave system was not down communications could continue. At a post debrief meeting the Northumbria TSG had identified a number of action points (attached to the report) that it could undertake to help to ensure resilient communications for the area in the event of a large scale telecommunications failure.

33. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Norland Annual Report 2009

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Norland Annual Report 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Norland was a multi-agency exercise programme which, until 2009, had focused on emergency response at a Silver/Tactical level. All exercises were table top in format and provided the opportunity for designated representatives from responders to experience incident management in the areas of:-

- Multi-agency Silver Command (led by Northumbria Police)
- Local Authority Tactical Command
- Health Services Tactical Command

The report outlined the exercises held during 2009 and identified recommendations to be taken forward during the 2010 series.

Mr J Walton, Senior Resilience Officer, reported that of particular importance during the exercise was the ongoing liaison and communication between each agency which ensured consistency in responding to the scenario, particularly in respect of media response.

Participants had highlighted a number of issues that needed to be addressed and that would be raised at the LRF for appropriate actions to be taken.

Councillor Clark noted that one of the comments on the tactical exercises was lack of attendance by relevant people. Mr J Walton stated that there had been a very good attendance at Executive level. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer commented that the absence of staff for business continuity would be the reality in a real situation.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that excellent feedback had been received on the programme and an observer had commented that the strategic exercises were a quantum leap in the quality of training and value of learning and participation at strategic level was outstanding.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the Norland Exercise and Training Group were to enter for a National Training Award on a multi-agency basis.

The Committee welcomed the report.

34. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) Performance Report

The Committee considered a progress report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on the analysis of performance against targets for the third quarter of the financial year 2009/2010 (October to December 2009) as detailed in the EPU Business Plan 2009/10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the EPU Business Plan had been delayed until July 2009 and a decision had been taken to move most of the work identified in the Plan to quarters 3 and 4 in order for EPU staff to complete appropriate scoping and project planning work.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported on the following work completed in addition to work described in the original 2009/10 work plan:-

- Completion of a handbook for use by Gateshead Council staff in Rest Centres.
- Design and delivery of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) professional training package at the Cabinet Office's Emergency Planning College.
- Work with Durham University to develop a funding bid for emergency planning research.
- Further work with Newcastle City Council to facilitate the Core Cities event in 2010.
- Development of a Rest Centre Plan for Sunderland City Council.
- Work to design a BCM Conference for Northumbria Businesses which would be held on 24 March 2010.

35. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

National Capabilities Survey 2010 Pilot

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of an invitation for the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and constituent Member organisations to participate in a pilot of the National Capabilities Survey (NCS) 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The survey was divided into three strands; essential services, government and local responders. The survey was issued to over 1000 responders within these groups.

- (i) The 'Essential' Strand was sent to Gas, Electricity, Telecoms, Transport, Health and Water sectors. The Financial Sector and Food Sector provided responses via alternative surveys.
- (ii) The 'Government' Strand was sent to government departments and regional government offices.
- (iii) The 'Local Response' Strand was sent to all category 1 responders and some category 2 responders. The survey also contained some questions which now focused specifically on the work of the LRF.

The NCS was an important aspect of the Government's resilience programme in determining priorities.

The findings would allow the LRF members to focus on the specific areas which needed more work, and allow a programme of work to be developed to ensure resilience in this part of the country was at a high standard.

In reply to a question from Councillor Jordan, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that generic resilience was how the LRF responded to a range of emergencies and the structures that were in place such as command and control arrangements and cascade call out procedures.

36. RESOLVED that the report be noted and the continued involvement of the EPU in this important workstream be endorsed.

Northumbria LRF Exercise Calendar 2010

The Committee considered a report on the annual Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Multi Agency Exercise Calendar, the scheduled events in 2010 and the process involved in its development.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the current version of the Northumbria Exercise Calendar 2010 (revised copy circulated at the meeting) had been received and endorsed by the LRF at its meeting on 21 January 2010 together with the Group's updated Terms of Reference and Policy. Further editions would be published throughout the year in response to any alterations.

37. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Local Government Association (LGA) – Annual Emergency Planning Conference and Exhibition 11-12 January 2010

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the LGA Annual Emergency Planning Conference.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the Conference had been an extremely useful update of contemporary issues in the field of Emergency Planning that would inform local planning and response. It also provided the opportunity to network with representatives of other Local Authorities and agencies.

38. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

39. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a disclosure of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972) Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3).

(Signed) J. BELL,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.