

Report



Meeting **County Council**

Date **13 September 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

Weeks of Action

- 2 I am very pleased to report that planning for our initiative to tackle crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour across the county, "Weeks of Action" is now well underway. "Weeks of Action" co-ordinates and concentrates the work of a wide range of agencies in one targeted location for a short intensive burst of activity. This initiative is an excellent way to raise community awareness about the services that we and our partners provide, whilst tackling local issues and reducing the fear of crime. Whilst concentrated activity is initially focussed around one week, a sustained, longer term plan for each location is also developed.

"Boy Racers"

- 3 I am delighted to report on the success of the county wide injunction that we took out against "boy racers". Colleagues will recall that this was to primarily tackle the problem of "boy racers" who were congregating in very large numbers around Junction 27 of the M1, putting themselves and other drivers at risk. Since the injunction, which was the first of its kind in the country, the police have reported that most problems at Junction 27 have been solved.

Sutton Lawns

- 4 I am pleased to report that the Garden Lane wall on Sutton Lawn which has been a magnet for anti social behaviour is coming down. The County Council has made a contribution of £20,000 towards this work. The wall is just one part of an action plan which has been agreed between the County Council, Ashfield District Council and the

Police to target problems at Sutton Lawns following regular complaints from residents. The plan includes a number of proactive measures.

Partnership Support Programme

- 5 I was especially pleased to welcome colleagues from the Home Office Partnership Support Unit to Nottinghamshire. They are here to look at the work we do through the seven district Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's). They will look at how we can use CDRPs to be more effective in our work to tackle crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour and maximise both the contributions and benefits to the county council. They will be reporting on their findings over the next few months.

Domestic Violence – Sanctuary Schemes

- 6 I am delighted to report on the development of “Sanctuary Schemes” across Nottinghamshire. These schemes enable victims of domestic violence to remain in their own homes with additional security and support and are a crucial part of the menu of services being introduced to deal with this issue.

Community Cohesion – “Living and Working with Migrants in our Community”

- 7 This key event in our programme to improve community cohesion in Nottinghamshire was held recently at the Holocaust Centre in Laxton. I was very pleased that such a wide range of partners were able to attend this important event to hear first hand what it means to be a migrant and the challenges they face and also to listen and talk to victims of genocide and crimes against migrants. The event served to signpost our future work in this area, and I am heartened that already local groups are being formed around the county to look at the problems caused and faced by migrant workers and the potential impact this could have on local communities

Community Development

Visits to Ashfield and Mansfield Community Development Projects

- 8 I visited Ashfield Development Project on 29th June to meet representatives of the community and voluntary sector to discuss issues pertinent to the Ashfield area and to hear about the work of our community development service. Group representatives included Ashfield Community Radio, Saplings Stay and Play, Beeches Youth Group, TAP Youth Ltd, Huthwaite Community Action Group, Sutton Seniors and 50 Plus Forum, Better Health for Hucknall, Reach Out Residents Group and Stanton Hill and Healdswood Area Recreational Project (SHARP). A lively discussion was held and I was pleased to hear the high regard in which the support provided by our community development workers was held. I invited the community representatives to visit County Hall in six months time to discuss and review progress on their community issues.
- 9 On Thursday 2nd August 2007 I paid the Mansfield Community Development Team a visit at their new premises at Park Road Resource Centre, Warsop. We met with the

Trustees of the Park Road Resource Centre and saw first hand how the team's existence within a community resource centre can help to maintain sustainability. I then visited Barrowhill Community Link – which is a pilot scheme which utilises one building on the Oak Tree Estate - and was taken on a tour of the building to see how different service providers work from one building, including volunteers from the community. This enables local residents to access different services from this building which is in the heart of the community. The reception is staffed by volunteers and there are flexible working facilities for other organisations such as Wardens, Mansfield CVS and the local housing officer. The Neighbourhood Element Team, Neighbourhood Renewal Team and the Police outlined how the support of the Community Development Workers has helped to enhance the delivery of services and specifically the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhoods Initiative.

PARTNERSHIPS

- 10 I am keen to have a much closer look at what the various LSPs are doing across the county, and to see how they link into the countywide partnership and the local agreement. I know that some LSPs have got really active working groups and are making lots of progress on things that are important for the district - but I also know that many of my colleagues (on all sides) do not share this optimism about LSPs. I am pleased to announce that we will be holding a countywide LSP Peer review during the autumn. All seven district LSPs, plus the county partnership will be reviewed by a Peer challenge team, made up of councillors and chief executives from other parts of the country, and we will get a final event which brings all the LSPs together to look at how we can improve joint working at district and county levels. I hope that lots of you will want to contribute to the review, and I will let you know how you can do this, once the arrangements have been firmed up. This is a big step forward in showing our commitment to improving two tier working.'

EMERGENCY PLANNING

- 11 The Emergency Planning Team have had an extremely busy period, responding to the major flooding incidents which took place across many areas of the county during late June and early July. Bassetlaw, Newark & Sherwood and Gedling were the areas worst affected. The floodwaters caused many problems for the transport infrastructure of the county, and over 1000 homes, businesses and schools were flooded.
- 12 The Emergency Planning Team co-ordinated the County Council's response to the floods, opening and staffing the County Emergency Centre here at County Hall for five days – three of which the centre stayed open 24 hours a day. They worked with colleagues in Highways, Adult Social Care & Health, and many other services across the County Council to alleviate the problems caused by the flooding. Staff also worked closely with partner agencies including district and borough councils, the emergency services, health and voluntary agencies.
- 13 Examples of the excellent work which was carried out to support the community include the deployment of pumping equipment and the provision of over 150,000

sandbags to householders at risk of flooding. The Rest Centre plan was invoked to provide emergency accommodation for people forced from their homes by the floodwaters, and special assistance was given to particularly vulnerable members of the community. The Emergency Planning Team provided information to the public via local press and radio, and worked with the Contact Centre to open a public helpline.

- 14 The County Council has also led the recovery, with the Emergency Planning Team pulling together a recovery working group which continues to meet to ensure that the communities affected are able to return to normal as quickly as possible. Debriefing is currently taking place to ensure that lessons are learnt and used to improve future response. In addition, the County Council has been represented at several public meetings. I am pleased to report that overall we have received very positive feedback from the public on the County Councils' response. I am sure that colleagues will join me in thanking all the staff from across the County Council who were involved in the response, and also those who took on extra work to ensure that essential services were maintained throughout the emergency.

REGISTRATION SERVICE

- 15 Arrangements for the transfer of registrars to full local government employment are progressing well, following the Statistics and Registration Service Act receiving its Royal Assent in July. A staff conference has been organised for 26th September 2007 to give all staff the opportunity to obtain detailed information on the transfer process and to ask questions. I will be opening the conference and there will be presentations from Personnel, Finance and Pensions experts from County Hall. A Planning Group has also been set up to help facilitate the transfer, as well as input into the modernisation agenda for the eventual restructuring of the Service. The Group has staff representation at all levels and from all the registration districts of the County.

TRADING STANDARDS

- 16 I recently attended the annual Trading Standards Conference in Manchester. This is the second year that I have attended the conference and again the diverse range of duties undertaken by the Service was highlighted by the workshops and conference stands. It will come as no surprise that one of the main themes was the work undertaken by authorities in the area of underage sales, both alcohol and tobacco. Following attendance at some lively debates where the views and experiences of the trade, enforcers and health experts were aired, I can inform you that this area of work is well developed within the County.
- 17 High on the agenda was the change that the Trading Standards Service is facing. The need for it to ensure it meets both local and the national priorities identified by the Rogers Review. There is also a need for it to reduce the burden on reputable businesses whilst ensuring that the rogue element is targeted and dealt with accordingly. I am confident that the Service will rise to these challenges in the coming year.

Financial Investigator

- 18 I am pleased to be able to inform you that the Trading Standards Service now employs an experienced Financial Investigator. Trading Standards increasingly finds itself dealing with offenders who can be classed as leading criminal lifestyles, particularly persistent rogue traders, counterfeiters and loan sharks. Often an appearance at the Magistrates Court is seen as an acceptable consequence by these individuals. Trading Standards investigations will now include an assessment of the financial gains accrued by individuals engaged in criminal activity. If the offender has a criminal lifestyle the Court must assume the entire offender's assets acquired over the last 6 years have been derived from crime and are eligible for confiscation. The recovery of criminal assets will disrupt criminal enterprises and send out a clear message that crime does not pay. I look forward to informing you of the progress that this officer is having within the County in the coming months.

Foot and Mouth

- 19 We are all familiar with the outbreaks of Foot and Mouth in 2001 and the devastating effect that they had on those communities affected. Early August saw the outbreaks in Surrey and a rapidly enforced national ban on the movement of susceptible animals (pigs, cattle and sheep)
- 20 From the initial announcement both Trading Standards and Emergency Planning Services were involved in ensuring that the strict and frequently updated controls around the movement of animals were complied with. Officers participated in the national and regional telephone conferences being lead by DEFRA on a regular basis.
- 21 The Animal Health team in Trading Standards worked over weekends to ensure that all animal movement tracing systems introduced since the last outbreak were up to date. We also based an officer at the DEFRA offices in Lincoln to assist with regional coordination.
- 22 The Great Britain wide movement ban was lifted with effect from midnight 23rd August although additional precautionary measures requiring animals to remain on the premises on to which they have been moved for an extended period of 20 days were imposed.

Test Purchasing

Alcohol

- 23 The Trading Standards Service remains actively engaged in alcohol test purchasing activities, involved in both the national Tackling Underage Sales of Alcohol Campaigns (TUSAC) and self initiated programmes. Since July 2007 142 premises have been visited. A total of 178 attempts have been made by our youngsters and on 18 occasions sales have been made. Working in partnership with the Police of these 18 sales 11 individuals have been issued with fixed penalty notices and a number of reports for prosecution are being compiled.

Buy With Confidence Scheme

- 24 I was pleased to attend the initial launch of the Nottinghamshire approved traders scheme on 20th July. This event was organised to present the initial 18 members of the scheme with certificates of membership.
- 25 You will recall that this scheme has been set up with partners in the City Council and Age Concern and will provide consumers with a list of reputable businesses who they can use knowing that they are committed to high standards of trading and are prepared to comply with both the letter and the spirit of the law. A full consumer launch is planned for National Consumer Week (12th – 16th November).

Prosecutions

- 26 The Trading Standards Service received a number of complaints concerning advertisements placed by a Worksop car company. The advertisements included the offer of five years free servicing, five years free MOT, five years road fund licence, five years guarantee and up to five years zero percent finance. In reality when consumers were lured to the premise by the advert they thought they would benefit from five years of each of the offers. The company's intention was that it would be a cumulative total where consumers would choose a combination. This had not been made clear in the advertisement. It was clear that the advert achieved its objective of getting consumers through the door where they would be greeted by a professional salesman. The company were fined £2000 and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.

Councillor Glynn Gilfoyle
CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS