

Tyne Port Health Authority Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Board

At the meeting of the Joint Board of the Tyne Port Health Authority duly convened and held on Tuesday 6 October 2015 at 10am in Quadrant (East), The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:-

Present:

North Tyneside Council:	Councillor B Burdis (Chair) Councillor M Hall Councillor T Mulvenna
Newcastle City Council:	Councillor G Bell
Gateshead	Councillor W Dick Councillor K Dodds
South Tyneside Council:	Councillor A Walsh

Officers in Attendance:

Colin MacDonald, Clerk to the Authority
Stephen Taggart, Chief Port Health Officer
Colin Smith, Port Health Officer
Alan Clark, Port Health Technical Officer
Jane Muizelaar, South Tyneside Council

JB01/10/2015 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Ronan from Gateshead Council, and Councillors F Cunningham and K Stephenson from South Tyneside Council.

JB02/10/2015 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

JB03/10/2015 Guest Speaker

Michael Croark of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) gave a presentation on the work of the MCA.

The remit and powers of the MCA was explained to members together with the risk based approach to inspections made possible by the enforcement database shared globally by regulators of marine safety.

Members were informed of recent examples of the effective collaborative working between MCA and Tyne Port Health. It was explained that there is some overlap of areas of responsibility and MCAs powers of detention can be used to assist port health authorities when serious health issues are discovered. The recent detention of the Donald Duckling was highlighted where the vessel was held for almost a year on the Tyne.

Mr Croark outlined some of the more serious issues the MCA encounters such as crew fatalities from working in oxygen depleted atmospheres in bulk carrier holds. Serious fire safety issues still arise on some vessels and a number of examples were given, however basic crew welfare was still the most frequently encountered problem.

The speaker closed by emphasising the importance of all agencies working together to improve standards for mariners, not just regulators but also the various marine welfare organisations who play a very important role.

Mr Croark answered a number of questions from members.

Members thanked Mr Croark for a very informative presentation.

JB04/10/2015 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Board held on Tuesday 02 June 2015 had been previously circulated.

RESOLVED that the minutes of 02 June 2015 be taken as read and confirmed.

JB05/10/2015 Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015

The report was presented by the Clerk. The Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015 containing the external auditor's certificate and opinion following conclusion of audit was presented to the Joint Board.

The external auditor has stated:

“On the basis of our review, in our opinion the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.”

The Joint Board were requested, by the external auditor, to accept and approve the annual return now that the audit opinion has been given.

The statutory Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been appropriately displayed at the premises of the host Authority North Tyneside Council following the completion of the audit.

RESOLVED to accept and approve the external auditor's certificate and opinion following submission of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015 relating to the Authority as attached to the report.

JB06/10/2015 Operational Summary 1 May 2015 – 31 August 2015

The Chief Port Health Officer presented the report explaining activity for the period.

The drop in ship sanitation inspections was explained as being due to seasonal fluctuations and members were reassured that, from inspections for the year to date, the Authority was on track to reach a similar level of inspections and income as previous years.

Other areas of activity were reported and there were no significant issues arising relating to imported food official controls or water sampling activity during the period.

Members were informed that following discussions with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), greater information sharing has been agreed between the Authority and APHA in relation to intelligence on live animal imports via the International Ferry Terminal. A recent joint exercise was conducted in September with a number of vehicles stopped at the terminal but no issues were found.

It was reported that presence at the International Ferry Terminal by the various enforcement agencies such as the Police, UK Borders and APHA had increased over recent months due to increased threats from illegal imports and potentially, illegal immigration reaching the port. This could have a small impact on the work of the Authority if food containers are involved. A recent example was given of a food container used by illegal immigrants destined for North Tyneside.

Monitoring for Ebola continues but members were informed that the number of new cases in West Africa had slowed considerably over recent months. Only a handful of new cases had been reported each week since early May compared to over 100 new cases each week when the outbreak was at its peak.

Figures just released by Port of Tyne confirm that a record number of 41 cruise ships are scheduled to visit the Tyne in 2016.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

JB07/10/2015 Association of Port Health Authorities Annual Conference 2015

Members were informed that this year's annual conference was held at the Marriott Hotel, Liverpool over three days from 08 September 2015. The conference was attended by Cllr Ged Bell together with the Chief Port Health Officer Steve Taggart.

Over 70 delegates attended on each of the three days and the theme of this year's Conference was 'Evolution – Adapting to Change'.

The Chief Port Health Officer gave details of a number of the presentations.

Highlights of the conference included a number of presentations on global disease. An Ebola update explained the difficulties in controlling the disease in West Africa because of local customs and remote communities. A presentation on Avian influenza described the particular challenges presented by a virus that can quickly mutate. There is a constant threat of a future mutation that would allow easy person to person transmission and consequent risk of pandemic. Limiting the spread is heavily reliant on effective border controls.

Day 2 of conference focussed on food fraud and a representative from the newly established Food Crime Unit explained the role of the unit. The Food Crime Unit was set up to assist enforcement agencies involved in large scale food fraud investigations by acting as a single point of intelligence information. The units role is to gather evidence of food crime to hand over to regulators for appropriate action.

The Welsh Food Fraud Unit gave details of an investigation into a multi million pound food fraud involving the theft and illegal slaughter of sheep in Wales, which ended up distributed and sold in London as 'Smokies'. The investigation was complex involving new techniques to monitor mobile phone and SatNav information as well as interrogation of financial records.

Mersey Port Health talked about a recent major investigation into illegal cockle picking in the Mersey Estuary and surrounding areas. The investigation was multi agency, involving the local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, Gangmasters Licensing Authority, Police and Port Health. The investigation resulted in a number of successful prosecutions.

The Better Regulation Delivery Office gave an update on Primary Authority and noted that no primary Authority partnerships had been set up involving port health authorities. The audience largely agreed that the nature of port health work does not easily lend itself to forming primary Authority partnerships although there may be limited scope for partnerships relating to food hygiene/standards.

A representative of Liverpool Cruise Terminal talked about recent and future developments at the terminal. He reported on growing numbers of cruise traffic with over 60 cruise vessels scheduled for 2016 and figures projected to exceed 100 by 2020. The terminal operates out of a temporary building and work was due to shortly commence on a permanent cruise terminal building. The terminal is owned and operated by Liverpool City Council.

It was announced at the end of conference that next years conference would be held in Southampton.

Members were circulated at the meeting with a supplementary report relating to nominations for election to the Executive of the Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA). The Chief Port Health Officer explained that he and Cllr Bell were approached at conference by the Secretary of APHA inviting the Authority to put forward a nomination for the position of East Coast of England (Northern) representative on the Executive Board of APHA.

It was explained that this post was currently vacant, and that the postholder would be expected to attend a maximum of 4 meetings a year over the initial 2 year term of office. Meetings were usually held in London. A nomination could be either a member or an officer of the Authority.

Travel expenses would need to be covered by the Authority and the Clerk explained that there was provision in the existing budget to cover travel costs.

Members discussed the possibility of a nomination which would allow attendance by an officer or a member as appropriate depending on the agendas of the meetings. The Chief Port Health Officer was asked to explore this with APHA.

Members agreed that the best way forward was to delegate a decision on a nomination to the Chair once clarification on the previous point had been received from APHA.

The Chief Port Health Officer also informed members that during conference, he had been approached by the Secretary of APHA about the possibility of the Authority hosting the APHA annual conference in 2017.

It was explained that the venue for the 2017 conference would be agreed by the APHA Executive in Autumn 2016 but at this stage APHA was making a tentative enquiry with the Authority about hosting the event.

After some discussion members agreed that a report should be presented to the next meeting to fully consider the request.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the reports be noted and that delegation be given to the chair to approve a suitable nomination from the Authority to the APHA Executive.
- b) a report is presented to the next meeting to consider the request from APHA for the Authority to host the APHA annual conference in 2017.

JB08/10/2015 Annual Review of the Corporate Risk Register

The report was presented by the Clerk and set out the Authority's obligations to have the necessary arrangements in place for the management of risk, and members were reminded that this is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

The Authority must not only make an assessment of the risks facing the body and take appropriate steps to manage those risks, but in addition, it must seek regular assurance regarding internal controls.

The Joint Board last reviewed and approved the corporate risk register at its meeting in October 2014. The Clerk presented the updated and revised draft risk register attached to the report.

It was explained that there was no activity that was considered to be high risk and no new risks had been identified during the year.

Each risk has been reviewed and the following key changes to the register are proposed:

Risk TPHA2 – Strategically discharging statutory functions: The score has been increased from E2 to D2 (although retained as a Medium Risk) to reflect risk to the retention of suitably competent officers. The host Council is currently considering Voluntary Redundancy applications from officers in Environmental Health that contribute to the Tyne Port Health Authority. The host Council are aware of the requirements of the Authority. However the risk has been increased to acknowledge the pending situation.

Risk TPHA3 – Compliance with the Audit and Accounts requirements: The drafting of this risk has been updated to reflect the new legislative regime. Following Government's abolition of the Audit Commission a new Act and associated regulations now covers the Authority. There is no material change to the legislative and audit requirements for the Authority and it remains compliant. The risk score remains the same.

Risk TPHA6 – Emergency Preparedness: The score has been reduced to its target score to reflect the extent of the arrangements now in place.

Risk TPHA9 – Operationally discharging statutory functions: Increase in score from E2 to D2 to reflect to the potential change in the structure of the host Council's wider Environmental Health service and resources available (as outlined in risk TPHA2 above).

RESOLVED that the Joint Board:

- a) Note the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and their application to the Tyne Port Health Authority as a “smaller relevant body”; and
- b) Approve the draft revised corporate risk register for the Tyne Port Health Authority as attached in **Appendix 1** to the report.

JB09/10/2015 Any Other Business

No other business.