

24th September 2013**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****LESSONS ARISING FROM THE EXPLOSION IN NEWARK ON 19 MAY 2013****Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise the Committee of the lessons arising from the explosion that occurred on Wright Street, Newark on 19 May 2013, and the process by which these will be used to improve arrangements for future emergencies.

Information and AdviceBackground

2. As reported previously, an explosion occurred during the early evening of Sunday 19 May at a residential property on Wright Street in Newark. Tragically, two people were killed and another was seriously injured. Approximately 100 people were evacuated from their homes and a 'Place of Safety' (Rest Centre) was established at the Grove Lane Leisure Centre. A multi-agency 'Tactical Coordinating Group' was established on the morning after the explosion and meetings were called at suitable intervals throughout the following week. A telephone 'Helpline' was established for those affected, using the County Council's Customer Services Centre number. Also, an 'Information Point' was established at Charles Street Methodist Church, where representatives of the County Council and Newark & Sherwood District Council maintained a presence and provided support to residents throughout the week. Representatives of gas and electricity suppliers also attended.
3. A 'Recovery Co-ordinating Group' was established, chaired by Newark and Sherwood District Council with guidance and assistance from the County Council emergency planning team. This Group assisted the return to normality and assumed the lead role in coordinating the longer-term recovery of the community.
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 and materials, as well as money, were donated by the community and collected by the church.
5. The following analysis has been provided based on the findings of the multi-agency debriefing meeting. However, the Local Resilience Forum has not yet had

the opportunity to formally consider these findings and determine what actions are appropriate to enhance current emergency plans. These decisions will be taken through the regular mechanisms of the Forum and its subgroups.

Debriefing

6. All agencies involved in this incident undertook internal debriefing activities ahead of a multi-agency debriefing event that took place on Tuesday 16 July 2013, facilitated by an officer from the County Council's emergency planning team using recognised 'Structured Debriefing' methodology. The event included representatives from the County Council, plus Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, East Midlands Ambulance Service, Newark and Sherwood District Council, Western Power Distribution, National Grid and British Red Cross.
7. The aim of the meeting was to identify lessons from the response to the explosion and the subsequent clearance and recovery operations. The event enabled participants to explore what were the most challenging aspects and the most successful aspects of response and recovery. The event went on to consider the most significant points each agency should learn from the event, and lessons that must be reflected in future planning, training, exercises and emergency response.

Challenges

8. The most challenging aspects of response and recovery in the incident were identified as:
 - Establishing information on the individual circumstances and needs of everyone affected by the explosion. Some householders left the scene and did not go to the Place of Safety, and so there were no means of communicating with them directly.
 - Working with an unstable structure that required significant immediate demolition and support work.
 - Access to the location with large vehicles. Initially, the streets in the immediate vicinity were congested with private cars which made access difficult for some emergency vehicles.
 - Mobilising local authority and other non-emergency services personnel on a Sunday evening for functions that are not served by out-of-hours duty officer systems.
 - Restoration of gas and electricity supply to nearby but unaffected properties.
9. It was noted also that the 'Fire Emergency Support Service' of the British Red Cross was activated at the beginning of the emergency but stood down when it could have been deployed to support longer term community and responder welfare.

Successes

10. The debriefing meeting identified a large number of successes, with many respondents expressing satisfaction that the response had demonstrated that effective emergency management systems are in place. Key successes were identified as follows:

- Close partnership working between responding agencies. This included all of the local agencies plus the utility companies, whose personnel joined the response from bases outside Nottinghamshire.
- The response was rapid where duty officers were available on call.
- Regular and effective multi-agency briefings at the scene during the emergency response phase.
- The operation to make structures safe.
- Multi-agency communication and work at the scene.
- Establishment, operation and location of the 'Information Point' in the Methodist Church Hall for local people to refer to.
- Availability and ease of media access to agency spokespeople at the scene.
- Positive media coverage of the emergency response and appropriate management of media messages, particularly in relation to possible causes.
- Fire and forensic investigation processes at the site of the explosion.
- Establishment and evolution of the 'Tactical Coordinating Group' and subsequent hand-over to an effective 'Recovery Coordinating Group'.
- The response of the community, and agency support for this. The role of the local Methodist Church was particularly important, and provided a focus for expressions of support from local people and businesses.
- The benefit of previous joint training was evident to responders at the scene and at the various control centres.
- County Council and District Council Elected Members expressed positive views of the response and said they felt well supported.

Significant Lessons

11. Overall, the consistent observation from debrief participants was that the emergency management arrangements currently in place are fit for purpose and had performed well. The availability of trained officers who are accustomed to multi-agency work is indispensable in events of this type. Also, where they exist, out-of-hours stand-by arrangements provide a timely response to an emergency call-out. However, the absence of formalised systems in some local authority services means that their potential contributions are either absent or delayed. Therefore, it would be of benefit if there were out-of-hours on-call systems for key services that do not currently have them.
12. 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.
13. Finally, it was concluded that there is likely to be benefit in undertaking further work to make information technology available in innovative ways at the scene of an incident.

Future emergency management

14. The following proposals were made for further increasing resilience to the impact of future emergencies through planning, training, exercises and emergency response and recovery arrangements.
15. In view of the recent major changes in health service structures, further joint training and awareness would be of benefit to all agencies.
16. New mechanisms will be needed if non-emergency services communication with the media and the public is to be as timely and effective in emergencies at weekends and in the evening as they are during the working week.
17. It was recognised that there is scope to make greater use still of the capacity for the voluntary sector to contribute to an emergency response. Therefore, there will be more consultation and awareness of the abilities of voluntary agencies available to be activated during an incident and participate in the recovery of affected communities.
18. Finally, addressing a topic that was already the subject of developmental work, this incident illustrated the need to be prepared to cope well with donations and offers of help come from people and organisations from near and far.

Implementation

19. The debrief report will be presented to the next meeting of the Resilience Working Group of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum. It is anticipated that this will lead to the formulation of recommendations and an action plan for implementation of these.
20. Within Nottinghamshire County Council, a report with proposed actions will be made to the Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board. It is anticipated

that this too will lead to the formulation of recommendations for enhancements to County Council arrangements and an action plan for implementation of these.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are included in the report.

Financial Implications

22. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee:

- 1) Note the lessons arising from this incident and future plans contained in this report.
- 2) Receive a further report to consider the implementation of recommendations arising from the meetings with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum and the Risk Safety and Emergency Management Board.

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Constitutional Comments (NAB 13/09/13)

23. The Community Safety Committee has the authority to consider the recommendations set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (KAS 05/09/13)

24. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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