

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY****KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES****Purpose of the Report**

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****Electric Blanket Testing**

2. The Service recently ran 6 days of electric blanket testing for older and vulnerable adults, at venues in Stapleford, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Mansfield, Retford, Newark and Hucknall. Over 300 blankets were tested, with an overall failure rate of 66%.
3. Many blankets failed due to age, as additional safety features have been introduced over the years - 6 blankets found were over 40 years old, whilst 69 found were over 20 years old. A variety of other serious issues were identified, including faulty controllers (melted, arcing), crossed wires, burn marks and substandard leads. Owners of the nearly 200 failed blankets were given free replacements, whilst the old blankets were made safe and donated to animal charities.

**Dangerous Baby Products – ‘Bling’ Dummies**

4. A dangerous cottage industry is developing, with previously safe baby soothers being ‘blinged’ or decorated, by the gluing on of gems, badges, chains and ribbons. This poses serious health risks to babies, creating choking, inhalation and ingestion hazards - Australia has recently introduced legislation banning such products.
5. Recently, a Nottinghamshire woman was tackled for making and selling such dummies via a Facebook page. Trading Standards are also working with the media to warn parents about the dangers of these products. Officers have also taken down a number of adverts for such dummies on an internet auction site.

**Food Standards Agency Audit of Official Controls on Animal Feeds**

6. The Food Standards Agency has now published its audit report on the authority. The control of animal feeds is a statutory duty, with animal feed safety vital in protecting the human food chain. There are over 550 feed premises in the County, with the largest four feed manufacturers producing 630,000 tonnes of animal feed per year.
7. In incidents where animal feed has become contaminated and led to unsafe human food, such as in Ireland in 2008, and Germany in 2011, there has been far reaching economic consequences for feed and food industries in those countries and further afield.
8. The audit explored how well the authority regulates animal feeds, looking at how inspections are undertaken, take feed samples and investigate complaints. An action plan has been developed to address some minor issues raised. The Agency will follow-up to ensure the action plan has been implemented later in the year.

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable People**

9. Bogus roofing firms continue to be a problem, preying on older and vulnerable residents in the county:
  - We have intercepted a roofer systematically targeting vulnerable residents. Excellent Police support led to him being arrested, interviewed and bailed. Prosecution will follow.
  - Councillor Yates contacted the Service concerning an older adult who had had a protective roof coating applied following a cold call which had damaged his roof. Our intervention ensured the trader repaired all damage.
  - Officers supported a couple suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia who had signed up for work following a cold call. Officers ensured the contract was cancelled, offered target hardening advice, and signposted them to Social Care colleagues.
10. An unsolicited telephone call and visit led to a resident paying a £950 deposit on a £1,950 hearing aid. Our resident subsequently wished to cancel the contract, but his deposit had been cashed. When the trader returned demanding the £1,000 balance, our officers intervened, and secured a full refund.

### **Neighbourhood Alert**

11. Trading Standards Officers continue to use the system to disseminate targeted information and early warnings. Recent positive responses to electric blanket testing messages have proven how effective the system is for communicating with our communities.
12. The number of residents signed up to receive Trading Standards alerts has risen from 1,700 in July to 5,500. We are working to promote the system further. Members can sign up to receive alerts by visiting [www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk](http://www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk).

### **Business Support & Primary Authority**

13. We are now engaged in 14 Primary Authority partnerships. In February, I joined Rushcliffe District Council colleagues to celebrate the first joined up Trading Standards and

Environmental Health Primary Authority partnership. I was very pleased to hear how highly the business valued the support given by Trading Standards and Environmental Health. I hope this will be the first of many such partnerships.

### **Community Lorry Watch**

14. Two new schemes have recently been introduced, with Ravenshead launching on the 13<sup>th</sup> February following an approach by the local Parish Council. The Nuthall & Greasley scheme was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> February, following a 7.5 Tonne weight restriction introduced there last June.

### **Scambuster Team**

15. The team recently secured the arrest of a prolific doorstep criminal who, we believe, defrauded dozens of local victims by passing himself off as a reputable property repairer, before carrying out very poor work at a very high cost. With Police help, we have excluded the man from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire as part of bail conditions to protect those who have already fallen victim to him. Investigations continue.

### **Legal Update**

16. The farmer convicted of multiple animal by-products and welfare offences has been given a 12 month prison sentence, and banned for 8 years from keeping pigs and cows. The case generated much national and local media interest, and helped raise public awareness regarding animal welfare and the serious disease risks posed by animal by-products.
17. Two men appeared before a 'contempt of court' hearing for breaching a court undertaking by mis-selling mobility aids. The Judge deferred sentencing until December 2014 - any further breaches will see them sent immediately to prison. Officers are monitoring their activities closely.
18. At a recent fraud trial a man has been found guilty of taking deposits for work without actually completing the work. Sentencing took place on 8<sup>th</sup> March.
19. The Proceeds of Crime hearing recently took place concerning the father and son imprisoned for offences relating to mobility aids. The father was ordered to pay £20.5k within 6 months or face an additional 12 months imprisonment, whilst the son was ordered to pay £1k compensation within 6 months, or face an additional 28 days imprisonment. £8.5k will go to compensate victims. In January, the case featured on the BBC 'Doorstep Crime 999' programme.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

### **Emergency planning service offer to schools and academies**

20. This year, for the first time, the County Council's 'Services for Schools' brochure includes a variety of emergency planning services, including assistance with planning, training and testing of plans. To promote these, and encourage schools to purchase services, members of the emergency planning team participated in the set of three NCC 'marketplace' events. These provided an opportunity to talk with head-teachers and school business managers.

Colleagues reported that school representatives spoke positively about the arrangements they have in place. The great majority said they are familiar with our guidance 'Coping with a School Emergency' and have used it to develop their own emergency plan. The services that most interested schools were the offer of training and of arranging call-out exercises to test communication arrangements outside normal school hours.

## **Incidents**

21. A period of particularly cold winter weather in early February, including some periods of snowfall, raised the prospect of the need to activate contingency plans. However, as the conditions did not cause or threaten to cause significant disruption to critical services, there was no requirement to activate the County Council's 'Winter Weather Emergency Plan'. The emergency planning Duty Officer received and responded to only a small number of non-critical enquiries. The cold weather did give rise to a short business continuity incident at County Hall when a burst pipe caused the central heating system to drain. Facilities colleagues deployed portable electric appliances to raise temperatures while their repairs were completed. The 'Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board' convened to consider if further measures were necessary. Reference was made to the 'County Hall Loss of Utilities Plan', and it was decided that it was not necessary to implement further measures.

## **REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICES**

### **Reorganisation of the Registration Service**

22. During January, the Registration Management Team proceeded with the formal steps necessary to implement a new Registration Scheme for Nottinghamshire, to come into effect from 30<sup>th</sup> March this year. The two key developments were the Delegated Decision approval from the Cabinet Member and confirmation from General Register Office (GRO) that we can proceed with our plans based on our presentation a draft Service Delivery Plan. The coming weeks will now be occupied with the enabling process and the steps required to put the new registration scheme in place.

### **Registration Service Accommodation**

23. The County Council is seeking to acquire the Gilstrap Centre in Newark from Newark and Sherwood District Council as the venue for the town's Register Office. The District Council is currently conducting a public consultation, as it is required to do as a condition of the Trust under which the building is held. The District Council require approval of the Charity Commissioners in order to relinquish their interest in the building. Meanwhile, registration services for Newark will remain at the Register Office at Balderton Gate until the end of September 2013. Similarly, the longer-term accommodation for Rushcliffe Register Office is under consideration. At present, registration services for this area are based in the Hall, West Bridgford, which the County Council is set to surrender back to Rushcliffe Borough Council in spring 2013 at part of the 'Ways of Working' programme. Possible alternate sites for registration services are under investigation in both Newark and Rushcliffe.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

### **Domestic Violence**

24. Community Safety staff have contributed to two reviews of Police procedure on domestic abuse arising from recent domestic homicides. Firstly, there has been a peer review with the National Police Improvement Agency commissioned by Nottinghamshire Police to assist with learning from recent events. Secondly, there is a Police Authority Scrutiny Committee on this issue taking place during March and April 2012. Later this year we will have the Domestic Homicide Review Reports in the public domain. Nottinghamshire Police is working closely with community safety staff in the County and the City to bring about improvements to Police and partnership responses to domestic violence in advance of these reports, in order to mitigate concerns raised.

### **Hate Crime**

25. Ruth Hyde, the chief executive of Broxtowe Borough Council, will be developing her role as the Safer Nottinghamshire Board (SNB) Hate Crime Champion by taking over as chair of the joint SNB and Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP) Hate Crime Steering Group (HCSG). The Group will be re-focusing its work on a better understanding of hate crime, the promotion of the reporting of hate crime through better awareness of current services; consistent training for staff and the possible use of Restorative Justice to tackle hate crime.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

26. The final of this year's Dragon's Den took place on 9<sup>th</sup> March. There were really high quality presentations from the 5 schools that took part. The judges made sure everyone got a prize but the overall winner was Selston Arts and Community College, who produced a very professional video about alcohol and the fact that you cannot turn back the clock when things have gone horribly wrong. All 5 schools did really well and Julia Hodson, Chief Constable, gave them all very positive feedback. We will try and pull together all the information the schools produced and use it countywide.

27. I am very pleased to report that the County Council were successful in their application for a court injunction to prevent vehicle nuisance and anti-social behaviour in the Netherfield and Colwick area of the County. The roads around the Colwick Loop Road and the adjacent Victoria Retail Park have, over the last year, seen increasing numbers of people gathering to race and show off their cars. The local Community Safety Partnership has initiated a wide range of initiatives to tackle this problem, including the installation of speed humps, traffic cameras, increase police patrols and amending car park design, but the only long-term solution was seen to be this injunction. From now on people found gathering for this activity will be deemed to be acting unlawfully and risk prosecution, ranging from a penalty fine up to the confiscation and crushing of their vehicle. The injunction will make the area safer for all road users and pedestrians and will be of great benefit to local residents and businesses who were suffering from noise nuisance, litter and associated anti-social behaviour. The injunction will remain in place until August 2014, when the situation will be reviewed.

**COUNCILLOR MICK MURPHY**

**Cabinet Member for Community Safety      CC104**