

# minutes



Meeting CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 27 October 2008 (commencing at 10.00 am)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

## COUNCILLORS

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

A Reg Adair  
John Carter  
John Clarke  
Stan Heptinstall

A Dave Shaw  
Mark Spencer  
Yvonne Woodhead

## APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Councillor Yvonne Davidson as Chair and Councillor Andy Stewart as Vice-Chair of the Committee was noted.

## MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee, as set out above, was noted.

## APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Woodhead.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Shaw declared a personal interest as a member of Ashfield District Council. Councillor Heptinstall declared a personal interest through his involvement in schools in the Bramcote Hills complex.

## INITIAL BRIEFING ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Rob Fisher, Head of Service for Emergency Management and Registration, began by referring to the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, an inter-departmental government organisation, accountable to MI5. The Centre had an advisory role to the power industry, telecommunications and transport undertakings, about resilience against terrorism or other threats. He explained that the Civil Contingencies Act distinguished between:

- Category 1 organisations: eg county and district councils, Police, Fire, health, Environment Agency, which had the full range of duties to assess risk and plan for emergencies, cooperate and share information with partners
- Category 2 organisations: eg power companies, telecommunications and transport, with a duty to cooperate.

An example of a threat to critical infrastructure arose during the floods of July 2007, when a multi-agency operation took place to protect an electricity substation in Gloucester, whose loss would have cut power to 450,000 people and the water supply to 150,000 homes. Sir Michael Pitt's review of the flooding had made nine recommendations in relation to critical infrastructure, including on the roles of the Environment Agency, regulators and Category 2 organisations.

Jacqui Towndrow, Emergency Planning Officer, gave the local context. Key was the Local Resilience Forum, and its sub-groups such as the C1 Group of emergency planners from Category 1 and 2 organisations. Some difficulties had been experienced, eg lack of engagement of Category 2 emergency planners, who might have to cover a wide region beyond Nottinghamshire; lack of common areas of interest; some Category 2 organisations not recognising their responsibilities under the Act. Therefore an alternative approach was being taken by representatives of the County Council, Police and Fire going to the Category 2 organisations. She pointed out that Category 2 organisations held their own lists of vulnerable people, such as patients on oxygen or dialysis. As an example of good practice, she referred to Severn Trent Water's resilience team of six people, who were working on alternative supply plans.

Councillor Clarke asked about collaboration with neighbouring counties. Ms Towndrow said that there were regional meetings, but that a local focus worked better. Mr Fisher added that most emergencies were local, and that there was a risk of losing local knowledge and connections if too much was attempted at the regional level. In reply to Councillor Adair, he stated that there was no specific connection with Local Area Agreement structures, although critical infrastructure might feature on agendas or in the Comprehensive Area Assessment. In reply to Councillor Heptinstall, he indicated that liaison between Category 1 organisations was good, and with Category 2 organisations was improving. There was liaison with adjacent emergency planners over cross-border incidents.

Councillor Adair wondered who was holding the Category 2 organisations to account. Mr Fisher explained that this was a national problem, although there were instances of good practice, as shown by agencies' cooperation after the offices of Melton Borough Council were burnt down. Councillor Stewart believed that relations with Severn Trent and other agencies had improved since the 2007 floods in Lowdham.

Councillor Heptinstall asked about the county council's own capacity. Mr Fisher replied that there were sound business continuity plans, which had been tested by various incidents. In response to Councillor Shaw, he said that Emergency Planning had no budgets to set up alternative arrangements for eg power supply.

## **SCOPE AND DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME**

A scope for the review had been circulated. Councillor Davidson indicated that the intention had been not to define the scope too tightly, while maintaining a focus on severe events rather than minor ones. She said that each member would receive an information pack, which would include the Pitt recommendations and Government's response to them. Suggestions for topics to be covered included: benchmarking with other local authorities; how responsibilities were allocated; how to involve the public in the review; and how to deal with sensitive information during the review.

It was agreed to meet at 10.00 am on 24 November, 15 December, 26 January, 23 February and 23 March; that evidence at the December meeting be taken from the military and emergency; that other meetings focus on health, the utilities and other authorities (eg Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire).

The meeting closed at 11.15 am.

**CHAIR**