

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 22nd September 2011

agenda item number **7a v.**

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD MAY TO JUNE 2011

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

Consumer Law Landscape Review

2. More detail has emerged regarding the Government's plan to move Consumer Advice responsibilities from Consumer Direct (an Office of Fair Trading initiative) to the Citizens Advice network. As of 1st April 2012, the seven local Bureaux in the County will effectively become the front door of Trading Standards, giving less complex advice and gathering criminal intelligence and information.
3. Trading Standards will work closely with the Bureaux over the coming months to ensure that our communities can access the services they need.

Primary Authority

4. Members will recall that Trading Standards recently moved to offering support to Nottinghamshire businesses via 'Primary Authority' Partnerships. To date, six companies have formal agreements with the Service. A further seven are going through the nomination process.
5. These partnerships allow the authority to recover the costs of providing the support, and provide businesses with a service tailored to meet their needs.

Any advice given by the service is also legally binding on other enforcers, providing much needed certainty to the businesses.

Counterfeit Alcohol

6. Trading Standards continue to work closely with enforcement agencies and the spirit industry to tackle counterfeit alcohol availability. The issue has received much coverage, following the fatal explosion in Lincolnshire thought to be caused by illicit alcohol manufacture. Such alcohol can pose serious health risks to those consuming it, some found across the Country containing dangerous industrial chemicals.
7. In recent weeks, visits have been made to 60 retailers across the County in order to ascertain the current picture, 3 of these visits following complaints to the Service. Six lines of counterfeit or potentially counterfeit alcohol have been discovered at 5 premises, totally approximately 70 bottles. The alcohol concerned includes vodka, whisky and wine. Of the 3 lines we have had the scientific analysis results back from, none have contained substances injurious to health so far – we still await results for the others though.
8. We have been working with local media and using the Neighbourhood Alert system to inform residents. We are also leading an East Midlands task group to co-ordinate efforts and learn from colleagues across the region. I will update Members at future meetings.

Charity Clothing Collection

9. Trading Standards have been working with the Lincolnshire & Notts Air Ambulance Trust, local media, and District Councils to raise awareness of, and disrupt the activities of a company collecting clothing claiming to be raising funds for Air Ambulances. This follows reports to Trading Standards from Councillors' Kerry and Gilfoyle. The business under investigation has no formal links to any air ambulance charities. Investigations continue.

Safeguarding the Vulnerable

10. Unfortunately, Trading Standards continue to receive requests to help vulnerable residents. Recent examples include;
 - Mansfield residents in a Cold Calling Control Zone intervened when they spotted a white van outside the home of their elderly neighbour. Trading Standards Officers responded and prevented the resident paying any money for work.
 - Officers prevented £1,700 being paid for shoddy fascia repairs. The bogus property repairer was arrested, interviewed, and gave Enterprise Act undertakings to trade fairly in future. He faces court action and imprisonment if he breaches the undertaking.

- A local bank contacted us when a vulnerable customer tried to make a large cash withdrawal, suspecting that she might be the victim of an unscrupulous trader. Enquiries established there had been several previous withdrawals. Trading Standards Officers are working with Adult Care colleagues and relatives to prevent her falling victim in future.
- A concerned resident alerted us to their 75 year old neighbour who had been pressurised by a cold caller into having a driveway resurfaced for £6,000. Despite knowing the work was substandard, he felt he had to pay as he was afraid. Trading Standards Officers intervened and were able to get the trader to leave without payment.

New Zones to Combat Doorstep Criminals

11. Support from partners has been secured to set up a further three No Cold Calling Zones in Bassetlaw where Police and Trading Standards intelligence shows particular issues with distraction burglaries and/or bogus property repair incidents. Intelligence analysis is also currently being undertaken regarding the possibility of a further three zones in other parts of the County.

Environmental Weight Restrictions/Lorry Watch

12. A new Community Lorry Watch scheme in Coddington was formally launched in August with press and radio coverage. Training is being delivered to local residents in the Langar Cum Barnstone and Cropwell Bishop areas prior to the launch of two more community lorry watch schemes. Work is ongoing to analyse intelligence to identify other areas suitable for schemes.
13. Over twenty investigations are currently ongoing into vehicles caught breaching environmental weight restrictions in the county.

Court Action

14. In July a Mansfield trader was sentenced to a 6 months suspended sentence and given a 200 hour community punishment order in Crown Court. The man had pleaded guilty to offering to supply 562 counterfeit t-shirts, jumpers and jeans through his shop in Mansfield. A Proceeds of Crime hearing is listed for September.
15. A Proceeds of Crime investigation has commenced into two individuals convicted last year of offences relating to the mis-selling of remedial damp proofing work and other building work largely to elderly and vulnerable residents. Our Accredited Financial investigator has submitted his statement outlining their benefit from crime and we are waiting for the next hearing.
16. The Father and Son owners of Nottinghamshire based Nottingham Mobility both recently received 12 month prison sentences, being described by the judge as “dishonest”, “disgraceful”, and “not fit and proper to be involved in any business involving the vulnerable”. Numerous victims, all vulnerable, included a 91 year old man who was persuaded to spend over £5,000 in one

Regional Operations Unit (Scambusters)

17. The Anti-Counterfeiting Group (ACG), the trade body representing many major brand holders in the UK, recently presented a “Highly Commended” award to our “Scambusters” Team at County Hall. The award recognised the case last year which saw two Nottinghamshire men jailed for 4 years and 10 months respectively for their part in a multi-million pound operation which brought thousands of counterfeit items, including unsafe GHD hair straighteners into the UK.

Media

18. The service continues to work with the media to communicate key messages to residents. Recent examples include:
 - Press, radio and television coverage of the sentencing of the father and son behind Nottingham Mobility;
 - Press coverage of the national award presented by the Anti-Counterfeiting Group to our Scambusters Team;
 - Press coverage of the sentencing of the Mansfield man for selling counterfeit clothing from a shop in Mansfield;
 - Press and radio coverage regarding the launch of the Coddington Lorry Watch;
 - Press and radio coverage regarding the Air Ambulance clothing collection; and
 - Radio coverage relating to scams in general, and also regarding to fake ‘iphone’s’.
19. Trading Standards Officers will be taking to the airwaves shortly, taking part in a monthly two hour consumer affairs show on Radio Nottingham. The show will tackle a different topic each month, and will allow us to communicate key messages to help safeguard residents.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

National Policy Award

20. I am delighted to report the achievement of another national accolade for our emergency planning function. Building on the Beacon Authority award of recent years, our emergency planning team and that of Essex County Council each led one of the two strands of the national ‘Developing Community Resilience Through Schools’ Project. The project has now won a prestigious Emergency Planning Society Resilience Award, in the category of “National Policy Award”. The award was sponsored by the Cabinet

Office, and was made to the scheme that was judged to have made the greatest contribution to the development of national emergency policies.

21. The aim of the project was to help schools across the UK to prepare effectively for emergencies and to increase the resilience of staff and pupils. Nottinghamshire led the aspects of the project which focused on developing practical resources for producing, training and exercising a school emergency plan. These materials were formally launched to UK schools earlier this year and are available to download from the project website www.schoolemergencies.info.

Public Disorder

22. Although Nottinghamshire did not suffer the scale of public disorder witnessed in other parts of the UK, local disturbances were of sufficient magnitude to trigger the use of arrangements in place to coordinate the strategic aspects of the response to a major emergency.
23. The emergency planning team represented the County Council at the Strategic Coordinating Group meetings convened by Nottinghamshire Police. The meetings involved senior-level representation from the emergency service, local authorities, health services and the criminal justice system, and were used to share information and to establish overarching strategic objectives for Nottinghamshire agencies' response to the disturbances.

REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICES

Consultation on Reorganisation of the Registration Service

24. The proposed reorganisation of our Registration Service is driven in part by the need for financial savings and the requirement to be consistent with overall changes in the County Council, but also offers the opportunity to consider service improvements that will benefit customers of the service. Detailed consideration of proposed changes has begun with the launch of a consultation process. It is proposed that the service will continue to operate under "New Governance" arrangements and will move from the current five registration districts to one for the whole of Nottinghamshire. The proposals include that customers will have single point access for booking appointments for registrations, ordering and payment for copy certificates and payment for goods and services. Also, it is proposed to centralise our records into a single repository, which will operate as a business unit. We intend make full use of the Customer Service Centre to liberate registrars' time for the delivery of more registration services.
25. In view of evident public demand for additional and enhanced registrations services, we have the opportunity for additional income generation to off-set the net cost of the service. Our key target is for the service to be financially self-sufficient by 2014-2015. It is anticipated that key benefit for customers is

that they will have more choice about where they can access the service and they will find it easier to make appointments. For registrars, centralised functions will enable practitioners to concentrate on face-to-face statutory and non-statutory activity. This will enable business development and income generation activities to flourish. The consultation process is due to continue until early October, with a proposed operational date of 1st January 2012.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Civil Disturbances

26. A summary of the local impact of the civil disturbances that took place locally during early August is outlined below:
- Between 6pm on the 9th August and 3am on 10th August Nottinghamshire Police dealt with some 600 incidents over and above what would be normally expected, the vast majority of which related to criminal damage and public disorder.
 - 5 police stations were attacked causing minor damage. One police vehicle was set alight. Whilst these incidents were in the city, investigations are ongoing to arrest the offenders - some of whom may be from the County.
 - 1 shop was entered illegally in the city centre
 - 3 police officers received minor injuries
 - 86 people were arrested by 3am on the 10th August
 - The first charges (following arrest) were instigated during the 10th August.
 - Charges continued to be "fast tracked" through the courts (73 charged by 11th August).
 - Increased numbers of police were on duty during the nights of trouble. These increased numbers remained in place until the threat had gone.
 - On the 11th and the 12th August Nottinghamshire Police reported things had returned to normal, with no significant incidents of violence or public disorder.
27. Nottinghamshire Police have praised and valued the help and contributions they have received from our staff in tackling this problem, plus the support from our communities across the County. Whilst the focus of the problems was within the city, offenders and perpetrators of the crimes will almost certainly include individuals from the County.

Domestic Violence Services Commissioning Consultation

28. A number of County Council domestic violence budgets have been commissioned separately in the past. The consultation will explore options for bringing commissioning together into a single process for all services in order to improve efficiency. It is imperative that any changes introduced maintain or improve service delivery, so the impact on services will be addressed in the consultation. An equality impact assessment has been included with the consultation to ensure the needs of all potential victims of domestic violence are taken into consideration.
29. The results of the consultation will be reported back to Cabinet in October 2011 with proposals to revise commissioning arrangements.

I Pledge evaluation

30. The National Centre for Citizenship and Law has completed its evaluation of the "I Pledge" project. It is very positive about the initiative. The report analyses evaluation data completed by participants in the '**I Pledge - Youth Crime Prevention Project**' during their two visits to the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL) and Galleries of Justice Museum between January 2011 and July 2011.
31. The evaluation results show evidence that the project outcomes are being achieved, specifically that pupils: increased their knowledge of the criminal justice system; improved their knowledge of the consequences of their actions as citizens; and improved their understanding of their role as active citizens in their communities.
32. Funding for the next "I Pledge" programme is now being sought, with the County Council looking to allocate £30,000 to this year's programme. Further funding is being sought from Community Safety Partnerships and the private sector. The 2011/12 programme will focus on schools located in the 15 Partnership Priority Areas identified in the Safer Nottinghamshire Board's Strategic Assessment.

Pintail Close update

33. Concerted action on the car cruising issue at Pintail Close has led to a significant reduction in the scale of the problem. Some activity has been displaced to a private industrial estate in Netherfield, where the Police are co-operating with a private security firm to manage the issue effectively.
34. The McDonalds restaurant near Pintail Close has submitted a planning application for a larger building. The Community Safety Partnership is formally objecting to the application, asking that a series of provisos should be met, which would help to ensure that the car cruising problem does not return to its former levels.

Gating Orders

35. New applications for Gating Orders in Eastwood and Ollerton are due to be considered by the Rights of Way Committee on 5th October. At the same time work is underway to consider whether some of the footpaths with the worst histories of anti-social behaviour and crime should not be extinguished.

COUNCILLOR MICK MURPHY
Cabinet Member for Community Safety

County Council/CC94