

## **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, 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

### **Present:**

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Clark, Heron Jordan and T. Wright.

### **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Renton.

### **Minutes**

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **EPU Performance Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2008**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with a progress update regarding the analysis of performance against the targets contained in the EPU Business Plan 2008-2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members referred to a table within paragraph 3.3 of the report which provided information relating to those areas of work which had been reprioritised, including reasons why.

Members held discussions on various work areas contained within the table. During which, the CEPO clarified that the CCS '6000 Mile Review' referred to a review of the Civil Contingencies Act and that Cabinet Office were expected to undertake a consultation exercise in December. Members will be updated accordingly.

The CEPO advised that a National Capabilities Survey was undertaken every two years and gave Ministers a snapshot on how prepared UK authorities were. This year, the survey had been completed online and the consolidated results were still awaited. Members would again be updated accordingly.

Councillor Clark enquired about the 'Mass Evacuation' and asked if this could be defined. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer explained that a 'mass evacuation' was the movement of a very large number of people from a potential place of danger to a place of safety, for example in response to a terrorist threat or an unexploded bomb. This work was being led by the Regional Resilience Team at Government Office North East.

Whilst referring to paragraph 3.5, Councillor Clark also enquired what the acronym COMAH represented. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer explained that COMAH stood for 'Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations' and explained that it was a comprehensive piece of legislation covering certain sites and installations deemed to have major accident potential, for example those exceeding a certain threshold of dangerous toxic or explosive substances. Whilst there were seven 'COMAH' sites in Tyne and Wear, one was a split site, so there were actually eight emergency plans in place drawn up by the Emergency Planning Unit on behalf of the FRA.

Councillor Wright, in referring to the table within paragraph 3.6, requested further information on emergency incidents entitled '999 Service Failure at Ebchester'. In response, Mr. Dave Simpson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Safety) informed Councillor Wright that most 999 calls were from mobile phones, and that this particular instance was a local failure, and not a major issue.

Councillor Wright then enquired whether two emergency alerts from Newcastle Airport was usual. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer responded that it was quite typical of a major international airport.

Councillor Wright enquired further in relation to training and how the Airport tackle this. Mr. Dave Simpson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that Airport staff needed to be certified every three years and that Tyne and Wear Fire Authority staff attended the airport training rig every year. In addition, a staff changeover took place for six months at a time between the two organisations, although the greater benefit was to the Airport rather than the Fire Authority, and that funding was a consideration for Newcastle Airport. Councillor Wright commented that experience and training was so important that it outweighed the cost. Mr. Dave Simpson,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Safety) agreed to research further details in relation to costs and bring this information back to Committee.

Councillor Heron enquired who was responsible for a fire at the Airport. Mr. Simpson responded advising that an Airport Fire would be the responsibility of the Fire Authority and a Group Manager would always be sent to take charge.

Upon consideration, it was:-

19. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Morpeth Floods – Provision of Mutual Aid Support**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) advising Members of the support provided by Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit to Northumberland County Council during the Morpeth Floods of September 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that on the weekend of 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008 there were instances of localised flooding across Tyne and Wear which local authorities and emergency services attended to help residents affected by the flooding.

The Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit, having undertaken an assessment of the situation in Tyne and Wear and the impact on councils, established that the storm had moved north, and would continue to remain centred on Morpeth in Northumberland. Following receipt of a mutual aid request that evening from Northumberland County Council, it was considered that limited assistance could be provided to Northumberland without detriment to Tyne and Wear councils, as adequate arrangements were in place should the situation unexpectedly deteriorate.

Officers from Tyne and Wear provided assistance mainly to evacuees and arranged for additional bedding and refreshments packs to be provided from the Tyne & Wear Central Bedding Store currently located in North Tyneside. It was extremely useful to have conducted a live activation of the store and for the process to have gone so smoothly. Lessons had nevertheless been learned from the events that had taken place, including the provision of fleecy blankets to supplement the foil emergency blankets.

A major multi-agency debrief was held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. Government Office for the North East provided an officer on secondment to lead the debriefing process, and the debrief report was due in January 2009. Members would be updated accordingly.

Councillor Heron raised an issue relating to land use planning and it was explained that Sir Michael Pitt had identified this as a major issue in his report into the Summer 2007 floods, and that addressing this issue was the responsibility of local authority departments such as Town and Country Planning.

The Chair added that housing developments were in close proximity to floodplains and this was an issue being looked into by the Authority.

20. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report, and receive further reports as appropriate.

### **Core Cities Study 2008**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) advising Members of the fifth annual Core Cities Emergency Planning Group Study that was held at the Emergency Planning College, Easingwold, on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer advised that Core Cities was a network of England's major cities, that form the economic and urban cores of wider surrounding areas. The Core Cities for 10 years has continued to develop long term partnerships with Government, national and regional agencies and other key stakeholders.

Members were informed that the study involved representatives from the following eight cities: Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield; who were from a range of different backgrounds, including Local Authorities, the Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Ambulance Services, British Transport Police, Health Protection Agency, Environment Agency, Primary Care Trusts and Regional Resilience Teams.

The programme for each of the three days was outlined in the reports and it was expected that study outcomes would be fed back in due course.

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

21. RESOLVED to note the report.

### **Great North Run**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the detailed planning that went into preparing the safety aspect of the Great North Run and the involvement of the relevant Councils and the Emergency Planning Unit in those arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that a validation exercise had taken place on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2008. This was a multi-agency emergency exercise and was completed in accordance with the Northumbria LRF Training and Exercising Policy.

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that the run, once again, had been a great success and the Event Safety Control was able to handle all incidents which occurred on the day, having learned valuable lessons from previous events.

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

22. RESOLVED that the contents be noted.

### **National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements (N.E.M.A.)**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of a recent visit by a representative of the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit to the open day held in relation to the National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements (N.E.M.A.).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer outlined the report, and in doing so explained that it was Government's objective to ensure that arrangements were in place to deal with large numbers of fatalities resulting from a major incident.

It was confirmed that arrangements were in place in Tyne and Wear, however information regarding the location of the sites was restricted.

The visit had proved to be successful and it provided an opportunity for visitors to read and learn about the mortuary.

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

23. RESOLVED to note the report.

(Signed) DAVE SMITH,  
Acting Clerk to the Authority.