

WEST SUFFOLK JOINT EMERGENCY PLANNING PANEL
Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 29 October 2014 at 5.00 pm
in Room GFR14, West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds

PRESENT: Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)
 Councillor D W Bowman (Vice-Chairman)
 Councillor T Wheble (substituting for Councillor
 N A Roman)

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)
 Councillor J Thorndyke (Chairman)
 Councillor T Beckwith
 Councillor P Chung (substituting for Councillor Mrs
 S A Stamp)
 Councillor Mrs P A Warby

1. Substitutes

The following substitutions were declared:

Councillor T Wheble for Councillor N A Roman; and
Councillor P Chung for Councillor Mrs S A Stamp

2. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor J Thorndyke be elected Chairman.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor D W Bowman be appointed Vice-Chairman.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs R E Burt, A Drummond, N A Roman and Mrs S A Stamp.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declarations Of Interest

None declared.

7. Terms of Reference - Amendment

The Panel considered a narrative as follows:

'To reflect the change in officer responsibility for Emergency Planning, to empower the Vice-Chairman to act in the Chairman's absence and to clarify that the emergency planning arrangements apply across the area of both authorities it is proposed that the existing paragraph 2.7 of the Terms of Reference i.e.

'At the discretion of the Chairman, in the event that either:

- (a) an emergency event arises which affects the area of either authority, or
 - (b) the risk of an emergency that affects the area of either authority is assessed as significant by Suffolk County Council's Head of Emergency Planning,
- an extraordinary meeting of the Panel may be called.'

be amended to:

'At the discretion of the Chairman, *or if absent the Vice-Chairman*, in the event that either:

- (a) an emergency event arises which affects the area of either authority, *or both authorities*, or
 - (b) the risk of an emergency that affects the area of either authority, *or both authorities*, is assessed as significant by the *District Emergency Planning Officer*,
- an extraordinary meeting of the Panel may be called.'



RECOMMENDED:

That paragraph 2.7 of the West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel's Terms of Reference be amended as detailed above.

8. Suffolk Flood Review Workshops

Officers gave an oral update on these workshops which had been held post the flooding events in the County during last Winter. The incidents of localised flooding that had occurred had given rise to demands for sandbags to be supplied to householders. However, the situation had been that whilst the County Council maintained a limited stock of sandbags these were to be used solely for strategic purposes. The joint view of Suffolk local authorities had been not to keep stocks of sandbags for general issue to households as they were not regarded as an effective measure of protection in most instances, particularly in situations of flash flooding. This approach had been reviewed but it had been agreed that the current policy should be adhered to. However, alternative ways to help householders in areas which had been consistently flooded would be investigated. These were to disseminate information on other flood prevention measures, such as flood bags or flood boards, which were available commercially and to encourage community resilience by supporting locally based solutions. The Panel were further informed that the National Flood Forum had agreed to support two pilot schemes in Suffolk to provide a response to potential local flooding incidents. These would be at Southwold (Waveney District Council) and Chelmondiston (Babergh District Council). In relation to the specific problems of flooding in St Edmundsbury Borough at Gardiner Close in Bury St Edmunds officers advised that the causes of this were being remedied by Anglian Water

and the County Council remedied including works to storm drains and clearance work being planned along the upper reaches of the River Linnet.

Members referred to specific flooding incidents within their wards and expressed concern about the difficulties in getting the appropriate authority to take action. Officers advised that the County Council as lead authority on flooding issues, had a dedicated telephone line (01473 260929) and link floods@suffolk.gov.uk for flooding incidents to be reported and in arranging a response officers would liaise with other agencies as appropriate. The Panel requested that information be sought from the Environment Agency, the County Council and Internal Drainage Boards as to what works were planned currently in respect of flooding problems in both Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough. These when added to works programmed by the Borough Council in respect of the River Lark would give an overview of which problems were being addressed and those which were not. The Panel also stressed that it was essential that the relevant authorities and landowners kept the rivers and watercourses (including ditches) clear. The Panel requested that a member of the Suffolk County Council Flood Management team be invited to the next meeting to facilitate further discussion of the issues.

9. Emergency Planning and Business Continuity: Update

The Panel received and noted Report F158 (previously circulated) which gave an overview of recent emergency planning issues as follows:

- (a) restructure of Joint Emergency Planning Unit and officers responsible for emergency planning in Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough;
- (b) two Emergency Incidents;
- (c) Training and Exercises;
- (d) Community Emergency Planning;
- (e) Business Continuity; and
- (f) Performance and Capability Assessment, attached as Appendix A to the report.

Officers further reported that approval was anticipated of a bid to the National Lottery Awards for All Fund for training of Community Emergency Planning Groups. A map showing those parishes which had established Community Emergency Planning Groups was tabled. The Panel was advised that copies of the Suffolk Community Resilience Newsletter were e-mailed to Clerks to parish and town councils and that Emergency Planning Officers attended meetings of these local authorities where requested to encourage the setting up of new groups. Approaches would also be made to other village organisations, such as Womens' Institutes, if normal channels of contact proved to be unresponsive. A survey would be carried out in the early part of 2015 to establish what level of engagement towns and parishes had in relation to emergency planning. Workshops were being staged this month on Winter Emergency Planning issues. Panel members and

other Councillors were asked to encourage involvement at parish/community level in respect of their wards.

In relation to the Performance and Capability Assessments, officers advised in relation to the red coding on Business Continuity that small businesses and voluntary organisations did not meet the required standard to be included in this assessment and that experience had been that larger businesses were often apathetic towards this matter. An induction session on Emergency Planning would be arranged post the elections next May for all Members. On staffing the Panel was advised that there were mutual aid arrangements with other local authorities in Suffolk to provide key staff. Whilst staffing levels were above the minimum approaches were being made to seek further volunteers from Suffolk County Council staff based at West Suffolk House. Recruitment of such staff with relevant skills and experience would be particularly useful in operating rest centres.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The following dates of future meetings were approved:

Thursday 12 February 2015 at Forest Heath District Council Offices;
and
Thursday 22 October 2015 at West Suffolk House.

Both meetings to commence at 5.00 p.m

The meeting concluded at 6.00 p.m.

**J THORNDYKE
CHAIRMAN**