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TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT

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*Committee Report*

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**Meeting :** CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 5 JULY 2010

**Subject :** NORTHUMBRIA LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM FLOOD PLAN

*Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on a report presented to this Committee in October 2009, and to advise of the issue of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Multi Agency Flood Plan.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Northumbria LRF Flood Group was established in September 2008, and is chaired by a senior officer from the Environment Agency, with the Tyne & Wear Emergency Planning Unit carrying out the role of Secretariat.
- 2.2 A range of relevant Category 1 and 2 responders from the Local Resilience Forum are represented on the group, including the 5 Tyne and Wear Councils, Northumberland County Council, and the Fire and Rescue Services of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.

**3. FLOOD PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 The Group is tasked with a range of responsibilities in relation to flood planning and related issues, including the development of an LRF wide Multi Agency Flood Plan.
- 3.2 Defra and the Cabinet Office jointly issued guidance documents to assist with the development of the flood plan. This guidance was adhered to as the Plan was being drafted during 2009 by the Group, though there were particular issues to be addressed, including the fact that Northumbria is comprised of two distinct areas; rural Northumberland and urban Tyne and Wear, with differing flood risks and response needs and arrangements.
- 3.3 These concerns were successfully addressed as the Plan was being developed. The Group agreed that there should be a single plan for Northumbria LRF area, with Part 1 - the strategic element being coordinated by the EPU officer, and the 6 Sections in part 2 based upon the

six local authority areas covered by Northumbria LRF (ie Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland), being compiled by the Resilience Officer for that council area. All the main plan writers had assistance and support from the other members of the Flood Plan Group.

- 3.4 The aim of the Plan is to provide a mechanism to co-ordinate the multi-agency response to a flooding incident with severe impacts on one council area, or affecting more than one local authority area in the Northumbria LRF area.

#### **4. PLAN ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 Prior to publication the draft plan had to be assessed by the Environment Agency on behalf of Defra, the draft plan was duly completed and sent to the EA in December 2009 for evaluation.
- 4.2 The EA evaluation feedback stated that 'each plan (area) exceeds the 61% target required to be satisfactory, with scores ranging between **67%-75%**.
- 4.3 The EA feedback advised that '*Generally the areas requiring more work revolve around vulnerable persons and critical infrastructure, particularly the mapping*'. There is also more work to be completed on surface water flooding and environmental impacts and responsibilities.
- 4.4 Following the successful evaluation by the EA, the Plan was published in February 2010, and the areas identified as requiring further work are currently being developed and have been included in the work plan for the Flood Group for this year.

#### **5. PLAN VALIDATION**

- 5.1 An important part of the plan development is exercising the draft plan to validate it and assess whether it is fit for purpose, and to identify any improvements.
- 5.2 To this end, a validation exercise or 'walk through' exercise was held at the EA offices in Newcastle on the 17<sup>th</sup> June. This exercise which was programmed into the LRF Training and Exercising calendar allowed the main plan writers to assess the effectiveness of the alerting command and control elements, and co-ordination arrangements specified in the plan.

#### **6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

- 6.1 The EA intend to simplify the Flood Warning codes later in the summer. These codes act as trigger points for the various levels of actions for the organisations which are the plan users.
- 6.2 When the revised codes are issued, the next version of the plan will be developed and published, and will include more information around the topics identified in the EA evaluation in January.

6.3 This revised version will then be validated in a tabletop exercise to be held in February 2011 prior to being utilised in the national flood exercise 'Watermark' being held in March 2011.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 There continues to be significant activity in relation to flooding, both locally and nationally.

7.2 The multi agency LRF Flood Plan Group continues to develop response arrangements, to address further flooding. The exercises held in Northumberland in September 2009 are an important element in the development of these arrangements as outlined in the Flood Plan.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the plan has comfortably passed the EA evaluation process having achieved final scores that have exceeded the national target;
- Note the plan validation activity, and the ongoing work to address those areas where the plan could be further strengthened;
- Continue to receive further progress reports on national and local developments in relation to flooding and related issues.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Tyne and Wear Civil Contingencies Committee Report – Flooding Issues Update – 12 October 2009
- Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Multi Agency Flood Plan - February 2010

*Copies of these documents are available in the Emergency Planning Unit*

