

minutes



Meeting CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 24 November 2008 (commencing at 10.00 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Yvonne Davidson (Chair)
Andy Stewart (Vice-Chair)

Reg Adair
John Carter
John Clarke
Stan Heptinstall

Dave Shaw
A Mark Spencer
Yvonne Woodhead

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24 November 2008 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Spencer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest by members or officers.

MILITARY AID TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Lieutenant Colonel Andy McCombe, Joint Regional Liaison Officer for the East Midlands, gave a presentation on the support which the military could give to civil authorities in emergencies. The principles behind such aid were that military aid was a last resort, and that the civil authority either lacked capability, or had a capability which had been exhausted. Military aid might also be provided to the government, to civil powers (eg airports) or to the civil community (eg the distribution of drinking water in Gloucestershire in 2007). Such assistance might form part of a training exercise. Lt Col McCombe gave examples of the types of aid which the navy, land or air forces or MoD agencies could give.

Councillor Heptinstall asked about the relationship with the Police. Lt Col McCombe replied that the relationship was good, and that a control room for use by all agencies was being developed. He explained that his role was liaison about response to major incidents, rather than risk assessment or planning.

In reply to Councillor Stewart, Lt Col McCombe explained that where life or property were at risk, there would be no charge for military aid. However, during the recovery phase they might charge either the full or marginal cost of services. He gave the example of the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001, when MAFF covered the full cost of military aid, up to the point where they felt that civilian contractors could cover the work. In reply to Councillor Adair about whether sufficient military personnel were available to deal with civil emergencies, he explained that it was a case of doing the best with the resources available, and that the MoD could deploy personnel from other parts of the country. In relation to publicity, Lt Col McCombe explained that each service had a presentation team which could explain the services provided, and he contributed to such work.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Vic McMillen, Group Manager, Emergency Planning and New Dimensions, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, outlined the service's input on resilience matters, which included: a Resilience Team, which could deploy very high capacity pumps to deal with flooding; an Incident Response Unit to conduct mass decontamination; detection, identification and monitoring of hazardous materials; and involvement in the Local Resilience Forum. In the future was the possibility of additional money to implement recommendations of the Pitt review, training for front-line and senior employees on flooding, a new regional control centre, standardised operating systems and the Airwaves communication system.

In reply to Councillor Heptinstall, Mr McMillen stated that the service could respond to flooding incidents where no life was at risk, but this would depend on priorities. He said that the service planned for flooding with its resilience partners, and tested procedures through training exercises. Councillor Adair asked how the service would respond to an air crash such as occurred at Kegworth in 1989. Mr McMillen replied that the service could deploy personnel and appliances as necessary, and draw on expert advice and assistance, eg from specialist rescue teams. The service aimed to deal with incidents without military assistance, except where there expertise and manpower were needed. Clear protocols existed. He stated that costs might be covered by Belwin arrangements, and he was not aware of the military charging for support at a major incident. He added that fire authorities were now expected to cover strikes without calling on military aid.

EAST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE

Geoff Alvis, Emergency Planning Officer, EMAS, explained that his service worked closely with the other emergency services and played a full part under the Civil Contingencies Act. There were contingency plans for major incidents. Plans for the future included the decontamination of casualties, and the creation of a hazardous area response team.

In reply to Councillor Clarke, Mr Alvis explained how EMAS would respond to a flu pandemic. He said that the Health Protection Agency would warn about the risk. The service had protective clothing for staff, and could draw on vehicles used for patient transport and by private and charitable ambulance services. There was a bank of former staff to draw on. There was an expectation that people with flu would remain in the community, and only those with complications would be admitted.

Councillor Stewart asked how EMAS operated at the borders with other areas. Mr Alvis indicated that the closest ambulance should attend an incident. The new Nottingham control room and Airwave communication system would help. In reply to Councillor Adair, Mr Alvis expressed confidence that EMAS' systems for major emergencies were robust, with regular testing and the ability call on aid from other services. At Kegworth, for example, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire had provided services directly, with other neighbouring authorities provided back up. Training was ongoing, both alone and with partners. Councillor Carter referred to the chlorine plant close to the M1, and asked whether EMAS would be consulted at the planning stage for such establishments. Mr Alvis that EMAS was consulted about a COBRA regulated site such as this, and took part in regular training exercises, paid for by the company operating the facility.

WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for future meetings was as follows:

26 January 2009: Nottinghamshire Police and Lincolnshire County Council

23 February 2009: Highways Agency and NHS Nottinghamshire

23 March 2009: draft final report

Members mentioned contamination of water sources from closed coal mines and landfill sites. Councillor Davidson believed this might be outside the scope of this review, but something which could be recommended for separate scrutiny, depending on the information available.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

CHAIR