

Mildred Rea

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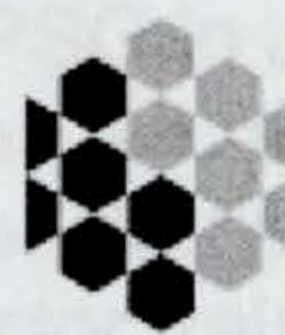
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Subject: Sub-Group Emergency Planning- minutes of meeting- 16 Jan 04

Central Personnel Group

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Department of
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Please find attached minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2004.

*Wileen: please b/f
 with my other
 papers on this.*

SUB-GROUP ON EMERGENCY PLANNING

MINUTES OF FIRST MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2004

Attendees:

Wendy Johnston DRD (Chair)

Liz Stewart DRD

Catherine Cavannagh DHSSPS

Damian Prince DCAL

Michael Daly DFP

Peter Houston DARD

Donal Moran DE

Judith Brown OFMDFM

Mildred Rea DFP (Secretary)

Background information

1. The SARS outbreak in 2003 increased awareness of the more critical type of emergency situation. A presentation on SARS to PSG in June 2003*, highlighting such possible effects of a 'level 3' situation, i.e. extensive spread in the community as being of high cost, unexpected severity, and impacting on areas falling largely within the public sector, raised questions about the preparedness of the NICS, at the corporate level, for such an emergency. Such a situation could arise as a result of a civil disaster, disease or chemical/nuclear incident.
2. The recent Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) crisis* was an example of a fairly self-contained emergency. DARD had coordinated the necessary action and arrangements for staff transfers had been made through the EOM network. However, a SARS-type emergency would be much more problematic, necessitating perhaps significant staffing redeployment across the NICS, and the possible need to bring in personnel, most likely in the specialist grades, from outside organisations and or GB for a limited period.
3. Judith Brown Central Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU) gave an overview of the existing framework of departmental business continuity planning and current action in the area:
 - CEPU, which has an advisory and promotional role, is in the process of discussing with individual Departments their arrangements.
 - Departmental level: consideration of Business Continuity Plans (BCP); nominated contact for this area.
 - Business Unit level: prioritisation of work areas; identification of needs in emergency situation ie staff numbers /grades /experience /skills (CEPU questionnaire)
 - Departmental BCPs should cope with levels 1 and 2 but level 3 emergencies would demand a corporate response.
 - Emergency Planning Policy Group (EPPOG): membership at G7/G5 level from central management Branches, chaired by CEPU director. EPPOG acts as a corporate management group during emergencies.
 - Crisis Management Group: flexible membership from Permanent Secretary to SoS/Ministerial level. CMG decides business continuity priorities for the NICS and can, where necessary, take decisions about dropping whole functions to maintain the most essential services.

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Role of the Sub-Group

4. The Sub-Group will focus on the mechanisms required for the effective re-deployment of NICS staff during an major emergency situation (Level 3) and provide a corporate personnel contingency plan that will feed into Departmental/NICS business continuity plans. Two pre-existing requirements for the necessary urgent action would be:
 - Clear decision that a level-3 scenario exists (CMG/EPPOG)
 - Categorisation of corporate priorities (CMG).
5. The previously drafted blueprint for corporate action* provided some initial elements of the personnel contingency plan:
 - Formation of a Corporate Operational Personnel Redeployment Unit (COPRU), possibly a 'virtual unit' within the HRMS team.
 - Use of the HRMS system to provide NICS-wide information
 - Possible locations Craigantlet Blds, Rathgael House, but in theory could be set up in any Personnel Division or Civil Service Pensions in Derry as necessary.
 - Creation of a contact network, with dedicated contact points within each Department/Agency to collate information, co-ordinate movement of staff etc.
 - Purpose of COPRU: to provide information to strategic monitoring group, collate Departmental needs, operating in parallel with EOM and Accommodation Planning.
6. Other issues for the attention of the Sub-Group are:
 - Other staffing needs for COPRU, perhaps asking appropriate areas to nominate dedicated personnel.
 - The existing HRMS facility for showing information on previous staff experience is rather narrow in view of what would be required for a level 3 situation: perhaps a matter to raise with eHR team.
 - Input from OBD and Supply both within DRD in the context of ensuring accommodation provision and a framework for financial propriety during such an emergency.
 - Appropriate protocols for redeploying NICS staff, similar to the Memorandum of Understanding produced by Cabinet Office*
 - Possible need for staff from outside NICS: identify possible sources of suitably skilled staff (depending on corporate priorities); create links to wider public sector; prepare suitable draft contract for temporary appointees.
 - Extent of power to direct operations/co-opt staff, potentially relevant factors being: the new Emergency Powers Bill currently being drafted; the appointment of a Central Co-ordinator (possibly HoCS); legal position of NICS as a single employer, rather than individual Departments.
 - Relevant experience in other countries.

Action and timescales

7. Members were asked to
 - Consider the information provided in particular the draft blue print;

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- liaise with their nominated Departmental contact for business continuity; and
 - contribute research as appropriate for a brainstorming session at next meeting (within 3-4 weeks).
8. The intention is to produce a corporate personnel contingency plan by the end of February for submission to the main PDG Group;

* indicates relevant documentation provided at the meeting

M E Rea
Central Personnel Group