

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2016

Statement from: Councillor P A Robinson, Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue, Emergency Planning, Trading Standards, Equality and Diversity

FIRE AND RESCUE

Emergency Services Collaboration

The move of Fire and Rescue to the Home Office and the response to the consultation on '*enabling closer working between emergency services*' provides a clear signal of intent from the Government with regards to future blue light collaborative working. While some broader fire reforms are likely to result from the Home Office move, the outcome of the consultation will see a duty being introduced on emergency services to work closer together. It will also enable, where a local case is made, Police and Crime Commissioners to take responsibility for Fire and Rescue services. From our perspective, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue already works closely with its blue light partners, an example being its co-responder scheme, which is delivered in partnership with East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS). It is also continuing to explore other areas of collaboration with both EMAS and Lincolnshire Police with a view to enhancing both operational and financial effectiveness.

Support to Medical Emergencies

Over the last year the service has expanded its co-responder scheme to a further five fire stations around the county bringing the total number of stations which operate the scheme to 25. The recent expansion has been achieved as part of a wider regional fire and ambulance initiative and continues to enhance the response to life-threatening emergencies within our communities. The results of the Joint Ambulance Conveyance Project have also proved very positive and we are looking, as a minimum, to continue operating the system from the three existing stations over the next year. Should appropriate health funding be identified we would look to expand the project to another five fire stations.

Integrated Risk Management Planning

As you will be aware the service has recently undertaken a public consultation around a number of proposals which could have an impact on service delivery. The proposals include the introduction of a revised three-year strategy document which outlines key community risks and the service's approach to mitigating those risks, a proposal to change the crewing arrangements at Lincoln South fire station in order to meet anticipated savings targets and a proposal to introduce a charge for businesses which generate repeated unwanted fire signals from automatic fire alarm apparatus. The consultation closed on the 16 May 2016.

Flooding Deployments

In the aftermath of storm Desmond the service deployed three water rescue teams to support the flooding events in Cumbria during December 2015. Crews from Boston, Sleaford and Gainsborough focussed much of their early rescue work in Carlisle assisting local crews and the RNLI. Between Christmas and New Year, crews were also deployed to Yorkshire where they provided assistance to vulnerable people in

Leeds and York and, working with other agencies, helped to reconnect services impacted by the collapse of Tadcaster Bridge.

New Station at Sleaford

Work on the new fire station at Sleaford is due to begin in the next few months. The development will take place on the Eastgate centre site and will include a new fire station and county council office accommodation. There also remains the potential for EMAS to share the site. The work is due to be completed by May 2017.

TRADING STANDARDS

In The Courts

Court work in this period has again been dominated by seizures of illicit tobacco and alcohol. The trouble taken to build hides in some retail outlets continues to provide a challenge but with the support of Lincolnshire Police, who have identified many of the businesses involved as being parts of organised crime groups, progress continues to be made. Premises continue to be subject to successful review of their alcohol licence if they are caught with these goods and Trading Standards assisted LCC to evict the tenants from a shop in Lincoln that persistently sold illicit tobacco. A further premise has been re-let by the private sector landlord in similar circumstances and tobacco products can no longer be sold from there.

There are a wide range of ongoing investigations within the service at this time, ranging from animal welfare on farm and in transit, to toy and product safety, illicit tobacco and counterfeit goods. Additionally an importer was required to recall a plastic ladle, which was found not to comply with Articles and Materials in contact with food legislation, in that it leached non-permitted chemicals into food, a number of restaurants in the county have been advised about the illegal use of colours in their food and furniture and soap manufacturers are being advised about technical safety legislation with which their products do not comply.

Last Autumn Anthony and Jack Newbury pleaded guilty to a series of fraud offences relating to over-pricing of and poor workmanship on driveways sold to elderly residents of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Sentencing took place at Lincoln Crown Court on 3 December 2015. Anthony Newbury pleaded guilty to eight offences of Fraud and one offence under the Trade Marks Act and was sentenced to 27 months imprisonment, whilst Jack Newbury (son) pleaded guilty to one offence of Fraud and one offence under the Trade Marks Act and was sentenced to 27 weeks imprisonment.

In January, Ahmed Iftakahr, received a confiscation order of £683,144 at the Crown court under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Mr Iftakahr, along with his two sons was jailed last spring after a three year investigation into sales of counterfeit goods. The order demonstrates the level of criminality involved in the organised crime that is product counterfeiting. Often the goods are poor quality (like Mr Iftakars trainers and clothing) and unsafe (like some of the electrical goods, toys, tobacco and alcohol). The money made at retail level often funds more serious crime in the black economy such as drugs, gun running and modern day slavery – as Trading Standards publicised last summer after seizing over 9,000 counterfeit items from an East coast market.

Primary Authority Partnerships

Two schemes are now in place to provide bespoke Trading Standards support to businesses in Lincolnshire. Nine locally based national businesses have already decided to form statutory Primary Authority Partnerships and will be looking to use the service's expertise in fields as diverse as food, animal feed, weights and measures, firework safety, toy and novelty safety and furniture safety. The complexity of this legislation is immense and the service will be looking to re-focus the generalist work of nominated officers to become subject experts in a way that has not been possible in recent years.

The Council has also just approved a 'Pay As You Go' advice scheme for traders who do not want or are not eligible for a Primary Authority Partnership. This scheme started formally on 1 April 2016 and several local, but nationally trading, firms are also taking advantage of this. In one case the advice requested goes far beyond legislation into food technology and a Senior Trading Standards Officer is using technical and sampling skills, alongside the science of the Public Analyst, to assist the business involved.

Scam Mail Project

The Scam Mail project, built on intelligence from the National Trading Standards Scams Team, has now conducted over 70 visits to more than 40 victims of scam mail. The project has been running as a pilot in the Lincoln area and is gradually training up and utilising Neighbourhood Policing Teams to deliver messages and assess the safeguarding needs that will help protect the estimated 1,500 victims countywide from this financial abuse.

It is anticipated that the project will move into East Lindsey in late May 2016 and be cascaded across the County after that. Feedback and reviews suggests that the work so far has saved victims over £100,000 a year, as victims interviewed send between £40 and £200 per week to these plausible fraudsters.

This page is intentionally left blank