

28th January 2014**Agenda Item: 11****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****UPDATE ON LESSONS FROM THE EXPLOSION IN NEWARK, MAY 2013****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on developments since the fatal explosion that took place on Wright Street, Newark, on 19 May 2013.

Information and AdviceBackground

2. This report provides additional information following the report made to the committee in September 2013, relating to the explosion that occurred during the early evening of Sunday 19 May at a residential property on Wright Street, Newark.
3. As a result of the explosion, two people were killed, another was seriously injured, and two others went to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation. Three homes were damaged extensively and approximately 100 local residents were evacuated from their homes. A 'Place of Safety' (Rest Centre) was established at the Grove Lane Leisure Centre and a multi-agency 'Tactical Coordinating Group' was established to manage the response over the following week. A telephone 'Helpline' was established, using the County Council's Customer Services Centre number. Also, an 'Information Point' was established at the Charles Street Methodist Church, where representatives of the County Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council maintained a presence and provided support to residents. Representatives of the gas and electricity suppliers also attended. Later, a 'Recovery Co-ordinating Group' was established, chaired by Newark and Sherwood District Council with support and assistance from the County Council.
4. An important feature of this incident was the response of the local community. Many local people wished to help with the relief effort, and the local Methodist Church became the prime focus for this. Goods, materials and money, were donated by local people and businesses, and were collected by the church for distribution in aid of the victims and the community.
5. The agencies involved in the response to this incident undertook internal debriefing activities ahead of a multi-agency debriefing event that took place on

Tuesday 16 July 2013. Key outcomes from this were reported to the September 2013 meeting of the Community Safety Committee. The consistent observation from the debriefings was that the emergency management arrangements that had been in place were fit for purpose and had performed well. It was recognised that the availability of trained officers, who were accustomed to multi-agency work, was key to the success of the response. Also, where they exist, out-of-hours stand-by arrangements provided a timely response to an emergency call-out.

6. Health service colleagues observed that this incident reinforced the importance of their arrangements to ensure that accurate casualty information is provided from the outset of the response.

Cause of the explosion

7. Since the earlier report to the committee, it has been confirmed that the explosion occurred when fumes from DIY work accumulated in a confined area and were ignited by either a cellar light or a freezer motor. The fumes emanated from an inflammable expanding foam product that was being used block a coal chute in an effort to control damp. The coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death.

Reflections on the emergency response

8. Following the multi-agency debrief meeting, lessons arising from the emergency response to the explosion were considered by Resilience Working Group (RWG) of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and then by the LRF itself.
9. The Resilience Working Group recognised that there had been a successful coordinated response to the explosion. There was consideration of whether it would have been beneficial to have activated the LRF Media Plan, since all of the emergency services were involved as well as local authorities. It was considered this would have helped if there were issues with a single agency representing the views of partners. There was also concern about the ability of agencies to mobilise non-emergency personnel on a Sunday evening, and regarding medical support and advice under new health arrangements. The RWG also reflected on the observation that the community had been very supportive during the incident and was continuing to support victims.
10. At the next scheduled LRF Meeting, on 5 July, chaired by the Chief Constable, it was agreed that inter-agency working had been noticeably good during this incident. In a letter to LRF members, in reference to recent incidents including the Wright Street explosion, the Chief Constable said "On each occasion our contingency plans and our multi-agency arrangements worked extremely well, reflecting on the hard work we have invested in our LRF over a number of years."
11. The County Council's response to the explosion was discussed by the Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board meeting on 16 July and again on 10 September. No major concerns were raised on either occasion.

Recent developments

12. Although not specifically linked to this incident, it is pertinent to note that starting from 21 December last year; the County Council's Communications and Marketing team now has an on-call system in place for weekends and bank holidays. This will ensure an appropriate response, on a reactive basis, to any requests from the media, senior managers, Elected Members, the emergency planning team or partner organisations.

Conclusions

13. The emergency management response to this incident has been scrutinised by means of a full debriefing process, and through discussions by the LRF (and by its Resilience Working Group) and also by the County Council's Risk Safety and Emergency Management Board. The conclusions reached were that emergency response arrangements were fit for purpose and had operated well. No lessons emerged to alter emergency planning in any fundamental ways.

Statutory and Policy Implications

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that the committee notes the contents of this report, reflecting in particular that emergency management systems operated well and that victims of the emergency were supported by the actions of their local community.

PAUL MCKAY

Service Director, Promoting Independence and Public Protection

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Robert Fisher

Group Manager, Emergency Management and Registration

Tel: 0115 977 3681

Email: Robert.fisher@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments

15. As this report is for noting only, no constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (KAS 19/01/2014)

16. There are no financial implications contained within the report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- [Previous report to the Community Safety Committee – 24 September 2013](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CS49