

## **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, Sunderland on MONDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

### **Present:**

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Boyes, Cooney, Gibson, Jordan and Renton.

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Fletcher and James.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

27. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **National Capabilities Survey**

The Chief Emergency Planning Officer (CEPO) submitted a report (copy circulated) outlining the Northumbria LRFs participation in a pilot to test and validate the new arrangements in the 2008 National Capabilities Survey (NCS).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Committee received an outline of the report from the CEPO who stated that the survey was divided into three strands; essential services, government and local responders. The CEPO advised that Officers from the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) and Northumberland EPD collated the required information and completed a draft return on behalf of the LRF, which was approved on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2007. The full 2008 Survey was then officially launched on 8<sup>th</sup> January and was available online for a period of two months during which organisations were free to access and revisit the system at any time, which was of major benefit. The Committee was advised that a letter had been received from the Cabinet Office to thank Northumbria LRF for its participation in the pilot survey and for the valuable feedback received.

The Committee was informed that it would be some time before the NCS 2008 results were known but these results would be brought to the Committee at a future meeting.

Upon consideration, it was:-

28. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the continued involvement of the EPU in this important piece of work be endorsed; and
- (iii) a further report be received once the results of the 2008 Survey were available.

## **Flooding**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) highlighting the findings of four recently published documents which covered the flooding events of summer 2007 and described the actions being undertaken within the Northumbria Resilience Form (NRF) to address these.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The CEPO advised that this was a follow up report from the previous September meeting which detailed four key reports that had been published following the summer floods in June and July 2007. The Committee were advised that the widest ranging of the reviews was led by Sir Michael Pitt which identified fifteen urgent recommendations for responders. The LRF General Working Group made urgent arrangements to establish a Northumbria LRF Flooding 'Task and Finish' Group whose main role was to take forward these fifteen urgent recommendations. The Committee were then provided with an update on the quantities of sandbags available within Tyne and Wear to assist in the event of flooding as had been requested at the September meeting.

Councillor Gibson thanked the CEPO for the excellent report stating that it showed that everything was being done to ensure Tyne and Wear could cope with every flooding eventuality. With reference to facilities that were built on and around a flood plain he queried whether these service providers occupying these sites would provide their own protection to flooding. The CEPO replied that it wasn't possible to comment on each site specifically but each facility would have been made aware by the Environment Agency that it is located in a flood risk area, and so should ensure that business continuity procedures are in place. The CEPO advised that this is being further supported by local authority Business Continuity promotion initiatives. The Committee were advised that automatic warnings were also given from the Environment Agency to any facility or residence located on a flood plain.

Discussion then turned to the issues of drainage with Councillor Cooney advising that there was a need for the Local Authorities to take an active role and ensure that drains were clear. Councillor Jordan stated that Local Authorities also had a duty to be aware of the locations of flood plains when considering planning applications. Councillor Renton stated that he believed that the Environment Agency had a bigger role to play to ensure buildings were not built on flood plains. He stated that many of the flooding issues were to do with the underground infrastructure.

With reference to the recommendations from the Environment Agency 2007 Flood Review, contained in Annex 1 to the report, Councillor Boyes advised that it was important to have good relations with the media so as to ensure reports of flooding were not sensationalised. The CEPO responded that the media had an important part to play in coordinating information to the public and advised that multi agency media response arrangements were already in place. It was further advised that the EPU had also ensured that a lead organisation had been pre-identified for each key risk in the LRF Community Risk Register in order that media reports were conducted with a single voice approach, with the most appropriate organisation taking the lead.

Following a point raised from the Chairman, the CEPO advised that the EPU did liaise closely with Northumbria Water Ltd. as well as other key partners in flooding exercises.

Upon discussion, it was:-

29. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as the LRF Flooding Group progresses its action plan.

### **Local Resilience Forum Budget**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) advising Members that the Local Resilience Forum had agreed that a budget should be established to be funded by contributions from key LRF organisations, in order to provide a permanent Secretariat and to help to fund some of the work delivered by the LRF sub-groups.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The CEPO advised that the provision of a dedicated Secretariat, to be appointed initially for 3 year period, would ensure that the LRF process would be effectively maintained and administered. She stated that there had been a need to obtain the appropriate funding for the post which had now been resolved, and she extended her thanks to the City Treasurers team at the host Authority for their assistance with this.

Upon consideration, it was:-

30. RESOLVED that the report be noted and further reports be received as appropriate.

### **A Guide to the Civil Contingencies Arrangements in Tyne and Wear**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Guide to Civil Contingencies Arrangements in Tyne and Wear document ('the Guide') which had been produced by the EPU for use by the five Local Authorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Committee were advised that the Guide was a reference document and not an emergency response plan, which summarised, for example, national emergency schemes, local and regional arrangements, the roles and responsibilities of responders together with the response and recovery structures in place. It was explained that the document would work in conjunction with and support local authority operational emergency response plans.

Upon consideration, it was:-

31. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **Schools Emergency Plan Template and Resilience Teaching Pack Initiative**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) making Members aware of initiatives being developed by the EPU for educational establishments in Tyne and Wear.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Committee were advised that the work was a result of the Unit's involvement with the second 'Japan-UK Seminar on Disaster Risk Management' held in January 2007. The CEPO advised that the vulnerability of earthquakes in Japan had resulted in significant effort being focused on disaster education in schools and valuable insights had been gained from Japanese colleagues which, together with previous disasters affecting schools in the UK provided the impetus and ideas to develop the current initiatives.

The CEPO outlined the project to the Committee stating that it consisted of combining two work streams:-

- A Model School Emergency Plan Template and supporting Training Awareness Presentation (complete); and
- A Resilience Awareness Training Package which was under development.

Upon discussion, Councillor Boyes endorsed the report stating that it would be incredibly useful. Councillor Gibson agreed with the comments and added that as a School Governor himself the potential risks in schools needed to be raised. He stated that his only concern was how quickly the plan could be introduced into schools. The Chairman also stated that quite often, when such an initiative was introduced into a school, the children would tend to go home and educate their parents with what they had learnt.

Upon consideration, it was:-

32. RESOLVED that the report be noted and further reports be received as work progressed.

### **Northumbria Exercise Calendar 2008**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the current Northumbria Multi Agency Exercise Calendar, the scheduled events in 2008 and informing members of the process involved in its development.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Upon consideration, it was:-

33. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **Kenyan Commonwealth Professional Fellowship Visit**

The CEPO submitted a report (copy circulated) providing information regarding a visit from a representative of the Kenyan Health Ministry to the UK and specifically his visit to Tyne and Wear EPU.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The CEPO outlined the report to the Committee stating that the visit by Hilary Limo, a Senior Public Health Officer with the Kenyan Health Ministry came about as a result of Mr. Limo attending an EPU-run Mass Fatalities Core Training Module. The Committee was advised that a subsequent communication from Kenya had been received to inform the EPU that the knowledge that he gained had been put into immediate effect to deal with the major loss of life resulting from the political unrest in

Kenya; and that he was training local Kenyan responders in the skills learned from the EPU to help deal with the extremely distressing crisis..

Upon discussion the Committee thanked the CEPO for the report, stating that it was testament to how far the work of the EPU and the Authority had reached out, spreading good practices throughout the world.

Upon consideration, it was:-

34. RESOLVED that the continuation and development of links with colleagues in Kenya be continued as appropriate.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) J. BELL,  
Chairman.