

report



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY – APRIL 2010

1. I am very pleased to present my report to Council as the Community Safety Portfolio Holder on the varied activities that have taken place within it. I hope you find the report of interest and I will be very happy to provide further information on any subject it covers.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Tesco supports the Beacon Project

2. I am pleased to report that the Healthier Communities Service has been working in partnership with Tesco Stores Ltd to identify potential projects for them to 'makeover'. Projects put forward varied from sports facilities for schools, a domestic violence refuge and allotments for grow and eat projects. All the projects showed dedication and commitment by individuals and organisations to community progression and sustainability at a local level.
3. The Beacon Project, a centre for homeless and vulnerably housed in Mansfield, was chosen. Details of the work are being finalised and are likely to include redecoration, improvements to cooking facilities and client areas, as well as storage, security and measures which will make the project more efficient and environmentally sustainable in the long term.

New National Tobacco Strategy

4. 'A Smokefree Future' is the new tobacco control strategy launched by the Department of Health. It has three main themes: stopping young people starting, assisting all smokers to quit and protecting communities and families from tobacco-related harm. Under each theme there are

proposals and aspirations for the next ten years all of which aim to reduce health inequalities. These include reducing the amount of illicit and counterfeit tobacco coming into the UK which is sold on to children and people who are economically disadvantaged, improving access to NHS stop smoking services and medication and encouraging more localised initiatives on reducing levels of exposure to dangerous second-hand smoke.

5. I am pleased to report that significant work is already underway to address these objectives through the Council's Nottinghamshire Tobacco Commissioning Alliance and the Children and Young People Smoking and Tobacco Control Group, both of which have partners from organisations across the county and the East Midlands such as the NHS, Trading Standards and Environmental Health.

Marmot Review

6. The Marmot review, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, has been published by the Department of Health. This landmark review is the culmination of 10 year's of work and provides a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the state of health inequalities across England. The report suggests that health inequalities are inextricably linked to social inequalities and looks at the relationship between health, early years, education, work, income and communities. Health inequalities carry a significant economic cost and the report estimates that 2.5 million years of life are potentially lost to health inequalities by those dying prematurely each year in England alone.
7. The report makes six policy recommendations:
 - Give every child the best start in life
 - Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
 - Create fair employment and good work for all
 - Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
 - Create and develop health and sustainable places and communities
 - Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention
8. Considerable work by the Healthier Communities service is already underway to address these objectives. The Service has significant experience of joint working with local partners to tackle health inequalities on many issues such as falls prevention, mental health and worklessness, homelessness, tobacco and alcohol related harm and obesity. The review has strengthened this work, and the Service is currently in consultation with its subgroups and partners to plan how these objectives can be further achieved.

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Domestic Violence Seminar

9. A domestic violence seminar, hosted by the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, was held in February at Colwick Race Course. It was attended by approximately 70 people representing over 20 different agencies, including the police, health, probation services and specialist domestic violence agencies.
10. The purpose of the seminar was to bring partners together to focus on domestic violence across Nottinghamshire, looking at local needs in the context of the national agenda and learn from examples of good practice. The day also provided partners with the opportunity to influence the Safer Nottinghamshire Board Domestic Violence Strategy.
11. Domestic violence comprised 27% of all violent crime recorded by Nottinghamshire Police in 2009. One in four women experience domestic violence in their lifetime and it is estimated that 2 - 3 children in every classroom are living in households with domestic violence and abuse. The impact of domestic violence is complex, widespread and costly.
12. The seminar was extremely positive and the outcomes will contribute to ongoing work to help prevent domestic violence, increase reporting to the Police, support victims and their children and bring perpetrators to justice.

TRADING STANDARDS

Poultry Premises Fire

13. Trading Standards officers responded to a barn fire in March on a South Nottinghamshire farm, involving 32000 poultry. Trading Standards has responsibilities to ensure that animals are not caused unnecessary suffering, and also enforce legislation concerning the disposal of animal by-products. A quick response was required to prevent the loss and further suffering of surviving birds. The area of the barn suffering the most damage contained 16000 birds, from which 8000 were rescued and removed.

Rabies contingency exercise

14. In preparation for the county's response to an animal disease outbreak, Trading Standards officers have developed contingency plans to cope with the advent of a number of diseases and during March the Rabies Disease Control contingency plan was tested. An incident room was set up for the exercise at the service's Mansfield office and, in conjunction with Lincolnshire Trading

Standards, Defra and colleagues in the County's Emergency Planning team, the emerging scenarios were worked through. Thorough debriefs have been undertaken and key learning from the exercise has been collated, shared and used to update the contingency plan.

Scamnesty

15. Every year, three million people fall victim to scams, losing on average £850 each and many of the victims are those least able to protect themselves. Scams use a variety of methods to contact their victims including post, phone or email and falling victim to one can be very distressing.
16. 'Scamnesty' is a national event to raise awareness of scams and encourages the public to deposit any scam mailings they have received in special bins placed in public areas. During February, collection bins were placed around the county and approximately 150 pieces of information were received. This information is currently being collated and will be sent to the Office of Fair Trading. The intelligence gained from this research will inform future enforcement actions and awareness raising campaigns.
17. Advance fee fraud scams elicit money from vulnerable people on the promise of receiving further winnings or services. For example, fraudsters stole £200 from an elderly Nottinghamshire woman by telling her she had won £13,000 on the Irish Lottery. She was also duped into sending two cheques to America.
18. Information regarding these scams has been shared with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and other organisations. Whilst there is little chance of the consumer recovering any monies, the service works hard to raise awareness of these scams with those targeted, their families and carers. As part of 'Scamnesty', our Officers have also been working with local victim support groups to raise awareness.

High Pressure selling complaint

19. A member of the public contacted Trading Standards because her relative, who suffers from dementia, had been pressured into buying a vacuum cleaner. The consumer had initially been contacted by the company who offered her the opportunity to have her carpets cleaned completely free of charge. The visit that followed lasted 2 hours, and resulted in the consumer agreeing to purchase a vacuum cleaner at a cost of £2000. The relative of the consumer made contact with the company to cancel the contract but without any success.
20. Legislation gives consumers a cooling off period of 7 days for most purchases made at home and which cost more than £35. If a notice of "Cancellation" is not given to the customer then the contract is unenforceable and the trader is committing a criminal offence. Following intervention by trading standards

officers, a full refund was given. An investigation into company continues and further criminal and/or civil action may well ensue.

Underage Alcohol Sales

21. Trading Standards continue to work closely with Nottinghamshire Police to prevent the sale of alcohol to underage young people and we recently combined forces to stop a man selling alcohol to children from a van in the south of the county. The trader was caught with the help of a 15 year old test purchase volunteer and he pleaded guilty to selling alcohol to an underage person and unauthorised licensable activity. The trader used a social networking site to market his business and this method of supply is emerging as a real problem in the county undermining efforts to reduce illegal supplies.

Mobility Aids – Emerging National Issue

22. Members will be aware that we host the Trading Standards East Midlands Regional Operations Unit. In common with other regional teams, the East Midlands have seen an increase in the number of complaints concerning the sale of mobility aids to disabled consumers. This industry attracts rogue traders and victims are often left without mobility scooters, stair lifts and other aids they have paid for, or are charged excessively for equipment that is not always suitable to their needs. This has a huge impact on the quality of life of people who are totally dependent upon these items.
23. Thanks to the campaigning work of the regional teams, this problem has now been recognised nationally by the Government. The industry is not regulated in any way, so there are no compulsory checks on the people who run the companies or on their past behaviour. This is in contrast with, for example, the finance industry which is subject to a licensing system and heavy regulation.

Consumer Challenge Quiz

24. In March, 4 students from Derrymount School came joint second in the regional round of the Consumer Challenge Quiz. The regional round was organised by Consumer Direct East Midlands and held at the National Space Centre, Leicester. The aim of the competition is to raise awareness of consumer issues and consumer rights amongst young people with learning difficulties.
25. Derrymount School were competing with schools from Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire. The teams matched logos with their descriptions and answered questions on consumer rights, food safety, environment and staying safe. Congratulations to Derrymount on a fine effort.

Covert Surveillance: Lord Colville's Visit to Nottinghamshire

26. Members will be aware from recent media coverage that the use of covert surveillance powers by local authorities has been the subject of much debate, resulting in a recent Government review. Within the council, Trading Standards make very good use of these covert surveillance powers to assist in gathering vital evidence to tackle the most serious rogue traders.
27. The Government review has resulted in a new Code of Practice under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) which comes into effect on 6 April. The Code includes changes regarding the levels of officers authorising applications for covert surveillance, and also recommends the introduction of increased Member scrutiny.
28. On 17 March, HH Lord Colville of Culross visited the County Council on a routine visit to review our policies and procedures. He met with representatives from Trading Standards, Legal Services and Children and Young Peoples. His full findings will follow in a report, but I am pleased to report that his initial response was favourable, and he was pleased to acknowledge that our officers had a good understanding of the proposed changes under the new Code.

Prosecution Update

29. A Hucknall man pleaded guilty in March 2010 to 8 charges relating to the manufacture of counterfeit DVD films and music discs. A search of his house resulted in the seizure of 2 DVD copying machines together with other equipment and materials used in the process. He was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, made the subject of a Supervision Order and, in addition, a 6 month curfew was imposed on him. The curfew order is particularly helpful as this prevents the offender from attending Sunday markets, protecting unwary consumers from any future illegal trading at this kind of venue.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

30. Local and national emergency response arrangements were activated during the winter of 2009 / 2010 due to heavy snow across the region and long periods of icy conditions. The Emergency Planning Team supported other service areas which included Highways, Adult Social Care & Health and Children and Young People to ensure that we could continue to provide our services to the community. The team liaised with the Government Office to ensure that Central Government was kept informed about the prevailing conditions and multi-agency command was introduced with the team playing a prominent role in ensuring that the

appropriate response was provided. Departmental and corporate debriefs followed and valuable lessons were learnt which will be incorporated into future planning arrangements.

31. Emergency Planning for most of the year has been deeply involved in planning for Flu Pandemics which are categorised as high risk nationally. The risk was compounded by the spread of Swine Flu which resulted in a number of UK deaths. Various plans have been produced in collaboration with multi-agency partners, including those specifically prepared for the County Council to address business continuity issues. Vulnerable people were identified and offered vaccination, as were key staff, especially those working in the care sector. A number of exercises at national and local level took place to validate plans and the outcomes will be incorporated into future planning arrangements.

REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICES

32. The recent introduction of new governance arrangements that transferred powers and processes from the General Registrars Office to local authorities has resulted in an improved and more flexible service. A number of marketing initiatives were developed to make service users aware of the changes and benefits.
33. Registrar offices are also improving with the provision of a new office location in Worksop which is shared by a number of county council departments. This will open in July and will greatly benefit the local community with much more pleasant surroundings. The Rushcliffe registrar office has also been refurbished significantly improving the public areas.
34. The service has launched a new initiative working with schools to provide information of British Citizenship and staff have delivered interactive events to educate our young citizens on the benefits of citizenship.

COUNCILLOR MICK MURPHY
Cabinet Member for Community Safety