

WEST SUFFOLK JOINT EMERGENCY PLANNING PANEL
Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 9 October 2012 at 5.00 pm
in the Council Chamber, Forest Heath District Council Offices
College Heath Road, Mildenhall

PRESENT: Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)
Councillor A Drummond (Chairman)
Councillor D W Bowman
Councillor Mrs R E Burt
Councillor N A Roman

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)
Councillor J Thorndyke (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor T Beckwith
Councillor P Chung
Councillor Mrs P A Warby

IN ATTENDANCE: A Points, District Emergency Planning Officer
S J Dwan, Committee Administrator (Temporary) (FHDC)

1. SUBSTITUTES

Councillor P Chung attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor S A Stamp.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S A Stamp.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2012 were unanimously accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

5. EMERGENCY PLANNING: INCIDENTS AND EXERCISES (REPORT D155)

The Joint Panel considered Report D155 (previously circulated) which listed the emergency planning incidents which had occurred in both authorities since the last panel meeting on 16 February 2012:-

(a) Haverhill Recycling Centre Fire on 27 February 2012

Following a fire at the Recycling Centre materials had continued to smoulder for a number of days resulting in complaints being received from local residents. SEBC Environmental Health Officers had liaised with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

(b) Newmarket Severe Rainfall on 3 May 2012

Properties in the Newmarket area had suffered flooding as a result of issues in the area of the No. 1 Drain. Meetings had subsequently been held between FHDC and local residents.

(c) Haverhill Castle Hill School Fire on 3 June 2012

A fire at a derelict school in Haverhill had created concerns over possible contamination by asbestos waste. SEBC Environmental Health Officers had liaised with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to alleviate concerns.

(d) Bury St Edmunds Cupola House Fire on 17 June 2012

Members were aware that a major fire had occurred at premises in The Traverse, in a building occupied by the Strada restaurant. The fire had created a significant impact on both local businesses and residents. Considerable press coverage and public concern about the future of the building had been generated.

In response to public concerns, an information stall had been set up in the Market Square for a week after the fire; the level of interest was high with queues forming particularly on Market day.

Links with businesses affected by the fire had been established by SEBC, and although they continued to face difficulties they were aware that every effort is being made to resolve the situation by SEBC and other agencies.

Renovation works were proceeding and although there had been some issues around scaffolding, these had now been resolved. It was reported that the building Contractor had liaised effectively with SEBC, the business community and other agencies.

The focus was now on continuing to manage the impact of the incident, and getting the building back to a habitable condition.

Councillors gave their thanks to all of the Officers and agencies involved in managing the response and recovery process successfully.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

6. BUSINESS CONTINUITY (REPORT D156)

The Joint Panel considered Report D156 (previously circulated) which informed Members that there had been two minor incidents since the last meeting:-

(a) West Suffolk House (SEBC)

Power had been lost on the 12 July 2012, and ICT services became unavailable until the following morning. However, the impact on service delivery had been minimal.

(b) College Heath Road Offices (FHDC)

Flooding had occurred on the 18 July 2012 due to water ingress through a flat roof, making some areas of the building unusable. Staff had been relocated to alternative areas and service delivery was not affected.

It was noted that business continuity training and exercises would recommence once the Joint Leadership Team and shared services structure was fully implemented. At that stage a joint business continuity plan would be developed to reflect shared services.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

7. COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS (REPORT D157)

The Joint Panel considered Report D157 (previously circulated) which advised Members of the dates of two forthcoming Community Resilience Support Network meetings arranged for 8 November 2012, 6.00 pm at Forest Heath District Council offices and 15 November 2012, 6.00 pm at St Edmundsbury Borough Council offices.

All of the Parish and Town Councils in West Suffolk had been invited, via the Parish Clerks, positive responses had been received from the following Parish Councils:-

(a) 8 November 2012

Brandon
Dalham
Freckenham
Gazeley
Red Lodge

(b) 15 November 2012

Bardwell
Chedburgh
Claire
Great Barton
Haverhill

Other Parish/Town Councils had expressed an interest but were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

In addition, the Learning & Development Section had also arranged an Emergency Planning training session for District and Borough Councillors on 22 October 2012. As space was available the invitation

had now been extended by Portfolio Holders Councillor R D Everitt and Councillor R J Millar to Parish and Town Councillors. The meeting was to be held at Forest Heath District Council from 5pm to 7pm.

Councillors expressed concern that the response rate for resilience training was low. The District Emergency Planning Officer replied that steady progress was being made, and asked that Councillors present promoted the importance of training to their colleagues in the Parishes and Town Councils.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED:

That:-

1. The content of the report be noted; and
2. The Forthcoming Community Resilience Support Network Meetings, as detailed in Section 4 of report D157, be promoted with their Councillor colleagues and with Town and Parish Councils in St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District.

8. PERFORMANCE AND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT (REPORT D158)

The Joint Panel noted Report D158 (previously circulated) the purpose of which was to provide an analysis of Emergency Preparedness in the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury areas.

The District Emergency Planning Officer informed the meeting that the format of the report had changed and was now presented as a high level summary. Appendix A was split into two parts showing performance against either a Mandatory or Better Practice heading for both Councils using a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status system. The majority of results for mandatory components were shown as green or yellow, which gave a better result than other Suffolk authorities.

In respect of capability it was reported that the number of volunteers was decreasing. To address this, and the move towards shared services, it would be logical to integrate the Emergency Planning Volunteer teams and processes as soon as possible.

In response to a Member query on the actions required to move the two 'Reds' for Forest Heath District Council up to 'Yellow' the District Planning Officer responded that there would have to be an increase in the number of Elected Members trained, in particular the Leader and Portfolio Holders. Amalgamating the volunteer team would also have a positive effect.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED:

That:-

1. The content of the report be noted; and
2. The proposal to move towards producing a single West

Suffolk Capability and Performance Report, as detailed in Section 4 of Report D158, be supported.

9. TRAINING AND EXERCISING (REPORT D159)

The Joint Panel considered Report D159 (previously circulated). It was confirmed that a forward plan for training would be developed when the West Suffolk Joint Leadership Team and shared services structure had been fully implemented.

The District Emergency Planning Officer informed the meeting that there had been a number of external emergency planning exercises. A county-wide exercise called 'Rebound' had demonstrated that Elected Members had an important role to play in the recovery phase following major incidents, particularly in relation to decisions that have a financial impact.

It was reported that a national exercise, OSMOSIS, had been arranged at RAF Honington for October 2012, and that a USAF exercise would be held at RAF Mildenhall in December 2012. Both would be supported by local Emergency Planners.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Joint Panel noted the following dates for future meetings:-

Tuesday 12 February 2013; at West Suffolk House; and
Monday 14 October 2013; at Forest Heath District Council Offices

Both meetings to commence at 5.00 pm

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

FHDC NAMED SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

Councillor R E Burt stated that a named substitute would be confirmed for Forest Heath District Council in time for the next meeting of the Panel.

The meeting concluded at 5.44pm.

CHAIRMAN

