

## Report



Meeting **County Council**

Date **13 December 2007**

agenda item number

### **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The County Council meeting gives me another opportunity to share with you issues, events and activities ongoing in the Community Safety and Partnerships portfolio. I hope all Councillors find the report of interest and will be very happy to provide further information on any subject it covers.

#### **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

##### **Safer Communities**

##### **Community Cohesion**

- 2 I am pleased to report that the County Council is taking the initiative in tackling the issue of Eastern European migration into the county, and dealing with the impact this will have on our communities. We are planning a “New Communities” conference to be held in March 2008, in partnership with colleagues from the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Support Service and the County’s new European Link Workers. This conference will include keynote speakers from the key areas of specific interest relating to Eastern European migration. I see this as a real opportunity to develop a county wide migrant strategy and information network.

##### **Domestic Violence**

- 3 I was very pleased to see a White Ribbon Information stall set up in the County Hall foyer on 27 November. The stall gave out information to staff and visitors about our work to reduce domestic violence and to bring perpetrators to justice, including our employee domestic violence policy, multi agency training available for staff, new programmes for perpetrators and the local refuges and support services that we support. People were encouraged to wear a white ribbon to signify their support for this work, and it was good to see so many people wearing them.

##### **Children, Young People and Smoking**

- 4 On the back of the recent tobacco ban and the change in the law relating to the sale of tobacco to under 18's, a consultation event took place on 12 November at Blidworth Community Centre. The aim was to consult with professionals who work with children

and young people around the issue of smoking, specifically in relation to prevention and intervention work around tobacco and cannabis. I am very pleased to report that over 40 delegates attended and the event was able to identify current good practice and highlight future development needs. As a result of this event a children and young people steering group is to be established to co-ordinate this work, with strategic support from the Smoke Free Nottinghamshire Action Group. I am confident that this will ensure that existing good practice is sustained and that we can target future work to meet any challenges identified.

### **Weeks of Action**

- 5 Colleagues will be pleased to know that our “Weeks of Action” programme goes from strength to strength. The event held in Cotgrave recently is now being viewed as a model of good practice, used to help inform other “weeks of action”, including that held in Mansfield during week commencing 19 November. Further events are currently being planned for areas of Bassetlaw, Gedling and Broxtowe. As always these will be tailored to meet local needs and priorities but will all be designed to tackle local crime, disorder and anti social behaviour issues in a way that encourages and engages the participation of local people. All partners agree that this is one of the most effective ways to reduce crime and the fear of crime in our communities.

### **Nottingham Magistrates’ Court Open Day**

- 6 A very informative and interesting day was held at the Nottingham Magistrates’ Court on 10 November. The event was aimed at the communities of Nottinghamshire, informing them about the work of the court and the associated crime, community safety and legal services, breaking down barriers and misconceptions that people may have. Nottinghamshire County Council was represented by staff from our Safer Communities and Trading Standards teams, giving information and advice about the value we add to the tackling crime and public safety agendas.

### **Secondment from Notts Police**

- 7 I am especially pleased to report that we have been successful in agreeing a secondment from Notts Police to work within Nottinghamshire County Council. Superintendent Steve Cooper will be working with us for the next few months developing strategic partnerships and the Community Safety Board and furthering our “Weeks of Action” programme.

### **HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES**

- 8 Work continues on providing a focus on reducing health inequalities and promoting health and well-being through joined up partnership endeavours across the county. A range of actions and initiatives supported by the county council and our partners, including PCT Public Health continues to provide a comprehensive framework for developing jointly agreed targets for addressing lifestyle matters, access to health care, income, housing, environment and other factors contributing to poor health.

- 9 As a result of continuous improved partnership working, including a jointly appointed Director of Public Health, a number of actions are being taken to reduce the impact of significant diseases which contribute to premature mortality, particularly in our most disadvantaged communities. These include:
- 10 Reducing smoking – The Tobacco Alliance has been co-ordinating activity around areas such as smoking cessation, smuggling and illegal tobacco sales. Tackling the effects of smoking contributes in turn to reducing coronary heart disease and many types of cancer. Ambitious targets are in place to decrease the percentage of the adult population recorded as being smokers and to increase the rate of 4 week quitters who attend stop smoking services provided by the NHS from some of our most deprived communities.
- 11 Tackling obesity - A major health policy issue, its cost for the public sector including the NHS is approximately £3.5 billion per year. Obesity levels in England as a whole are growing faster than any other European county. Across Nottinghamshire the estimated prevalence of overweight and obesity by BMI measurement [Body Mass Index] reflects a national year on year increase with Bassetlaw, Ashfield, Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield being above the national average. Key service improvements being supported through partnership delivery and commissioning include access and choice to healthy diets, physical activity and an awareness of the harmful effects of obesity.
- 12 Addressing excessive alcohol intake and related diseases – reducing the health related harm caused by alcohol is a priority because of the links with cirrhosis of the liver, other cancers, crime, including domestic violence and social inequalities across the county. Initiatives being developed to tackle this problem include: increased workplace awareness of responsible drinking, reduced illegal use of alcohol by children and young people and improved access to prevention and treatment services.
- 13 Tackling avoidable injury – a significant issue which impacts on people’s health. Nottinghamshire has high rates of injury on the roads, in the home and amongst the very young and the over 65’s. Key commissioning objectives, with partners, are to improve these concerns include: the reduction of the risk of a first fall and further falls, to reduce risks to children under 5 years of age, for example, home safety support and to ensure appropriate support for older people to optimise their independence and recovery following a major injury.

## **COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Ashfield Neighbourhood Governance.**

- 14 The Neighbourhood Governance Implementation Team will be in place by the end of the week. This will include 3.7 FTE partnership development officers who will work at developing and linking the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT), 15 Local Area Teams (LAT) and 4 Area Partnership Groups (APG).

- 15 A number of adjustments have been made to the original Ashfield Partnership endorsed implementation plan. SNT's and LAT's were to be one and the same groups, based on ward boundaries. The Police, however, have already set up a number of SNTs in some wards. These will now need to be linked to the LATs as they are formed. The LAT meetings will be open to the public, but the business will be driven by County and District Cllrs, Partnership Development Officers and the local Police representative.
- 16 A key task of the LATs will be to ensure that a robust community engagement mechanism is put in place so that the views of minority groups are collected. The Sutton North and Sutton West LATs will be the first to be developed in Ashfield.

### **Community Cohesion Issues**

- 17 The Show Racism the Red Card initiative has now been transferred to Children and Young People's department, but the current officers will deliver the final aspect of this current year's work which is the publication and distribution of the 2008 Racial Harmony calendar. A small Civic Reception, inviting children, parents and teachers from the winning schools as well as national football celebrities, to launch the calendar will be held on the 27 November or 4 December 2007.
- 18 The Nottingham Asian Arts Council invited County Cabinet members to their Diwali Gala on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2007, at the Royal Concert Hall.

### **Countywide Disability Forum**

- 19 An initial event was held on 9 November to explore the development of a countywide disability forum. The event was lead by NAVO and invitations sent to 400 agencies and groups from across the county. This initiative links strongly to the Equalities agenda, and the intention is that this forum (if successfully established) will become a consultation mechanism for Service Diversity Reviews across the council.

### **Community Engagement mapping**

- 20 We are collecting job descriptions from the 60 – 70 employees in the council who have community engagement responsibilities. We are looking at ways in which these staff can be used as virtual locality teams that could support members in their constituencies, provide them with accurate and up to date information about activities in their patch, and reduce duplication of effort. It is anticipate that proposals for a new model of working will be ready by January 2008.

### **Members Information project (formally Frontline Councillors project)**

- 21 The frontline councillor project is one of five within the programme. Its thrust is policy definition and the policy statement that will be its major outcome will feed into the overall community constitution.

The key outcomes for the project are:

- (a) An agreed and implemented information flow system, empowering frontline councillors to be aware, proactive and influential in responding to and effecting changes within their electoral division with the support of the County Council.
  - (b) An agreed policy statement on the roles and responsibilities of the frontline councillor which is accepted by the County Council and is written into its constitution and implemented.
- 22 This project is progressing according to plan. Focus groups have been held with staff and councillors to find out what information councillors need and how it is currently provided. The community engagement mapping work (above) is being linked to this project, as a key source of information for members is about their locality, rather than the workings of the county council.

## **TRADING STANDARDS**

### **Animal Health – Foot and Mouth, Blue Tongue and Avian Flu**

- 23 DEFRA, Local Authorities and the farming community now find themselves in the grip of three animal diseases. Although animal movement restrictions have now been relaxed in relation to Foot and Mouth, Nottinghamshire is now wholly within the Blue Tongue Surveillance Zone which extends from the western edges of East Anglia across to the Welsh border and up to North Yorkshire.
- 24 Despite Avian Flu outbreaks in Norfolk and Suffolk, there has so far been little direct impact in Nottinghamshire. The national ban imposed on bird gatherings, shows and racing pigeons has now been lifted, and now only applies in the disease zones.
- 25 Throughout, officers of the Trading Standards Service have continued to advise and assist the farming community during these difficult times. Our Animal Health Officers are returning to their full range of inspections, with particular emphasis on enforcing the bio-security measures necessary to minimise the risk of disease outbreak.

### **The Festive Season**

- 26 In the run up to Christmas, our Trading Standards Food and Agriculture team will be carrying out inspections at licensed premises to check authenticity of spirits and beers. To help in this, Trading Standards have the use of a portable 'Spectrophotometer' on loan from the International Federation of Spirit Producers, which can tell whether major brands of whiskys, vodkas and rums are what they are supposed to be, and have not been 'watered down'.
- 27 Nationally, the problem of spirit substitution occurs in 2 per cent of premises. In Nottinghamshire, the issue appears to be at a lower level perhaps due to the work of its Trading Standards staff. There have however been a handful of instances where adverse results have been found, 3 of which are the subject of reports for consideration of legal proceedings.

### **Buy With Confidence Launch & Promotion**

- 28 On November 12<sup>th</sup>, the Nottinghamshire 'Buy With Confidence' (BWC) Approved Trader Scheme had its full consumer launch at an event at the Council House in Nottingham. A representation from the 45 traders approved to date posed with Trading Standards staff, myself and the Lord Mayor of Nottingham in a photo opportunity by the fountains in the market square. The launch received good media coverage with a feature on ITV's Central Tonight programme. The publicity resulted in a flurry of enquiries from other Nottinghamshire traders eager to join the scheme.
- 29 A further event is planned during the first week of December with the BWC team joining up with the Theatre Royal's press office. With the slogan "Don't get hooked by rogue traders this winter" we're planning a media event with Captain Hook from the pantomime Peter Pan (John Challis -"Boycey" from Only Fools & Horses) to promote the scheme along with an advertisement in the pantomime programme.

### **Home Information Packs**

- 30 The Government has decided to roll out Home Information Packs (HIPs) to one and two bedroomed houses with effect from 15 December. Any person selling their home will now have to commission a Home Information Pack containing certain prescribed information, including an energy performance certificate and copies of local authority and water board searches. Failure to comply with the requirements could render the seller and/or the estate agent liable to a fixed penalty notice of £200.
- 31 A programme of inspections is planned over the forthcoming months to assess the level of compliance and a number of promotional activities to raise both consumer and trader awareness.
- 32 Related legislation requires estate agents to be a member of an approved redress scheme. One such scheme is the Ombudsman for Estate Agents Scheme, which deals with a range of complaints about estate agents relating to the provisions surrounding HIPs, with the power to award compensation where complaints are upheld.

### **Alcohol Test-Purchasing**

- 33 Although not the peak period for test purchasing, Trading Standards has carried out 55 test purchase attempts in the period 16/10-23/11. Of these, sales were made on nine occasions or 16% of attempts. This represents a continuing trend of the number of sales falling. The national rate is around 30%, whilst Nottinghamshire's in the previous period was 22%. Although it would be wrong to draw long-term conclusions from this it is encouraging that our activity continues to be successful. Those making sales were issued with fixed penalty notices by the police. One licensee was also formally interviewed during the period owing to the issues found when a sale was made in his store.

## **Tobacco Age Limit**

- 34 The age limit for purchasing of tobacco rose to 18 from 16 on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Test purchasing before and after the date using appropriately aged volunteers brought no sales. The new legislation seems to have been well publicised and implemented by Nottinghamshire businesses. Concerns about possible assaults on traders were largely unfounded, although this was flagged up with the police by Trading Standards via CDRPs. Two incidents of race hate were reported in Mansfield which appears to be connected with refusal to sell tobacco products. Discussions with the Local Area Police Commander have revealed concerns that traders are not well skilled in refusing sales. We are looking at providing assertiveness training to traders as a response to this.

## **Fireworks**

- 35 The service carried out 36 visits to traders storing fireworks to check that safety measures were being observed. These were targeted on new traders and those with a history of problems. Minor breaches were found in several cases, the officers were able to advise the traders and make them compliant in each case. This is an improvement over 2006, when a major seizure of illegally stored fireworks took place.
- 36 In addition intelligence- led under-age test purchase attempts were carried out using JIN (Jupiter in Nottingham) data on firework nuisance and referrals from Crime Stoppers to identify targets. Of 20 attempts 3 sales were made (15%), two from a car boot sale in Mansfield and one from an Ashfield trader. In each case a prosecution report to the Head of Service is pending. Anecdotal information from the police indicates a general reduction in the number of calls received concerning fireworks nuisance.

## **Mini-Motos**

- 37 The Trading Standards service has played a leading role in the regulation of so called mini-motos by checking that products offered by retailers meet safety standards. Unfortunately there are no specific regulations aimed at this product so tests have been against a standard used for general machinery. There has been a concern that whilst conforming to that standard, wider considerations around safety have not been taken into account. As a response the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, formerly the DTI, has commissioned Trading Standards nationally to carry out tests on mini-motos as part of a review of the regulatory framework. Nottinghamshire has been selected to participate and we will be purchasing and submitting for test a mini-moto sold over the internet by a local trader.

## **Road Weight Restriction Enforcement**

- 38 The Trading Standards service continues to deliver a programme of enforcement exercises on weight restricted roads in partnership with the Highways Division of the County Council. During the period one enforcement exercise was conducted in Bingham, this resulted in 34 vehicles being checked, of these three are the subject of

further enquiries. In addition five reports for prosecution resulting from previous exercises were submitted to the Head of Service.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

- 39 The emergency planning team continues to invest significant resources into activities arising from the floods of last summer. At present, work is in hand to update and revise the Nottinghamshire multi-agency floods response emergency plan, ahead of an exercise planned for next February. The exercise will test response arrangements and offer the opportunity for staff awareness raising and training. In addition, the team has continued to attend public meeting across the County, including follow-up meetings from earlier events. Whilst the majority of issues at these meetings have concerned the entire spectrum of drainage matters, rather than emergency response, the team have taken the opportunity to offer support to communities wishing to prepare their own Community Emergency Plan.
- 40 Each year the emergency planning team join with a different District or Borough Council, and other partners, to arrange a live Rest Centre Exercise to rehearse plans for emergency transport and accommodation. This year's event, Exercise Pumpkin, took place on October 31<sup>st</sup> at Hucknall Leisure Centre, in Gedling, and the scenario concerned a major fire and the explosion of an acetylene cylinder. As part of the exercise, it was supposed that a primary school needed to be evacuated and a class from Beardall School participated in the event. This enabled staff to rehearse the arrangements to care for young children and to reunite them with their parents.
- 41 Also of note recent, the team took part in a major emergency response exercise for the Colwick depot in Gedling. This event brought together the site operators, emergency services, local authorities and others to test the arrangements and plans available to cope with an incident at this site. Outcomes from the exercise will be used to improve plans.

## **REGISTRATION SERVICE**

- 42 I have reported previously that the currently autonomous registrars in Nottinghamshire are about to transfer to become County Council employees. Arrangements for this transfer are now at an advanced stage, and attention has turned to changes to the organisation of the service when the staff have transferred. This is part of the overall, government-led modernisation of the service nationally. Locally, the details of service modernisation are being informed through public consultations, and engagement with staff and trade unions. To this end, registration service question have been included in the survey that went to the 2000 members of the Citizen's Panel, which includes representatives of all groups in Nottinghamshire.

**Councillor Glynn Gilfoyle**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS**