

minutes



Meeting CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 23 February 2009 (commencing at 10.00 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

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

A	Reg Adair		Dave Shaw
	John Carter	A	Mark Spencer
A	John Clarke		Yvonne Woodhead
	Stan Heptinstall		

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Vincent Dobson

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 26 January 2009 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Adair, Clarke and Spencer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest by members or officers.

RESILIENCE - GOVERNMENT OFFICE EAST MIDLANDS

Peter Ward, Regional Resilience Director, GOEM, introduced the regional office's role in emergency planning. He explained that his team of five people had a communications role, using links to government departments and COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Room A). Examples of when the team became involved were the finding of cryptosporidium in drinking water in Northamptonshire in 2007, flooding in summer 2007 and outbreak of blue tongue disease in 2008. Most of the team's work was devoted to planning and preparing for emergencies, including plans for rationing fuel supplies, pandemic flu, biological and radiological incidents, communications and mass fatalities. There was a regional resilience forum, along the lines of the

local forums. Mr Ward referred to the National Risk Register, which identified a range of emergencies, all of which could have an impact on critical infrastructure. The team met with partners to assess risk on a regional basis. He pointed out that GOEM had no authority over partner organisations, and no funding to distribute.

Councillor Stewart asked what plans there were for mutual aid between local authorities. Mr Ward replied that the Pitt review had recommended better systems of mutual aid. The Home Office had produced a model agreement, which partners would be advised to sign. Councillor Shaw asked whether priorities would change. Mr Ward replied that a degree of flexibility was necessary. His practice was to review the previous year's incidents, and to look ahead for the next five years.

Councillor Carter referred to proposals after the 1963 coastal flooding for a North Sea Wall, which had never been constructed. Mr Ward stated that he took advice from DEFRA and the Environment Agency on such matters. Both these organisations had limited budgets, and had to balance between coastal areas which should be defended and those which could be flooded. There were discussions with such agencies, but GOEM's involvement had been particularly around planning for evacuations. In reply to Councillor Shaw, Mr Ward said that lessons were learned from practice in the Netherlands. In reply to Councillor Stewart, he indicated that DEFRA had a responsibility to consider the security of food supplies, for example in light of flooding in the Fens.

Relations with Category 2 responders were unsatisfactory at present, in Mr Ward's view. He understood that there might be revised guidance to clarify relationships with the Category 2 organisations. There might be a mandatory requirement for them to participate in joint work. However, appropriate structures would need to be devised. Councillor Heptinstall asked what value Mr Ward felt his team added. Mr Ward to the team's work at the preparation stage, comparing the responses to the 2001 and 2007 foot and mouth disease outbreaks. He believed that the most serious threat in Nottinghamshire was loss of electricity supply.

EMERGENCY PLANNING - NHS NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY

Debbie Brown, Emergency Planning Lead Officer, NHS Nottinghamshire County explained that she worked in a team of six people for one of the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) covering Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. They worked in partnership with the Strategic Health Authority, Health Protection Agency, acute NHS Trusts, mental health Trust, ambulance service and the other PCTs. They participated in the Local Resilience Forum, and other local and regional groups. The PCT had emergency plans covering rest centres, mass casualties, flooding, fuel shortages, heat waves and pandemic flu. Each directorate had a business continuity plan. There were also site-specific and service plans. Plans were tested out by holding exercises, and training was organised to include all PCT employees.

Councillor Carter asked about the global position in relation to pandemic flu. Mr Ward replied that the World Health Organisation was responsible for monitoring flu outbreaks. The H5N1 flu variant was present in the animal kingdom, but remained difficult for humans to catch. He said that the UK was better prepared than most countries for a pandemic. Organisations had been requested to prepare business continuity plans on the basis of losing one-third of their staff. Ms Brown indicated that the PCT would redeploy staff from non-critical services. In reply to Councillor

Shaw, Mr Ward stated that Tamiflu was the best off-the-shelf product to limit the duration and symptoms of flu. It might take six months to develop a specific vaccine against a new strain of flu.

Councillor Heptinstall referred to his own work at the Queen's Medical Centre. He was aware that staff had annual fire awareness training, but he did not know of training to deal with any other sort of emergency. Ms Brown understood that the PCT was the only trust to have a mandatory requirement to train for emergencies. Mr Ward pointed out that every organisation must be prepared for an emergency, but had to make a balanced decision as to whether individual staff required training. Ms Brown explained that the PCT's e-learning package made people aware of the plans which existed, but did not expect them to learn the details of the plans. Councillor Heptinstall remained concerned by the general lack of awareness at the QMC about such plans. Ms Brown indicated that senior managers at Nottingham University Hospitals had the knowledge, which they could cascade if necessary. The NUH Trust would need to consider whether such training should be mandatory for all staff.

EMERGENCY PLANNING - HIGHWAYS AGENCY

Matthew Pates, Emergency Planning Manager, Highways Agency explained that his organisation was an executive agency of the Department of Transport, responsible for the strategic road network in England. In Nottinghamshire, the remit covered the M1, A1, A46, A52, and A453. He was one of two emergency planning staff covering the East Midlands. He expressed a wish to improve relationships with partners, to be available and to attend local resilience forum meetings. The Agency had to know of risks on or near the highway. He aimed to update the Agency's contingency plans.

Mr Pates drew attention to the lack of responsibility for any particular organisation to provide welfare to stranded motorists. The Agency had now agreed to deliver basic welfare, and to evacuate motorists if necessary. However, the Agency's preference would be to enable people and their vehicles to leave the road. Examples of welfare being provided were on the M5 during the 2007 floods, and recently on the A38 after heavy snow. The Pitt review had made two recommendations to the Highways Agency: the provision of welfare, and about parts of the network vulnerable to flooding. However there were some stretches of road where flooding could not be prevented. The Agency had had a robust severe weather plan since 2003.

Councillor Stewart agreed that the priority should be to reopen a road rather than provide welfare. He referred to the delays which could occur while the Police surveyed an accident site. Mr Pates explained that the Agency's target was to reopen a road within 45 minutes of arrival on site, although this target was suspended while the Police and Fire and Rescue Services were involved. If someone had been killed in an accident, the Police were obliged to carry out a forensic examination. The Agency had provided equipment and training to enable investigations to be carried out more quickly. There was also discussion about diversionary routes, gritting against ice and snow, and communication with the Agency.

WORK PROGRAMME

There was discussion about how to draw together recommendations for the final report, which would be considered by the Select Committee on 23 March. It was agreed that officers would draft the final report and recommendations on the basis of discussion at this and previous meetings, and e-mail them to members in advance of the agenda being dispatched.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am.

CHAIR