

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

1. I am pleased to present the key issues and activities as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, since the last report to Council. I hope you find the report of interest and I will be very happy to provide further information on any subject it covers.

TRADING STANDARDS

Consumer Law Landscape Review

2. The Service recently responded to the Department of Business Innovation and Skills consultation, "Empowering and Protecting Consumers". Government proposals could lead to several opportunities, the most significant of which is Trading Standards becoming the sole consumer enforcement body. It is likely that local services will be able to bid act as a lead authority for specialist areas relating to national enforcement issues.

Primary Authority

3. The number of partnerships continues to grow - we have now entered into 8 formal agreements. Trading Standards are currently exploring how it could work more closely with colleagues from Rushcliffe Borough Council to provide a joined up Primary Authority approach for two food manufacturers.

Counterfeit Alcohol

4. Forty (40) bottles of counterfeit Jacob's Creek wine were seized from a retailer following a series of visits to shops as part of our crackdown on counterfeit alcohol. The seizure received excellent local TV and radio coverage to raise awareness of the issue. Investigations are ongoing.
5. Officers have visited approximately 60 premises as part of the initiative to tackle illicit alcohol, identifying problems in 5 premises. Pleasingly, the vast majority of traders were found to be selling genuine product, and we are encouraging them to report any approaches from individuals trying to sell them alcohol at low prices.

Age Restricted Sales: Tobacco

6. In August, Trading Standards Officers conducted 57 test purchase checks across the county. Nine of the premises visited sold tobacco products to the young volunteers. Investigations are ongoing.
7. On 1st October, public cigarette vending machines were outlawed in England. Government figures estimate that 35 million cigarettes are sold illegally to children through vending machines each year, and that 11% of children who regularly smoke buy their cigarettes from vending machines.
8. In September the Government mailed out leaflets on the subject to premises affected, such as pubs, restaurants etc.

Counterfeit Cigarettes and Tobacco Seizure

9. Cigarette smoking is the greatest cause of preventable disease and premature death in the UK. Counterfeit and smuggled product is cheap, significantly reducing the incentive to quit making smoking more affordable for all particularly those on low incomes and for the under-18's. There are also significant implications in terms of the tax revenue lost through their sale which could fund hospitals, schools and other public services.
10. Working with Customs and the Police, officers recently seized in excess of 20,000 cigarettes and over 10kg of rolling tobacco from a premise in the County. Some are counterfeit, and as well as not having the required warning labels on some and are non-duty paid. Investigations continue.

Safeguarding the Vulnerable

11. Recent examples include:
 - The daughter-in-law of an elderly dementia victim alerted us to systematic targeting by a bogus healthcare worker who had taken £6,000 from the victim, having twice driven them to the bank. Trading Standards are now working closely with the Police to intercept the offender. We have worked with safeguarding and 'Assistive Technology' colleagues to identify ways to protect the individual. Movement sensors have been installed to work with a remotely triggered CCTV system purchased by the family.
 - A social worker contacted Trading Standards about a vulnerable couple in their 90's targeted by unscrupulous mobility companies. They paid over £9,000 for 3 unnecessary products. Trading Standards have worked with social care colleagues to prevent the couple falling victim again.
 - We obtained over £25,000 in refunds for 4 vulnerable Nottinghamshire consumers targeted by a Cheshire based double glazing company. One elderly resident paid £14,000 to build a tiny conservatory. When she tried to cancel, the salesman falsely insisted she would have to pay £6,000.

- We intervened to prevent a trader targeting a couple in their 90's for £8,000 for unauthorised and over-priced property repairs.

Food Standards Agency Feed Audit

12. Trading Standards was recently externally audited regarding the work done and systems in place to deal with animal feed production and distribution. The audit looked at how the service deals with inspections of premises, feed samples and complaints. The feedback was generally positive; a full report is expected in due course.

Preparation for EU Commission Visit on Livestock Markets

13. Trading Standards jointly inspected Newark Livestock Market with the Government's Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) in preparation for the upcoming EU Commission visit to livestock markets in England. The fabric and structure of the market, as well as the handling of the different species was checked, together with the disease risks and controls. AHVLA reported that as one of the largest markets in England, Newark is fully compliant and ready for a visit by the EU Commission.

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Controls within Newark Livestock Market

14. Trading Standards Officers have worked alongside AHVLA and the Market Operator on the new TB licence and requirements for TB restricted bovines entering the market on a slaughter only day. A contingency plan has also been agreed to ensure that TB restricted movements are closely monitored, reducing possible disease risks.

Proceeds of Crime Court Action

15. The hearing took place concerning two individuals convicted last year of the mis-selling of damp proofing work to elderly and vulnerable residents. One of those convicted appeared in Crown Court - he was given a criminal benefit figure of £100,000, and a confiscation order of £30,000 was made. A compensation order was also made for £16,500 to ten victims of the fraud, out of this £30,000. He now has six months to pay the £30,000, or face a further 15 months imprisonment – this will still not extinguish his liability.
16. The second defendant failed to attend court. Investigations have shown he has no assets, but still receive a £100,000 benefit figure, and a £1 confiscation order. This leaves the matter permanently open, and allows us to recover funds should he come into possession other assets. We will monitor his financial position going forward.

“Community Lorry Watch” Scheme

17. Trading Standards has introduced two further “Community Lorry Watch” schemes in conjunction with Langar-cum-Barnstone and Cropwell Bishop Parish Councils. The first enforcement sessions by Trading Standards resulted in two cautions being issued and five ongoing investigations.

Radio Slot

18. The recent prosecution of two rogue mobility aid salesmen caused lots of media interest. Radio Nottingham was particularly pleased with our input, and as a result has offered the service a monthly slot on their afternoon programme. This provides an excellent platform to publicise the work of the Council, enabling us to get important advice to potential victims.
19. The County Council and Trading Standards were also complemented by the BBC for its professionalism and efficiency. They singled out our Media officer, Rob Shirley, for special praise. Well done Rob.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Winter Weather Planning

20. In preparation for the possibility of severe winter weather in the coming months, the Emergency Planning Team has produced a plan to assist in the use of four-wheel-drive vehicles to deliver critical services. Vehicles have been matched to pre-identified services to allow rapid deployment, and a team of staff volunteers has been created from those prepared to drive their own 4x4's on behalf of the County Council. Plans include improved use of social media, with key messages to include the 'Snow Code' and how people can help themselves and their communities. Work with District and Borough Councils has identified resources that can be redeployed to assist communities.
21. In related work, the Emergency Planning Team have updated and re-issued the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum Flood Response Plan. The plan now includes information on critical infrastructure in flood risk areas, such as electricity substations. The Plan also includes a Sandbag Policy written in conjunction with Highways Operations. Lessons identified from the 2007 response to major flooding demonstrated that a policy was required to help co-ordinate and manage a high volume of sandbag requests across the county. The policy lays out clear priority guidance to help establish which sandbag requests need to be addressed first, and which relate to people and businesses that may be able to provide for themselves.

REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICES

Working with the Customer Service Centre

22. A phased project to enable the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to handle telephone calls for the registration service reached a major milestone on 13th October, with all calls going through the CSC. Stakeholders have been advised of the new procedure for contacting the service through new direct numbers, and call announcements have been placed on the previous numbers. Appointments for all births and death registrations can now be made via the CSC, and it was important that this was in place ahead of the forthcoming launch of the 'Tell us once' service on 3rd November. Bookings for weddings, civil partnerships and other ceremonies are still made by Register Offices, as customers normally need to

discuss their individual requirements with a registrar, however initial contact is via the CSC.

23. Training has been provided for CSC colleagues to give them an in-depth understanding of registration services. The partnership between the two services will strengthen with the implementation of 'Tell us once', and the assistance the CSC can offer in respect of market research and customer experience information.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Working with Vulnerable People and Complex Families

24. Tasked by the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, the Community Safety Team organised a very successful event to look at how the County Council and other agencies work with vulnerable people and complex families. Held at The Arrow Centre on 10th October, over 120 delegates from a wide range of agencies across the county, including the County Council, district and borough councils, Police, Fire, Health and Victim Support attended the event, which sought to ensure that we have a consistent and competent approach and process to our work with vulnerable people and complex families. Delegates highlighted areas of good practice that will be shared across the county, and had the opportunity to express concerns regarding any areas of this work that need improvement. These issues will be addressed by a small "task and finish" working group, lead by the Community Safety Team. The group will present a report, including recommendations for change to improve our approach, to the Safer Nottinghamshire Board later this year.

Anti Social Behaviour

25. Gating Order applications at Malthouse Close, Eastwood and Whitewater Road, Ollerton have now been approved by Rights of Way Committee and work will commence to put the gates in place to stop anti social behaviour blighting residents' lives.
26. Delivery plans developing initiatives within the 4 Partnership Plus areas in Ashfield are providing activities ranging from Prison Me No Way (a school based project to give a targeted group of young people who are felt to be at risk of offending an understanding of what prison is really like), to enhanced detached work on local parks and open spaces delivered by the Police, NCC Targeted Support Service and Catch 22, and intensive work to make sure private sector landlords manage their properties effectively.

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County Council/CC97