



Structured Debrief Report

Debrief commissioned by:	Wirral Council
Event:	New Ferry Explosion (Recovery Phase)
Date of Event:	25 th March 2017
Date of Debrief:	13 th February 2018
Debrief Location:	Committee Room Two Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton Street
Debrief Team:	David Ball & Ian Voce Wirral Council
Debrief Participants:	See Appendix A
Debrief Summary: All persons in attendance were informed of the ethics and purpose of the debrief process. The report focuses on areas for improvement and perceptions of what went well; it concludes with a series of recommendations to assist the Council and MRF to improve the planning and management of similar future events. The report does not include or comment upon matters identified in any other debriefs or post-incident reports that may have taken place.	

ITEM	REC. NO	COMMENTS
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT		
Planning & Management Arrangements		
<p>The meeting room at the hall was open plan and there was limited opportunity to conduct discreet and sensitive one to one interviews in private. In the first couple of days emotions were naturally running very high and the hall wasn't conducive to providing any level of privacy or in preserving confidentiality.</p> <p>Without wishing to single out any particular internal service I felt as though there were a couple of instances that I had to push quite hard for reactive and appropriate response. I felt as though there was a lot of agreement "on the hoof" with partners (both internal and external as to what they could commit to. If this was pre-pledged then that research/negotiation period could be minimised/dispensed with.</p> <p>Apart from the council being in a position to come across as a bit more charitable and benevolent in the immediate aftermath, I can't think of anything significant.</p> <p>There was just a feeling even from the very first full day after the explosion that pennies were being counted. There seemed to be a reliance on residents being able to pay for things like accommodation and supplies until they were either able to seek help from their insurers or go through a lengthy and complicated appeal for benefits, which in the case of at least one family I know having to come up to Wallasey to fill in the form at the One Stop Shop.</p> <p>Minutes kept of all meetings/discussions held with all persons involved especially the Community Meetings. It has been difficult to deal with a number of individuals whom for one reason or another were not aware that some of the costs incurred by the Council would be recovered.</p> <p>A number of further observations were raised by the participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early consideration to include Constituency Manager and Neighbourhood Team • Local Councillor engagement to ensure joined up approach. 	1	<p>The process was planned out using national and local guidance which in general provided a robust framework against which tasks and activities were undertaken. There is recognition that a number of areas could have been improved upon during the recovery phase</p> <p>New Ferry Village Hall's location and proximity to the scene of operations provided a good base from which to focus the recovery effort. It is acknowledged that circumstances led to a number of considerations remained overlooked.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy and equality considerations to be included in the planning arrangements • Administration and clerical support for officers • IT Support – Sharing information with partners • Reception/welcome desk for the hub • Consideration of support to meet all members of the community e.g. CYPD • Reinforce press liaison is directed to a single point of contact and through the Communications team • Regular monitoring of social media • Non- English speaking occupiers/residents • Complexities of individuals – Housing issues • Engagement with insurance companies 		
Resources		
<p>A lack of any dedicated administrative resource to establish a comprehensive “all singing and dancing” contact database available at the touch of a button. Initially all visitors were required to complete a signing in sheet with their respective contact details on, which was cumbersome to say the least. (This was however rectified some weeks later, but should have happened much sooner).</p> <p>Not knowing where people where - One centralised database for all Agencies maintained of where Owners/Tenants etc. went to live after the incident and populated with additional information such as Insurance Advisors etc.</p> <p>Co-ordination of contractor/owners entering onto site without authorisation and knowledge to Local Authority.</p> <p>A couple of these owners had a poor command of English and it may well have been beneficial in certain cases to have a dedicated interpreter on hand, particularly when dealing with complex housing benefit and JSA/Universal Credit queries.</p>	1	<p>The observations, in general, are believed to be minor in the greater scheme of events but the consensus is that these would have enhanced the council’s response efforts.</p>
Communications		
<p>Perhaps slightly clearer communication on how to get psychological help, there appeared to be a private provider involved that the NHS weren’t aware of. Use NHS England as the single point of contact.</p>		<p>Overall feedback was that the communications strategy worked well</p>

It was appreciated that the Police were carrying out a complex investigation however they could have provided appropriate updates to support the communications plan.	2	and again these were raised as minor points
Community Engagement		
In the early stages at the weekly communications meetings, they were often tempestuous affairs. Lead officers and Ward Members were often bombarded with queries outside of the jurisdiction i.e.) issues to do with police investigation, questions about liability for the explosion and the role of utility companies etc. (Representatives from the organisations concerned did attend meetings when specifically invited, but it may have been wise to have had them routinely attending in the immediate aftermath, when feelings and emotions were at their highest).	3	
Welfare and Well-being		
The only aspects that we (the Police / all agencies) could have managed better were the provision of facilities. MFRS supplied portable toilets in the first few days but they were then removed. Unfortunately, due to another significant operation occurring at the same time, we were unable to provide a command vehicle and we relied on that provided by MFRS. The mobile PS remained as the police vehicle at scene for a period of time which wasn't ideal in terms of the volume of people at the scene on occasion and a larger vehicle / shelter is required.	4	Due to the complexities of the incident and the ongoing investigations as to the cause of the explosion the Response and Recovery phases ran simultaneously

AREAS OF GOOD PRACTISE		
Hand Over Process		
<p>The Council's Lead Officer was meticulous and very calm throughout. He provided the community with a thoughtful presence and a level of detail that involved them in the process, observed at heated community meetings. He ran well structured and detailed coordination meetings, which assisted all partners. He was ever present throughout the recovery phase and dedicated an inordinate amount of time to the incident, the recovery phase and to the community as a whole. I felt that he managed the recovery phase exceptionally well.</p> <p>The Lead Officer was accessible at all times, this was vital to the coordination of the incident.</p>		<p>These support both the Civil Contingencies best practise and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) doctrine and helped the efficient and effective response to the event and immediate needs of the community.</p>
Planning & Management Arrangements		
<p>Senior manager supporting decision making process with regards to costs etc. allowed for a quick response and reduced delays in issuing orders</p> <p>By far the most successful aspect of the recovery phase was the "spirit" of partnership working between all key statutory and non-statutory organisations and their willingness and flexibility to go the "extra mile" on numerous occasions for the benefit of the individual, be they a householder or local business owner.</p> <p>During the initial weeks at New Ferry Hall there were times when colleagues had to deal with very distressed and troubled individuals. The level of compassion shown in their handling of these people was particularly praiseworthy, given the trying circumstances.</p> <p>One to one, personal interaction over a prolonged period, providing honest and transparent information directly to those affected playing a big part in maintaining an overall feeling of goodwill towards the council. Having a named officer and a very proactive councillor also helped, as did having constituency officers on the ground.</p>		<p>As above</p>

Resources		
<p>I think we should be particularly proud of how the relief hub was set up, staffed and the atmosphere that we managed to create there throughout. It really did become the epicentre of the response effort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External agencies committed to providing staff to offer advice on site etc. • Local residents/businesses affected knew that the village hall was the focal point of the response effort and as such (I believe) felt they always had somewhere to turn, no matter how big or small their needs were. <p>The coordination of the partners was managed well. Almost immediately, coordination meetings were arranged and the appropriate partners invited. These meetings were concise and brief, ensuring that people were informed but could continue with the job of managing the incident.</p> <p>There were with clearly structured regular coordination meetings arranged, vital for the coordination of the partners.</p> <p>Having maps of the area available was important in allowing all staff to visualise exact locations for the coordination of the scene (provided by the council).</p> <p>Information sharing was efficient and appropriate. For e.g., details of all parties involved was gathered and shared with the relevant parties when requested.</p> <p>The speed of response and implementation of the securing works undertaken to the properties affected by the incident in order to allow Owners etc. safe access to their properties to assess damage and recover valuables, pets etc.</p>		<p>Suitable and sufficient support set up for the people immediately affected by this event which enabled the longer term structures to be set up and put in place.</p> <p>Clearly outlined the desire for a co-ordinated approach amongst the key stakeholders.</p>
Communications		
<p>Regular communications with Residents meant they knew exactly what was going on. The fact that face to face meetings were regularly held made all the difference to the resident's perception.</p> <p>Council's presence at and input into weekly communication meetings and monthly recovery team meetings with internal and external stakeholders.</p>		

<p>Circulation of regular press releases to keep broader community informed. This extends to use of social media, Twitter and Facebook.</p> <p>Engagement with regional TV and radio networks,</p> <p>I think the ongoing engagement via the regular meetings in St Mark's Church Hall were key to ensuring the issues that were developing within the community were dealt with swiftly. Residents and businesses felt as though they had a communication channel to the council after the relief hub was closed.</p> <p>Having regular surgeries where displaced Members of the public could attend for information and assistance was invaluable and inviting partners such as the police to provide reassurance greatly helped.</p> <p>Following on from the above, holding regular meetings at the local church with the same lead people in attendance greatly assisted both the community (in terms of continuity and reassurance / updates) and the partners as it provided both reassurance and a vital conduit for information in both directions.</p>		<p>Provided good ongoing shared situational awareness and ensured that all persons affected were kept up to date, preventing any possible circulation of misleading or "Fake news"</p> <p>Again in accordance with emergency preparedness and response best practice</p>
<p>Community Engagement</p>		
<p>The role of the local community in New Ferry and beyond cannot be understated. In particular the work of local church and community groups in providing emergency accommodation, collecting food, clothing and essential toiletries to donate to those most in need in the immediate aftermath.</p> <p>This is best exemplified by the emergence of New Beginnings during the crisis, providing support through a wide variety of different means for those affected by the explosion. Such has been their impact on the community that they have now been given permanent premises from which to operate and some grant funding to facilitate capacity building opportunities. They have now successfully acquired CIC (Community Interest Company) status, which will enable them to establish a dedicated neighbourhood resource centre, providing advice, information and support on a wide variety of "social" issues.</p> <p>The 'drop-in' service worked well, particularly having representatives from specialist areas such as insurance, health etc. Having this 'open house' seemed to inadvertently helped to foster a stronger community spirit among affected residents. Being so accessible to</p>		<p>The role of individuals and the community in supporting the Councils vision for recovery of New Ferry following the incident cannot be underestimated in seeking resolutions.</p>

interested journalists also helped position the council as the leaders of the recovery operation and gave the impression of it being a controlled and co-ordinated response.		
Regular support meetings at professional level		

No.	RECOMMENDATIONS - Multiagency	OWNER	COMMENTS
1	All appropriate plans and guidance should be reviewed following incidents or exercises to check accuracy and validity; this should take into account to those development areas highlighted.	Mark Camborne & Ian Voce	The review should also look at creating a blueprint for the recovery team to compliment the Councils All Hazards Emergency Plan and dovetail with multi agency arrangements.
2	Establish and maintain a clear single point of contact for the psychological and wellbeing support for all those affected by such an event or tragedy.	All agencies	Linked to existing Council and Multi-agency plans and guidance. (compliment recommendation 1)
3	Ensure arrangements for community engagement is maintained to ensure their perspectives are taken into account when formulating action plans and setting milestones.	Lead Officers	Considerations to be included in the revised plan/guidance (compliment recommendation 1)
4	Ensure welfare arrangements and support remains in place for responders as the incident transitions from response to recovery.	Lead Officers	(compliment recommendation 1)

Appendix A – Participants

Agency	Name						
Wirral Council	David Ball	Fergus Adams	Alan Creevy	Neil Mitchell	Sab Spina	Ian Voce	
Merseyside Police	Georgina Minnery						
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service	Billy McIntyre						
NHS England	Jim Deacon						
SP Energy Networks							
National Grid							
Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Graham Scott						