

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE IN HEREFORD IN NOVEMBER 2003

Report By: Emergency Planning Manager

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To provide an update on emergency planning arrangements following on from the Committee's Review of the response to the 2003 outbreak of Legionnaires disease.

Financial implications

2. None identified.

Background

3. Since the Committee's Review, an update on action in response to which was last given in September 2005, the national profile of infectious diseases has been raised by the possible threat that avian influenza might pass from birds to humans and then mutate into a human-to-human disease of pandemic proportions. National, regional and local risk assessments make this the most likely health threat to the population of the UK. Whilst the emergency planning focus on health has been on the pandemic influenza threat, the lessons learned from the Legionnaires outbreak in Hereford have helped to inform planning and training. Specifically:
 - a. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 has considerably enhanced the sharing of information and the co-operation between Category 1 responders through the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF). More locally, this is facilitated through membership of the Herefordshire Emergency Response to Major Incident Team (HERMIT) and there is now a Primary Care Trust (PCT) led Herefordshire Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee, supported by emergency planning and social care representatives from the Council.
 - b. The lead and roles of agencies involved in the identification of trigger points and the management of an infectious disease outbreak are now more clearly defined. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the Council and the Health Protection Agency (HPA), dealing with the protocols for infectious diseases was circulated 18 months ago, but has not yet progressed beyond draft status. Nationally the HPA have been working on a new MoU that takes into account recent changes to PCTs and Strategic Health Authorities introduced in October 2006 and which impinge on the response of partner organizations such as Local Authorities. The West Mercia LRF multi-agency Joint Emergency Response Arrangements (JERA) are being developed and are out for

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Philip Wilson, Emergency Planning Officer (Scrutiny) on 01432 260567

consultation. A request for action on the local MoU has been made to the HPA on 6th March 2007.

- c. Multi-agency emergency plans have been revisited and updated. Whilst the current local risk assessment does not require there to be a specific emergency response plan for legionnaires disease, the health authorities have published pandemic influenza specific response plans for multi-agency use.
- d. There has been a series of exercises to test and evaluate the emergency response arrangements for dealing with pandemic influenza at the local, regional and national level, in which Herefordshire Council participated throughout. This series culminated, in February, with the Department of Health led national exercise Winter Willow, during which the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate and Customer Services and the Emergency Planning Manager were closely involved at the appropriate levels on the Regional Response Committee and the Strategic Command Group.

RECOMMENDATION

That (a) the emergency planning update be noted, subject to any comments Members wish to make;

and

(b) that an update on the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Health Protection Agency be made in six months time.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None