

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **County Emergency Committee** held in the Lindisfarne Room, Fire and Rescue HQ, West Hartford on Monday, 26 March, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J. Riddle (Chairman)
in the chair

COUNCILLORS

Daley, W.
Dickinson, S.

Simpson, E.
Sharp, A.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Hedley, P
Clough, I
Bennett, Mrs L.M
Fisher, N
Allan, B

Chief Fire Officer
Civil Contingencies Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Civil Contingencies Officer
Civil Contingencies Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Hall, C
Clark, D

Environment Agency
Environment Agency

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.G. Davey, R.R. Dodd and P.A. Jackson.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting of the County Emergency Committee held on 5 September, 2017, as circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. COUNTY EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS AND EXERCISE BORDER REIVER

Members received presentations from the Chief Fire Officer and the Civil Contingencies Manager. (Copy attached to the signed minutes.)

Environment Agency - Gravel Extraction from Rivers

The Chair welcomed Mr. David Clark from the Environment Agency to the meeting. The issue of gravel extraction from rivers had been raised at the previous meeting.

The following points were raised:-

- It was explained that the situation at the South Tyne at Haydon Bridge was the same as for other rivers in Northumberland and scientific methodology was used with regard to gravel extraction.
- The Environment Agency would remove gravel from the river, particularly if there was a flood risk to nearby properties and no harm to the environment.
- The river at Haydon Bridge had been closely monitored for 20/30 years.
- It was noted that gravel at Haydon Bridge had been removed in December 2017.
- Historically, farmers had removed gravel from rivers/streams on their land, but it was noted that this could now only be carried out on a site specific basis and with a permit.

Review of Civil Contingency Arrangements

- All of the County Council's Emergency Plans had been reviewed following the Grenfell Tower Fire.
- An exercise involving NECA Chief Executives had taken place and found to be very useful. More exercises of this nature were planned in the future.
- It was expected that future exercises would encompass the Northumbria Police area rather than just the North of Tyne area following devolution.
- The role of rest centre managers and staff had been defined and an appeal for volunteers had been successful. Approximately 50 volunteers had come forward and would be trained.
- The involvement of the British Red Cross would be enhanced.
- Contact information was being reviewed and the facility to contact specific groups of officers via group texts would be explored.

Feedback from Exercise Border Reiver

- The local debrief had taken place although the official reports were not yet available.
- Improvements were needed to the operational rooms at Police Headquarters and at West Hartford to deal with issues such as noise and the positioning of meeting rooms. The Police also needed extensive access to WiFi.

- Multi-agency media liaison needed to be improved to prevent delays.
- The involvement of the Emergency Committee had been beneficial and it had been a useful opportunity to deal with some communication problems with Members.
- Security clearance needed to be widened and multi-agency liaison to be improved.
- Other areas which had not been explored during the exercise had been recovery and restoration, the role of the Coroner and the role of Town and Parish Councils.
- The Civil Contingencies Manager had since met with the Northumberland Association of Local Councils and had received information on contacting Town and Parish Councils in emergencies.
- The testing of personnel over a 24 hour period should be considered for further Tier 1 national exercises.
- Facebook and Twitter had been used with a closed audience to test live streaming throughout the exercise.

‘The Beast from the East’ - Severe Weather Update

- The Community Risk Register listed severe weather hazards and was reviewed annually.
- Early warnings had allowed discussions to take place with Highways and Adult Social Care to plan response and contingencies.
- The Incident Support Room had been activated and dealt with many requests for assistance from across Northumberland.
- Rest centres were set up at Alnwick and Berwick. A storage facility had now been identified at Berwick for emergency bedding. All supplies had been replenished.
- Tele conferences were held between services and agencies to prevent the need for officers to travel in dangerous conditions.
- The Communications Team was fully involved and was skilled at getting messages out to the public.
- There was a massive increase in the use of social media during the severe weather.
- The military had not been involved as it was identified that it did not have the required specialist equipment in Northumberland needed to deal with the snow.

The Chair thanked all of the staff for their dedication and hardwork during the severe weather.

The meeting was adjourned.

CHAIR

DATE