



Winchester City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2005

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14(2)b

QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Sutton

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health

“Can the people of Winchester and District be assured that all possible measures are in place to safeguard the population in the event of a disaster caused by terrorism, natural forces or the effects of a pandemic of avian ‘flu?’”

Reply

“In reply to each specific question area:

Terrorism

The Home Office holds primary responsibility for counter-terrorism within the UK. The Security Service website has detailed information on the current threats to national security and expert security advice for businesses, organisations and anyone with responsibility for the safety of others. The UK Resilience website has a broad spread of information, including links to government websites, and many more. The County and City Councils would provide assistance to the Security Services as requested in the event of notification of a specific threat.

Natural Forces

The City Council’s role in a major civil emergency of any type, including those caused by natural forces, is to support the full-time emergency services when requested to do so. In most instances the City Council will lead the local authority response. It is likely any response will involve no more than the provision of the services and resources normally provided by the City Council, but focussed on the specific requirements of the emergency. These include the welfare of people through the provision of Rest Centres in the event of an evacuation and restoration to normality following an incident.

When requested to do so by the full-time emergency services the City will implement and staff its own Emergency Control Centre which can command and control the City’s response at operational, tactical and strategic levels if required.

The City’s Emergency Response Plan Identifies procedures, roles and responsibilities for responding to any emergency and allocates staff to fill those roles and responsibilities. It also sets out the call-out arrangements for such staff including

the 24-hour contact telephone numbers for all staff and agencies with responsibilities under the plan.

Avian 'flu

The lead agency will always be the Department of Health and local health providers. The City Council will have a support role and in the meantime are acting as consultees to information from the Department of Health on contingency plans and possible arrangements.

Director of Public Health for Mid Hants Primary Care Trust has just issued a draft protocol and guidance on response plans and these will be finalised over the next few months.

The Environmental Health Division have updated their Emergency Plans to include contact details for avian 'flu issues.

General

Emergency Planning was the subject of review by a Scrutiny Panel earlier in the year.

The conclusion of the Panel as reported to Principal Scrutiny Committee on the 11 May 2005 was: 'That in respect of assessing the scope and state of development of arrangements in place to protect the public in the event of an act of terrorism or civil disaster in or affecting the Winchester District the preparedness of Emergency Planning in Winchester is satisfactory and well advanced.' "