

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, 5 JULY 2010 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Clark, Jordan, Mole and Renton.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trueman and Wright.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jordan disclosed a personal interest in Item 5 relating to Built Infrastructure for Older People's Care in Conditions of Climate Change (BIOPICCC)

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 March 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Community Resilience Consultation

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the current status of the Community Resilience work area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Kate Cochrane, Resilience Manager, reported that the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) had developed a package of documents about community resilience. The documents included guidance for individuals and communities on how to prepare for emergencies and a strategic national framework for community resilience, which set out the Government's contribution to build and enhance community resilience across the United Kingdom. The proposals developed by the CCS were a useful starting point to develop resilience at a community level. They recognised that people were able to develop local solutions to local risks and that these activities should be encouraged.

Specific reference was made to Elected Members within the consultation documents that they could play an important role in communicating with their constituents before, during and after an emergency and should consider what role they could play in facilitating and encouraging community resilience activity as representatives within their local areas.

Kate Cochrane stated that one of the challenges would be to persuade local communities to understand the risks and hazards, help them to prioritise the risks and take ownership of a plan.

The Committee considered the role of elected members in the community resilience process and ways in which the Committee could link into the community resilience work areas being developed within Tyne and Wear Councils and in the course of discussion the following points were made:

- Councillor Mole suggested that he could include a summary of the community resilience consultation and guidance on the agenda for the next joint meeting of Gateshead Council with Northumberland and Durham Town and Parish Councils for discussion within that arena.
- Councillor Bell noted the difficulty in defining communities and that in South Tyneside alone, there would be seventy seven neighbourhoods to contact. Councillor Clark concurred and suggested links with the Youth Parliament, the Elders Council and Ward Committees.
- The Committee agreed that community resilience be referred to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Boards, Crime and Disorder Partnerships and SNAPS for discussion.
- Councillor Bell commented that referral to the LSPs would be a huge task and expressed concerns regarding the identification of funding for developing community resilience with LSPs and whether there would be resources to support litigation that the risks required.
- The Committee supported the role of Elected Members as outlined in the CCS Consultation documents.

2. RESOLVED that the above comments from the Civil Contingencies Committee be included within the consultation submission to the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS).

University Research Projects and Opportunities

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on current and developing links between Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU) and the Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience (IHRR) within Durham University.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

TWEPU had supported a number of work areas within IHRR through the provision of practitioner representatives and as supporters for research proposals and this had been formalised through the invitation received by Kate Cochrane, Resilience Manager, TWEPU, to sit on a number of groups. From the perspective of Tyne and Wear, the role was to support the development of research outcomes that developed professional practice within the resilience community. The groups were:

- IHRR Advisory Council – group met twice a year to provide advice and support to the research activities within the Institute;
- Emergency Response to Rapidly Evolving Large-Scale Unprecedented Events (REScUE):- sitting on project management board (total project grant £350,788);
- Built Infrastructure for Older People's Care in Conditions of Climate Change (BIOPICCC), sitting on project management board: total project grant £713,942.

At present, TWEPU had engaged with IHRR on a reactive basis; however it would be useful for members to consider how these links could be used to develop a more proactive approach to resilience development within Tyne and Wear.

A number of different research funding routes were available to non-academic bodies with the most appropriate being a CASE studentship provided through the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This scheme jointly funded three years of supervised research at a PhD level within an area agreed between the non-academic agency and university.

ESRC paid an enhanced maintenance grant and fees for the student with the non-academic partners making a minimum contribution of £2,000 to the student and £2,000 to their collaborating academic department commencing from the first year of the PhD studentship.

3. RESOLVED:-

- (i) that if funding becomes available the Committee supports the development of a research proposal to be submitted during the next round of ESRC case studentship applications;

- (ii) the potential research areas to include the role of elected members within the community resilience work area and the legal aspects of resilience.

Air Quality Advice and Monitoring in an Emergency: the Air Quality Cell

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on Air Quality Advice and Monitoring in an Emergency: the Air Quality Cell (AQC).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Alan Purdue, Senior Resilience Officer (Major Hazards), reported that the Buncefield Incident (major oil storage explosion in Hertfordshire) in December 2005 highlighted the need for a more coherent approach to air quality monitoring and modelling during a major incident.

The new arrangements included a multi-agency Air Quality Cell, new national air monitoring capability and improved modelling capability that was phased in between November 2009 and April 2010.

The Environment Agency, in consultation with the Health Protection Agency (Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division) would convene an Air Quality Cell in a major chemical air pollution incident. The Met Office, Health and Safety Laboratory and Food Standards Agency and a Local Authority representative would, where appropriate, join this AQC. The AQC would be chaired by the Environment Agency and would meet virtually, unless the incident was of sufficient magnitude and duration that it needed to meet physically.

The Met Office would provide modelled air quality information to the AQC. The Environment Agency would provide monitored air quality data using:

- rapid response teams based at eight locations in England and Wales with hand-held monitoring and sampling instruments;
- two monitoring and sampling response vehicles; and
- Download of data from air quality networks.

The Air Quality Cell would co-ordinate air modelling and monitoring; assess the uncertainties and limitations of the data; and provide interpreted air quality information to the Health Protection Agency and the Science and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) at Gold Command (if it was established). If a Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG/Gold Command) was not formed, information from the AQC would be given to the Health Protection Agency.

The Health Protection Agency would use the air quality information to provide health advice to the emergency services and the public.

Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit would undertake the following:-

- ensure that partners were fully aware of the Air Quality Cell by raising awareness at exercises and providing a fact sheet;
- amending off-site emergency plans where appropriate;
- seeking to work with regional partners to facilitate provision of appropriate information to the Air Quality Cell in an emergency; and
- contributing to national agreements on the work of the AQC.

Arrangements had been fully deployed recently for a fire in an oil refinery in Humberside in July, 2010.

In reply to a question from Councillor Mole, Alan Purdue confirmed that the Air Quality Cell covered England and Wales only and formal arrangements for Scotland would be developed in due course.

The provision of the Air Quality Cell demonstrated how collaborative working produced better outcomes for those affected by an emergency and would enable local responders to have access to national expertise, in incidents with potential impacts on large numbers of people.

4. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Business Continuity Conference “Resilience Over Uncertainty” 24th March, 2010

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on a major Business Continuity Resilience event organised by Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) and supported by Tyne and Wear Local Authorities and Northumberland County Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Business Continuity Management (BCM) was a process that helped manage risks to the smooth running of an organisation or delivery of a service, ensuring continuity of critical functions in the event of a disruption, and effective recovery afterwards. The Government wanted to ensure all organisations had a clear understanding of BCM.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) placed a statutory duty on ‘Category One’ responders to put in place (BCM) plans and arrangements. A further duty was placed upon local authorities only, to promote BCM, to provide advice and assistance on Business Continuity to businesses, the Voluntary sector and the wider community.

Tyne and Wear EPU had organised a major one day Business Continuity Conference – ‘Resilience over Uncertainty’ on 24th March, 2010.

The aim of the conference was to raise awareness of the importance of BCM for local businesses and to encourage them to prepare BCM plans.

This was addressed by giving practical advice and guidance to help businesses understand how to plan for and survive disruptive challenges. Business representatives also had the opportunity to meet with their Local Authority Resilience Planning representatives both on Local Authority information stands, and during the Question and Answer session at the end of the Conference.

Businesses invited to attend included those who were suppliers to Local Authorities, businesses within the Public Information Zone (PIZ) around Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites, businesses at risk from flooding, as well as a range of other small/medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from the Northumbria region.

The Cabinet Office Assistant Director of Corporate Resilience, Stuart Sterling, gave the keynote address which was set firmly in the context of Business Continuity “Why it matters” and “What Businesses can do” and highlighted what the Cabinet Office was currently doing to support this.

This was followed by a programme of presentations and a workshop as outlined in the programme attached to the previously circulated report.

The event had been extremely well attended and feedback both on the day and from the Evaluation Forms had been excellent, with many delegates commenting that it was the best event that they had attended.

The Cabinet Office had been similarly impressed and a copy of an email and subsequent letter from Stuart Sterling, Assistant Director, Corporate Resilience (Cabinet Office) thanking the EPU for arranging the event, was included with the report.

The conference succeeded in its aim of raising awareness of BCM within the target sectors. The challenge was how to keep this topic on the agenda, and further discussions were underway to consider how to build on the momentum generated by this event.

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report and Cabinet Office feedback be noted;
- (ii) Dawn Hickman, Joe Walton, Lyndsey Potts and all staff involved, be thanked for organising the Business Continuity Conference; and
- (iii) further reports be received on future activity in due course.

Control of Major Accidents Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) Exercises: Exercise Kestrel (SRM Ltd) and Exercise Harrier (Chemson Ltd)

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on two COMAH exercises carried out at SRM Ocean terminal at Hendon Dock, Sunderland in March, 2010 and at Chemson Ltd, Wallsend in May, 2010 (Exercise Harrier).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In accordance with the requirements of the COMAH regulations, testing of 'off site' emergency plans was required to ensure that they were accurate, complete and practicable. Exercising of each plan was required at least every three years.

In relation to the evaluation of Exercise Kestrel, there were a number of very positive comments on facilitation and learning methods. Nearly all participants felt that overall, the exercise had been a good opportunity for multi-agency working/co-ordination.

The Environment Agency welcomed the focus on the existence of the new Air Quality Cell and on the possibility of a Major Accident to the Environment (MATTE): there was general consensus on the usefulness of reinforcing command and control procedures.

The most significant point identified was the provision of relevant information to the newly formed Air Quality Cell and TWEPU would take this forward with partners in the Region.

The general consensus was that Exercise Harrier was well chaired and from the exercise planners' viewpoint, key discussions occurred, options were considered and appropriate decisions taken. There was good liaison and provision of advice both from the HPA and site operator.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Members note the content of the report; and
- (ii) Members welcome the lead TWEPU was taking regionally regarding provision of information to the Air Quality Cell.

Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) Performance Report

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

(For copy report – see original minutes).

As a result of the delay in finalising the Business Plan, there had been a degree of slippage as expected in some areas of work identified in the Business Plan.

The report detailed both work areas that were completed and also those which, although they were longer term projects, had commenced and were ongoing pieces of work.

In addition to the resilience work completed in 2009/10, the EPU had also successfully maintained its certification to both the ISO 9001:2000 standard and the Investors in People standard. Both standards were subject to external audit in 2009/10 and were achieved in August 2009 and February 2010 respectively.

Lessons learned while implementing a new approach to business planning during 2009 had been incorporated into the business planning cycle for 2010/11.

7. RESOLVED that the report the noted.

Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) Business Plan (Provisional) 2010-2011

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the EPU Business Plan for the period 2010-2011.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Although the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (TWFRRA) and the Tyne and Wear Strategic Local Authorities formally expired in March 2010, a provisional budget had been agreed and the SLA had been extended, with the agreement of all parties, for a six month period until the outcome of the Tyne and Wear Resilience Review was known. The outcome would no doubt have implications for the way in which resilience services were delivered in future across Tyne and Wear, and this year's business plan would need to be reviewed once the review had been concluded.

A new approach to business planning had been developed last year by the Strategic Management Board (SMB), which led to a significant delay in the publication of the 2009-10 Business Plan. However the learning points identified from that process had been taken forward to inform the development of the current years Business Plan.

A joint TWEPU/Tyne and Wear Councils Business Planning Workshop was held in January 2010 which involved members of the Strategic Management Board (comprising the District Liaison Officers from each Tyne and Wear Council and the CEPO), council resilience officers, and officers of the EPU.

A copy of the provisional Tyne and Wear business plan was appended to the report.

Further work was required to finalise the plan which would be undertaken once the outcome of the Tyne and Wear Resilience Review was known.

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the publication of the provisional Tyne and Wear Business Plan 2010-2011 be noted;
- (ii) the further development of a more detailed plan to reflect the outcome of both the Tyne and Wear Resilience Review and the National Capabilities Survey 2010, as appropriate, be approved; and
- (iii) a further report be received providing final details of the above as soon as practicable.

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Flood Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on the Northumbrian LRF Multi Agency Flood Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Northumbria LRF Flood Group was established in September 2008, and was chaired by a senior officer from the Environment Agency, with Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit carrying out the role of Secretariat and also co-ordinating the 'strategic' element of the Northumbria wide plan.

A range of relevant Category 1 and 2 responders from the Local Resilience Forum were represented on the group, including the five Tyne and Wear Councils, Northumberland County Council, and the Fire and Rescue Services of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.

The Group was 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 which stated that the plan had comfortably exceeded the national target of 61% by achieving scores that ranged between 67%-75%.

Following the successful evaluation by the Environment Agency, the Plan was published in February 2010, and the areas identified as requiring further work were currently being developed and had been included in the work plan for the Flood Group for this year.

A validation 'walk through' exercise was held at the Environment Agency offices in Newcastle on 17th June, 2010. 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.

The Environment Agency intended to simplify the Flood Warning codes later in the summer. These codes acted as trigger points for the various levels of actions for the organisations that used the plan and the plan would need to be revised to take

account of these changes. The revised plan would be revalidated in readiness for the forthcoming major national exercise "Watermark" being held in March 2011.

There continued to be significant activity in relation to flooding, both locally and nationally and the multi agency LRF Flood Plan Group continued to develop response arrangements, to address further flooding.

9. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Members note that the plan had comfortably passed the Environment Agency evaluation process having achieved final scores that had exceeded the national target;
- (ii) Members note the plan validation activity, and the ongoing work to address those areas where the plan could be further strengthened; and
- (iii) Members continue to receive further progress reports on national and local developments in relation to flooding and related issues.

Military Aid to the Civil Community Update and HMS Bulwark Maritime Resilience Demonstration

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on recent updates to the guidance document for requests for Military Aid and of a recent demonstration of Royal Naval Maritime capability given during a recent visit by HMS Bulwark to this region.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Ministry of Defence was a contributor to the wider Government responsibility for the safety and security of United Kingdom citizens. The level of that contribution was governed by the requirement and, crucially, on Defence's ability to undertake operations in support of the government's objectives.

Military Aid to the Civil Authorities could, however, make a significant contribution at times of crisis and the Armed Forces remained prepared to respond to a range of emergencies in the UK within the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) construct. The updated guidance was a much shortened version of Joint Doctrine Publication 02 (JDP 02) and was a handier aide-memoire for civil responders requesting military aid.

The Royal Navy demonstration of capability on HMS Bulwark was an extremely useful awareness raising session and demonstration of that capability.

In reply to a question from Councillor Mole, Joe Walton advised that progress was being made on the ability of the emergency services and the military to jointly communicate and their technical capabilities would be tested in Exercise "Merlin Aware" which was scheduled to take place in October 2010.

10. RESOLVED that the contribution of the MOD to the civil community and recent updates to the MACA scheme be noted.

North East Regional Exercise Calendar 2010

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Emergency Planning Officer on the updated annual North East Regional Multi Agency Exercise Calendar, the scheduled events in 2010 and the process involved in its development.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Regional Calendar was designed to provide an overview of the coming year to help LRF and regional exercise planning groups ensure no conflict of interest or overstretching of resources regarding organisational participation at any one event.

Annex 1 to the report contained the updated version of the North East Exercise Calendar 2010 provided by GONE. Further editions would be published through the year in response to any necessary alterations.

11. RESOLVED that Members be requested to note the exercise calendar publication and to receive reports from specific exercises as appropriate.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

12. 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.

