

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 3 – EMERGENCY PLANNING AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY

MINUTES

Thursday 11th April 2017

PRESENT: Councillors: Anthony Young (Chair), Swarn Kang, Anthony Kelly (Vice-Chair), Tariq Mahmood, Mohinder Midha, Andrew Steed, Chris Summers and Simon Woodroffe.

LBE Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains	- Scrutiny Review Officer
Simon Freeston	- Emergency Management Officer
Laura Spray	- Emergency Management Intern
Lee Teasdale	- Democratic Services Officer
Donna Wootton	- Head of Emergency Management

1. Apologies for Absence
(Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Kamaljit Dhindsa, Kieron Gavan and Gurmit Mann.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private
(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Minutes (02.02.2017)
(Agenda Item 4)

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel which had taken place on 2 February 2017.

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel held on 2 February 2017 be agreed as a true and correct record.

5. Draft Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 3
(Agenda Item 5)

The Chair introduced the draft final report of the Panel - asking that the Committee go through each recommendation for agreement or amendment accordingly.

Principal Finding

The Emergency Management Service has responded effectively to the challenges the Council has faced. The Emergency Management Service undertakes frequent exercises in preparation for emergencies and has a robust system of debriefing after major incidents which allows improvements in the service to be made.

Agreed as written

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The IT Service should ensure that there is adequate off-site support available so that customer service phone operators can work from home when the Council's customer service line is diverted to their mobile phones during business hours.

Agreed as written

Recommendation 2: The Emergency Management Service and the Facilities Management Service should ensure that a suitable alternative emergency evacuation site is available if necessary during the closure of the Town Hall for refurbishment.

It was advised that work had begun on finding a suitable site. The recommendation was agreed as written.

Recommendation 3: The Emergency Management Service should ensure that multi-agency exercises would benefit from providing feedback to the teams on the answers given in the exercises.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 4: The Communications Service should have a protocol in place for the Councillors which clearly explains who they should contact during an emergency.

It was advised that new generic national guidance was due to be circulated soon.

Discussion took place around the use of communications, it was explained that due to staffing issues 'lower level' incidents could only be reported on the Council's social media during working hours. The Head of Emergency Management was due to meet with the Head of Communications to discuss possibilities around the Emergency Management having a degree of control over the social media output at these times.

The Chair suggested that this could be added to the recommendation in some form.

Recommendation 5: The Scrutiny Panel commends the close inter-agency work concerning emergencies that is presently carried out in the borough.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 6: The Emergency Management Service should review the operation of its volunteer service. This review should cover recruitment and barriers to recruitment, availability during weekends and outside normal working hours, and service and deployment issues.

It was discussed that whilst the initial level of volunteers available was helpful (as seen during the Northolt incident) however such resources did tend to get used up quickly, and guarantees could not be given beyond the eight hour mark.

Emergency response was due to become an organisation wide responsibility.

The Panel felt it would be good to have as many volunteers as possible available and the recommendation was agreed as written.

Recommendation 7: The Emergency Management Service and the Communications Service should consider alternative means to social media such as through schools and local voluntary organisations to relay key messages relating to emergencies in the borough.

Various concerns were raised. Such as the problem of maintaining balance and ensuring that too much information was not put out in the public domain, which could lead to people ignoring it due to the frequency. There was also acknowledgement that outside of working hours, such communications would be limited.

There was a limit to the amount of time the Emergency Management Team could dedicate to its communications work, so social media possibilities could help in finding the solution for pushing messages to wider audiences.

The recommendation was agreed as written.

Recommendation 8: The Emergency Management Service should investigate further the suitability of the local places of worship that currently run night shelters as potential sources for future temporary accommodation for evacuees during emergencies in the borough.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 9: The Emergency Management Service should consider Councillor Involvement in the debriefing exercises.

There was discussion around the wording, with some Panel Members feeling that it needed to be strengthened. It was suggested that Councillors should be invited to all briefing exercises, however, following further discussion it was agreed that not all debriefing exercises were appropriate for Councillor involvement due to their high level nature.

Following further conversation it was agreed that the wording of the recommendation would be amended as read as follows:

“The Emergency Management Service should consider how to involve Councillors in debriefing exercises”.

Recommendation 10: There would be significant benefits to a West London Sub-Regional Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Hub. Ealing Council should:

- (i) continue to explore these opportunities with neighbouring boroughs; and**
- (ii) strive to establish bilateral partnerships with other local authorities that are willing to work together with us.**

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 11: The Rehousing Service should adopt the proposed flowchart on emergency arrangements for evacuees and review this periodically in the light of experience.

Conversation took place with regards to evacuee contact with re-housing officers.

The Head of Emergency Management stated that a learning point taken from the Northolt situation was that a re-housing officer would be onsite for all future incidents of such nature.

The Panel agreed that an extra recommendation should be inserted stating that:

“Two-way communications should be established between those who are rehoused and those in the rehousing team”.

Recommendation 12: The Rehousing Service should undertake further investigation of the insurance cover arrangements for emergency evacuees and apply these accordingly.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 13: The Emergency Management Service and the Rehousing Service staff should have certified training on dementia, learning disabilities and other mental health issues.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 14: The IT Service should ensure that cyber security is paramount in safeguarding the Council’s data resource.

It was advised that the Digital Scrutiny Panel had also been looking into this area.

Agreed as written.

Recommendation 15: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should undertake the ongoing monitoring of the accepted recommendations.

Agreed as written.

The Panel then expressed its thanks to the Emergency Team, stating how impressed they were by the Team’s diligence and knowledge.

The Head of Emergency Management thanked the Panel for buying-in to the process.

The Vice-Chair of the Panel thanked the Chair for the running of the Panel and the supporting officers to the Panel for their able assistance.

The Chair then drew the Panel to a close, with the Panel Members agreeing to delegate the signing off of the finalised report to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Resolved: That the Panel agree that the amendments noted above be made to the recommendations and that sign-off of the final report be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel.

Councillor Anthony Young, Chair.

The meeting ended at 7.40pm.