

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, 9 MARCH, 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Charlton in the Chair

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

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Forbes and Bell.

Minutes

24. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 1 December 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Update

EPU Performance Report Second Quarter 2008

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer reported that in response to an enquiry, Government Office North East had advised that the regionally led 'mass evacuation' work had not progressed due to other priorities which had arisen, relating to flooding and pandemic flu. However it was intended that a meeting would be held in the first half of 2009 to take the workstream forward.

Morpeth Floods

The Morpeth Flooding Multi Agency De Briefing had been held on 18 November 2008 and the full report was due for publication in April 2009 and would be reported to the Committee in due course.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) Performance Report – 3rd Quarter 2009

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 for the third quarter contained in the EPU Business Plan 2008-2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In reply to a question from Councillor Clark regarding notification from central government relating to terrorist activities, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that she was not aware of any specific terrorist activity in this area but any change would be notified through the Police Counter Terrorist Security Adviser with whom there was regular liaison.

Councillor Heron asked if telephone systems were overloaded and if there was a difference between 3G systems and Mr Dave Simpson, Assistance Chief Fire Officer (Community Safety) stated that the Firelink coverage was extremely reliable. The Chief Emergency Planning officer also advised that a new Resilient Extranet system would become available during 2009, which would allow emergency information to be shared securely between responders when planning for or responding to an emergency.

In relation to a question from Councillor Clark regarding the possible reduction of mobile phone coverage to the public to enable access to be maintained by the emergency services, it was noted that the mobile phone providers would monitor the management of the system carefully and only activate if absolutely necessary, for the minimum duration required. However during any such activation, it was noted that the public would still able to call the 999 service, and that the use of media-publicised Helplines would be used as a means of providing clear accurate information to the public.

Upon consideration, it was:-

25. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

North East Regional Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Update

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) advising Members of the current arrangements and developments at both Regional and Local level regarding Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) planning.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Joe Walton, Senior Resilience Officer advised that the North East Regional Capability Co-ordination plan had been reviewed and updated and was designed to provide a strategic overview of the response throughout the North East region. The Plan had been approved by the North East Regional Resilience Forum and would be distributed via membership of the NE CBRN Issues Group to their respective organisations.

Councillor Renton asked about the classification of vulnerable sites and Mr Walton, Senior Resilience Officer, advised that these were sites designated on the basis of population throughput.

In relation to a question from Councillor Clark regarding triage, Mr Walton, Senior Resilience Officer, confirmed that due to working restrictions within the ‘hot zone’, initial triage focuses on walking and non walking classifications were designed to filter people through the decontamination process .

26. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Land Use Planning and the Control of Societal Risk around Major Hazard Sites

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) advising Members of the conclusions and recommendations of the Buncefield Major Investigation Board.

The Board proposed that a system should be developed that provided a more integrated and consistent approach between the Land Use Planning and COMAH (the Control of Major Accident Hazards) regulatory systems, with, for example, the site operator being formally consulted about any proposed new developments in their vicinity. The Board, following the results of a report commissioned from DNV (Det Norsk Veritas) into societal risk, also proposed that a full QRA (quantified risk analysis) based planning system should be used, i.e. one that takes into account population size and distribution, in order that the planning system can be more responsive to the level of risk posed by each site.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In reply to a question, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer confirmed that gas storage facility outside Newcastle was not one of the seven ‘top tier’ COMAH sites in

Tyne and Wear that were deemed to present the greatest risk, requiring preparation of an off-site emergency plan.

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

27. RESOLVED to note the report and receive further reports as appropriate.

Exercise Falcon

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of Exercise Falcon which was designed to investigate the North East capability to respond to multiple blast and burns casualties from a terrorist attack.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In November 2008 the HPA returned to Tyne and Wear to deliver Exercise Falcon. The emphasis was on the health response but Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council were invited to attend as players to assess their ability to provide assistance to health agencies during an event of this type.

The exercise was of particular benefit to the local authorities of Tyne and Wear who used the opportunity to evaluate both internal and multi agency incident response procedures.

Councillor Heron asked how emergency vehicles could reach for example the Metro Centre in times of heavy traffic and it was noted that this was primarily a police responsibility to divert and coordinate traffic in and out of the area.

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

28. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The review, originally referred to as the “CCA 6000 mile review” had now been formally launched and was known as the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme (CCAEP). It was explained that this was no longer to be a ‘light touch’ review as originally envisaged, but due to the disruptive challenges that have occurred since 2005 (floods, foot and mouth, Buncefield; plus the Newton and Pitt reports) and the lessons to be learned from those events, it would instead be a full review of the Act with an ongoing delivery programme split into four phases over the next three years.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

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

29. RESOLVED to note the report and agree to receive further updates as the Enhancement Programme progresses,

Enhancement of Tyne and Wear Central Bedding Store

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the recent measures taken to enhance supplies at the Tyne and Wear Central Bedding Store.

In reply to a suggestion from Councillor Clark, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer stated that the use of vacuum storage bags to protect and store the stock had been considered and would be kept under review.

30. RESOLVED that the report be noted and the improved resource facilities now in place resulting from lessons learned be noted.

(Signed) DAVE SMITH,
Clerk to the Authority.