

report



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| meeting | COUNTY COUNCIL | | |
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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 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.

TRADING STANDARDS

Motor Vehicle Fraud

2. I have previously reported that motor vehicle fraud is currently a significant threat to our consumers and legitimate businesses. Service histories add significant value to used vehicles and Trading Standards has recently begun investigating the supply of vehicle service records and dealer's service stamps which allow others to commit fraud.
3. Officers recently purchased a blank service book and dealer's service stamps for under £30 from a local person over the internet. Initial investigations revealed the stamp is likely to be a stolen item, and by coincidence has been used in another vehicle case under investigation. We also believe the person has supplied similar items across the country in cases where vehicles have been sold with full service histories. Colleagues from other authorities are now investigating those sales.

The Big Society - Community Lorry Watch Update

4. Our Papplewick and Linby Lorry Watch scheme continues to attract growing community support, with many volunteers providing invaluable information about vehicles potentially breaching the local weight

restriction. Three quarters of the vehicles reported to us have registered weights in excess of that permitted. Two enforcement exercises carried out by Trading Standards based on this community intelligence has resulted in 10 warning letters, 13 simple cautions and 2 ongoing investigations. A new webpage explaining Lorry Watch Scheme and providing online resources is available on the County Council's website.

Fireworks Campaign

5. Trading Standards again teamed up with the Police and Fire Services on a coordinated firework safety campaign focusing on:
 - **Safe storage and sale** – all premises licensed to sell and store fireworks were inspected. 40% did not comply with safety requirements. Premises with more serious issues received a revisit and compliance was confirmed.
 - **Firework misuse/anti-social behaviour** - Trading Standards and Police operated firework 'hotspot' patrols again this year during key evenings in Ashfield, Bassetlaw and Gedling. The high visibility patrols visited shopping areas and those known for anti social behaviour to deter firework misuse and other antisocial behaviour.

Alcohol and Young People

6. **Alcohol Seizures** - During our hot spot patrols, alcohol was seized from a child under the age of 18 which had been sold by a local shop. The seller and the children will be issued with fixed penalty notices and the trader concerned was given advice.
7. **Test Purchasing** - Trading Standards carried out an exercise in Mansfield and Ashfield districts regarding the sale of alcohol and tobacco. The exercise targeted premises based on intelligence and eight premises were visited, resulting in one sale. The trader will be dealt with using an Action Plan and further test purchases.
8. **Alcohol Awareness week** – Trading Standards officers worked with the Co-op during the week to educate traders on the new mandatory license condition which states that all licensed premises must have an age verification system. Officers promoted the Challenge 25 scheme as a way to meet this requirement. The Co-op donated the Challenge 25 material for use by retailers, and trainers and training facilities for sessions that were provided for small retailers.
9. **Proxy Purchasing operation** - the joint operation to tackle purchasing alcohol on behalf of children (proxy purchasing) recently took place. No

illegal purchases were made during the operation, and no further community intelligence has since emerged.

Animal Health Contingency Test – Exercise Pullet

10. Trading Standards recently took part in a regional Animal Health exercise to test the partnership response to a fictitious outbreak of Avian Influenza. The exercise involved DEFRA and Trading Standards staff reacting in real time to notifications of disease outbreaks within Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. Whilst this was only a training exercise, Trading Standards staff had chance to think and respond as they would in a real situation.

Pawn Shop Refund

11. Our officers recently assisted an elderly and seriously ill ex-miner to retrieve money owed to him by his local pawn shop. Four years ago, the man took his £4000 compensation cheque for lung disease to a pawnbroker who agreed that he could draw small amounts from this balance as and when he needed it. Soon after entering into the arrangement, the man became very ill and was unable to visit the shop again until recently. When he did visit, the business refused to give him any of his money. Following our intervention and negotiations, the business gave the man his remaining balance and £250 in compensation.

Prevention & Education Work

12. Officers have taken part in a number of awareness-raising events:
 - car sales continue to cause significant consumer detriment, so officers recently worked with Sixth Formers at the National School, Hucknall to raise their awareness of the usual pitfalls and provide simple ways to protect themselves when buying their first car
 - officers recently delivered awareness sessions about consumer rights and our Buy with Confidence Scheme at events for 160 older adults organised by Broxtowe Borough Council
 - Trading Standards took part in the multiagency 'Safety Zone' event attended by around 650 year 6 children in September.

Legal Update

13. I am pleased to report that in November 2010, our long standing investigation into a bogus property repair gang came to a successful conclusion at Nottingham Crown Court. This case involved the exploitation of older adults by people who persuaded them to have

unnecessary building work done to their homes. Aggressive and dishonest sales techniques were employed to get victims to part with large sums of money.

14. Six defendants pleaded guilty and are to be sentenced shortly. We will continue to work with the media to warn local people of the dangers of doorstep criminals and to reinforce the message to always use approved traders from our Buy with Confidence scheme. I look forward to updating you on this matter at a future meeting.
15. A Sutton in Ashfield man has pleaded guilty to supplying an 18 rated video game containing scenes of gross violence to our 14 year old volunteer. The seller who had been previously cautioned for selling cigarettes to an underage person was fined £600 and ordered to pay costs of £472.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Voluntary Agencies Training

16. An emergency planning training day for voluntary agencies was staged in the Assembly Room at County Hall on Saturday 6th November. The event was entitled 'The Ripple Effect' and examined medium to long-term recovery issues following major flooding events. The presenters included Paul Hendy, Director of the Scottish Flood Forum, who shared his experiences from floods in Carlisle, Gloucestershire, Yorkshire and Humberside. Nearly 100 volunteers from eleven different organisations attended the event, and their feedback indicated that the event was highly valued.

Emergency Plans

17. The armoury of plans available for coping with emergencies in Nottinghamshire has now been enlarged by the creation of a new 'Winter Weather Plan'. This aims to coordinate the County Council's response to severe snow and ice conditions, including how aid would be provided to the most affected communities. Topics addressed by the plan include salt supplies and salting routes, a new school closures reporting system, communications and resources, as well as command and control.
18. A consultation exercise has now been completed on a draft Local Resilience Forum 'Community Resilience Plan'. This has been prepared by the County Council Emergency Planning Team in close collaboration with other agencies. It establishes a mechanism whereby communities can work with responding agencies to plan for emergencies that affect their area. The consultation involved approximately 75 organisations across the County including selected parish councils, flood and resilience

wardens, faith organisations and community groups. Findings from this exercise will be incorporated in the final version of the plan.

REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICES

Enhanced Ceremonies

19. I am delighted to report that there has been a very positive public response to the availability of enhanced marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in our decommissioned ceremony rooms at our Register Offices. These ceremonies are offered at increased cost and consist of a longer ceremony in which there is scope for readings and other embellishments requested by the couple concerned. At present, the ceremonies are available to book in Worksop, Mansfield, Newark and Rushcliffe. Public demand for enhanced services will increase income for the Registration Service generally, and thereby reduce the net cost to the County Council.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Stop Hate UK helpline in Nottinghamshire

20. A new hate crime helpline has been launched, covering the City and County areas. Stop Hate UK is a 24/7 online and phone line hate crime reporting and recording system that enables victims and witnesses of hate crime to report hate crime incidents through the Internet, by phone, by post and by text. The confidential helpline is staffed by highly skilled call takers with real life experience of hate crime, who are trained to give advice, support and guidance to victims and witnesses.
21. Funding for an initial one-year period for Stop Hate UK of £22,000 is being provided by Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council. The County Council has supported the commissioning process for this new service. A launch event took place on 30 November 2010, hosted by Nottingham City Council.

The new service is a crucial part of Nottinghamshire County Council's partnership commitment, via the Safer Nottinghamshire Board's (SNB) Hate Crime Steering Group, to increase the reporting of hate crimes in Nottinghamshire and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. The service will also provide a quarterly report which will allow partners to work together to tackle issues and raise awareness of hate crime.

Domestic Violence Campaign

22. Community safety partnerships are staging their annual media and publicity campaign to promote the White Ribbon Pledge to end domestic violence and abuse. The campaign starts on November 25th and there are events in all the districts. For the first time there is going to be a drop-in event in Duncan MacMillan House on December 1st demonstrating the links between mental health and domestic violence. There is to be a Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Conference on December 7th with a speaker from the Home Office and we await news of Government plans promised in the spring to clarify Home Office priorities on violence against women and girls.

COUNCILLOR MICK MURPHY
Cabinet Member for Community Safety