

Committee:	COMMUNITY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item
Date:	September 14, 2006	4
Title:	EMERGENCY PLANNING, BEIRUT EVACUATION – JULY 2006	
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Summary – Sequence of Events

Thursday 20 July: Notification and Initiation

1. The District Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) was notified by Essex County Council Emergency Planning Department of the likelihood that a flight containing refugees may arrive at Stansted. The Crisis Management Team (CMT) of Uttlesford District Council (UDC) assembled that afternoon at their Emergency Centre to discuss the Council's action. CMT split the group so that a shift rota could be initiated if necessary. Later that day and after some confusion regarding the flight arrival times, CMT made the decision to temporarily stand down until further notice.
2. The first meeting was kicked off by a briefing from the DEPO followed by a briefing from the Chief Executive. Following this, a range of meetings took place to discuss the following topics:
 - Media strategy.
 - Make contact with Crawley Borough Council to learn from their experiences.
 - Location and practicality of rest centres
 - Putting necessary organisations on standby (Social Services, WRVS, Red Cross etc)
 - Discussion of the variety of needs of the refugees
 - Gold Silver or Bronze liaison officers to be arranged.
 - Situation Reports
 - Acquisition of staff volunteers
 - Facilities at the airport to support the refugees
 - Warning and informing Members and Parish Councils

Friday 21 July: Notification and Initiation

3. The CMT reassembled to discuss at the Council's response and to make further arrangements to involve implementing partners:
 - Confirmation that funding would be received from Central Government
 - Putting Rest Centre Volunteers on standby and onto a shift rota

- Costs of using various hotels to accommodate the refugees
 - Informing other respondents of the rendezvous point and to keep them informed of developments (PCT, Red Cross, WRVS, ECC, GO East)
 - Strategy of delivery (location, logistics, who what when and how)
 - Problems experienced at Gatwick
 - Provision of food and welfare
 - Plan A was that we will use hotels. Plan B was that UDC would open a rest centre
 - Administration duties and equipment required.
 - Check lists
4. The first multi-agency briefing commenced at 08:00hrs at UDC in the Council Chamber which concluded the roles and responsibilities of those involved along with a discussion of key issues:
- The Chief Executive briefed all delegates of the Council's action
 - The amount of people requiring care and accommodation
 - ECC Social Services agreed to be present at the Hilton Hotel (Rest Centre)
 - Method deployment of resources
 - Logistics and responsibility
 - Essex Police to locate at the airport for media control
 - UDC staff to rendezvous at the airport at 03:00 hours on Saturday 22 July 2006
 - Responsibilities of Job Centre Plus, WRVS, Red Cross, Social Service, Stansted Airport, Essex Police, and Essex County Council (ECC).
5. At 09:00hrs a call centre was established to accommodate the quantity of calls relating to Operation Highbrow.
6. Following the briefing, the Chief Executive, DEPO and an Executive Manager met to finalise any arrangements.
7. Throughout the course of Friday night through to the early hours on Saturday 22 July, the first shift of the volunteers guided by the DEPO, arranged and organised the Hilton Hotel not merely to accommodate the refugees but to implement registration facilities and arranged any essential services such as, medical and welfare assistance. It was anticipated that some of the refugees would make their own arrangements after registration or would require support from the Job Centre Plus for onward travel upon arrival.

Saturday 22 July: The Initial Response

8. The first flight arrived on Saturday 22 July at 05:10 hours with approximately 400 refugees on board, of which 15 required help with onward travel and 44 adults and 29 children required overnight accommodation at the Hilton Hotel.

9. The response teams of all agencies convened to assess the efficiency of the response so that changes could be made prior to the arrival of the second flight in which it was concluded that the initial response was very successful.
10. The second flight arrived on Saturday 22 July at 15:45 hours whereupon 15 of the refugees required overnight accommodation, two of which required immediate social care. Another two of the refugees required immediate medical attention and were transported from the airport to a hospital in Colchester.
11. The third flight arrived on Sunday 23 July at 17:30 with 140 refugees on board of which only a handful required overnight accommodation.
12. The final flight arrived on Tuesday 25 July with approximately 39 refugees on board.
13. As the refugees arrived, a member of UDC (to include a senior member of staff) met the refugees onboard the plane so that those who required local authority assistance could be referred to the coaches at the front of the airport. In succession, the coaches transported the refugees to the Hilton Hotel.

Recovery: Housing Needs

Monday 23 July

14. On Monday 23 July, the Housing Team sought to interview the remaining 64 refugees to categorise those who are eligible for housing and public funding and those who weren't. As a result, many were not eligible and upon contacting GO East, UDC was to await further guidance from Central Government. Such guidance included the temporary amendment to statute law to allow for the provision of housing and funding to the refugees.
15. The Emergency Response Teams, in conjunction with the Housing Team, arranged for accommodation at student accommodation in Colchester. The day closed with a final handover from the Emergency Response Teams to the Housing Teams. The Emergency Response Teams remained on standby and continued to provide support and assistance to the Housing Team in terms of arranging logistics and support.

What went well?

- Good co-ordination and communication
- Effective command and control structure
- The Rest Centre Plan

- One team to set up the rest centre and separate team to operate the rest centre.
- The decision to use the Hilton hotel due to its suitability in terms of location and facilities
- The arrangement of logistics and facilities at the hotel.
- The overall running and management of operations at the airport and the hotel was extremely successful.

Learning Objectives:

- Misinterpretation of information: Different organisations provided different ETA's for the flights. In some cases, the details of the flight manifest were different from the details provided by another organisation.
- The call centre was inundated with calls wherein additional staff should have been required.
- There was confusion as to whether a major emergency had been declared.
- Although the rest centre registration forms proved to be useful, it became clear that the forms should be more generic.
- The deficit of volunteers to assist at the hotel was tolerable but would have been a major issue had a rest centre (school, town hall, leisure centre etc) been set up.
- The provision of prescriptions did not match the facilities for medical supplies as there were no pharmacists/chemists nearby.
- Confusion arose over the responsibilities of shift rotas as there was many staff who assumed this role.
- The need for an *announcer* who would address the refugees of the system for processing and registration as they waited in the "waiting area".
- The Emergency Plan was activated but not followed. Time was consumed in compiling a plan that contained the same information as the Emergency Plan. This has identified that training is required so that all are aware of what is contained in the emergency plan.
- Implementing partners should be built into the Emergency Plan so that their involvement can dovetail other organisations. The doctor used normal operating procedures to refer people to hospital. It should have been built into the plan that the doctor uses a joint procedure with the Red Cross.

- A media representative should be present at the site to manage any on-site media enquiries.
- Some shifts were too long and although staff reported that they had worked well under these conditions, it would be more effective if shifts were shorter.
- Social Services provided assistance at the beginning but were not present in the later. This caused considerable problems as the need for Social Services became apparent with the arrival of the second flight.
- Due to the time of Operation Highbrow, most hotels had no vacancies. It was identified that there should be a greater relationship with rest centres and hotels in the Uttlesford District.
- Telephone cards were purchased by the Council to be used in conjunction with the refugees phoning home however, some of these cards did not work and some were over-consumed.
- The provision of doctors on Monday 23 July became apparent in which UDC requested that the PCT provided a doctor. As it was a working day, there was a shortfall in the availability of a doctor.
- The hotel did not have any available rooms for people with disabilities in which accommodating these people became an issue.
- A definitive list of rooms was required and due to the complexity of this, locating refugees became more difficult. This problem was overcome due to the skills and knowledge of the staff involved.
- The layout of the rest centre was very successful although it was realised that a proper area for children should have been identified.
- Communication: Occasionally, the lack of communication with implementing partners rendered contradiction as one in one scenario two parties were trying to accomplish the same objective without communicating with each other.
- Too many organisations submitting general Situation Reports (SitReps) wherein contradiction occurs. A central agency or lead agency should take the sole responsibility for a general SitRep as all other participating agencies should take responsibility for their own SitReps.
- It was later learned that a room should have been set aside for a doctor. Even though a room was utilised, this should have been integrated into the plan. It was also acknowledged that a structured approach should be introduced so that people are triaged before referral to the doctor. A waiting area was a great benefit as this prevented people wandering which would cause delays.

- The staff on standby should have been informed to stand down once it was clear that their services were no longer required.
- The exploitation of staff for this emergency left the Housing Department in a deficit in which business continuity became an issue.
- On Monday 23 July, the interviewing conducted by the Housing Department of UDC took longer than expected due to the complexities of the refugees.