

Review Committee – 7 January 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **7 January 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr Mrs D Hoy
Cllr M Hoy

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr P J Shaw

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr A L Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C C Cannell, Mrs J R Gooding and R Milne.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr D Merrick for Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley for Cllr R Milne

OFFICERS PRESENT

M Harwood-White - Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial
J Stacey - Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer
P Gowers - Overview & Scrutiny Officer
M Power - Democratic Services Officer

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 EMERGENCY PLANNING AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial, which detailed the way in which the Council would respond to an emergency and how the work taking place will prepare the Council to meet its future risks.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- The opportunity for Members to receive the training delivered currently to staff to be emergency rest centre volunteers could be considered. In the past the Emergency Planning officer had delivered a more general

emergency planning training course to Members on responding to emergencies; this could be repeated, as new Members have been elected to the Council since the last training.

- Joint emergency planning training with neighbouring local authorities has taken place.
- Residents are more likely to contact Councillors out of hours, so it is imperative that Members are conversant with the procedures needed to be followed in the case of a large-scale emergency. Councillors can offer relevant skills; they have knowledge of their wards and can provide a link with Parish Councils as well as residents. Members cited instances of Councillors not being contacted in the case of an emergency occurring in their ward.
- A communications protocol was introduced in 2018, which set out the process for liaising with Members during an emergency. This is operating currently but can be reviewed and arrangements made to remind Members of the protocol. In the case of a large-scale emergency, communication would be firstly with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder, and then to other Members. In addition, there is a duty Assistant Director protocol where, in the case of a large-scale emergency, the on-call officer will communicate with the duty Assistant Director, the Managing Director and other Councillors. Training had been delivered for the Leader and Deputy Leader, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council on how to speak with the press in the case of a large-scale incident.
- The out of hours service is run by Tendring District Council Careline, which can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the case of a call to the out of hours system, Careline will deal with the call in the first instance using a comprehensive information pack (developed by the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer and relevant Council officers). If the call requires further action by the Council in response to a major incident, Careline will contact the Emergency On-Call Officer who is trained and experienced to take further action as appropriate. Should the incident be considered to require input of the Leadership Team the On-Call Officer will contact the Duty Assistant Director, who will in turn brief the Managing Director and Leader of the Council. This is set out in the communications protocol referred to above. A Member suggested there be a secondary emergency number for Members in case of need.
- Thorough testing of the Tendring out of hours service should be undertaken to make sure that all calls from the public are being answered. Although Members cited instances historically of members of the public receiving no answer when they phoned the careline number, there is now a different provider, which has resulted in an improved system. There have been no reports of problems with the line. Reports on all the calls received by the out of hours service go to Customer Services; information would be provided to the Committee on how many calls are made to the service and

the responses received.

- The information on the Rochford District Council website would be displayed in a more prominent place on the website. Residents should call 999 in the case of a serious emergency.
- It is generally the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity officer who designs the planned emergency exercises undertaken by the Leadership Team; he will assess the response and feed back to the Leadership Team on how the response has met requirements and if/where the Council's emergency plans need to be amended as a result. Exercises that are multi agency are evaluated by an independent party.
- The issue of whether the Council has cyber insurance is not part of the emergency planning remit, although this fact could be established, and Members advised.
- The Council could apply for financial assistance from central government under the Bellwin scheme, which is available to help local authorities meet uninsurable costs incurred when dealing with the aftermath of an emergency in their area.

It was requested that there be a report back to the April meeting of the Committee to cover how Members can be trained as emergency rest-centre volunteers; how the Tendring out of hours service is monitored, tested and evaluated; the communications protocol for responding to an emergency, how information is provided to Members and how it can be re-launched.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Committee receive an update report at its meeting on 2 April 2020, on the following: training for Members as emergency rest centres volunteers; information around communications protocol and how it can be re-launched to Members; confirmation that the emergency number is more prominently placed on the Council's website; a testing regime for the Tendring out of hours emergency service and the results of this testing.

3 REPORTING PROCESS FROM REVIEW COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

Clarification had been requested by a Member on the reporting process by officers from Review Committee to Full Council.

Review Committee on 3 December 2019 had requested that amendments be made to the mid-term Treasury Management report prior it being reported into Full Council.

The Overview & Scrutiny officer explained that the standard process for drafting a report from a Committee into Full Council had been followed by officers, that

is, production of a covering report that included the body of the Minutes of the meeting to give a flavour of discussion by the Committee, with the original report to the Committee attached as an appendix. In this instance, the additional information requested by the Committee had been included in a table added to the covering report to Council.

In response to a question as to why the additional information had not been circulated to the Committee in advance of publication of the report to Council, the Overview & Scrutiny officer explained that in this case officers were operating to a very tight timescale, which would have made this extremely difficult. Although it was not usual practice, in future, time permitting, the amended report or additional information requested could be circulated to the Committee prior to being published.

The Committee discussed the possibility of the mid-term Treasury Management report going to the November meeting of the Committee.

In previous years, the Review Committee had established a Treasury Management Sub-Committee to consider the Treasury Management reports and report back into the Review Committee; the re-establishment of this could be considered at the June 2020 meeting of the Committee.

4 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The committee considered the Key Decisions Document and noted its contents.

5 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan.

3/3/20 Community Safety Partnership. The Chairman of the Partnership, a representative of Essex Police and the Council's outside body Member representative would be invited to attend the meeting. Members could email questions in advance of the meeting to the Overview & Scrutiny officer.

2/4/20 – Emergency Planning update.

The meeting closed at 8.31 pm.

Chairman

Date

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