

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 FEBRUARY 2014

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

FIRE & RESCUE/EMERGENCY PLANNING

Flooding

At the time of writing, Lincolnshire has been relatively fortunate in terms of flood damage in the recent storms. No-one was killed in the floods, and, with the exception of Boston, damage to property was much less than elsewhere in the UK. However, in Boston some 580 properties were flooded and 250 people evacuated to rest centres. There was also severe damage to many of the coastal defences which had taken years of work and significant amounts of money to erect, so that our county is now more vulnerable to future storms. Some farming land near the coast is still under water.

Emergency plans worked well and may have been helped by the Exercise Lazarus, fortuitously held in the County Control Room at FRS HQ only weeks before the risk of flooding hit the news. Alongside each other, national bodies such as the Environment Agency, local authorities, our county emergency services and voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross, all worked in a co-ordinated way to minimise the threat to life and property.

As the flooding continues in Somerset, Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Service are deploying rescue boats and crews (provided last year by central government as a result of Exercise Watermark) to help local emergency services.

TRADING STANDARDS

Trading Standards have been using social media to 'inform and warn' consumers about issues and scams; this approach is paying off as visitors to the trading standards information on the LCC website area has increased by 30%. Work on regular and interesting content updates and more pictures has paid off. The top five stories were unsafe children's sweets (candy trees), illegal cigarettes seized in Lincoln, rogue street sellers, advice for carers on doorstep crime and warnings over scam council tax refunds.

Together with the Police, Trading Standards have apprehended a prolific Lincolnshire-based rogue trader who may be linked to a string of offences; the investigation continues.

Working with the Government Agencies Intelligence Network (GAIN) an organised crime group (OCG) has been identified. On-going work with Lincolnshire Police will result in multi-agency actions in due course.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Human Trafficking and Slavery

East Midlands Councils are in the process of setting up a task group to discover the extent of human trafficking into our region, and to develop the capability to deal with it. The first meeting of the task group was held on 28 January and was attended by local authorities, police and voluntary bodies. Speakers from Bristol, where anti-trafficking is more established, provided a briefing on the scale and nature of the problem, and the action they were taking. Speakers explained that human trafficking is not restricted to victims from the 'Third World', and nor is the range of slavery confined to prostitution: many cases are being found where both men and women are trafficked and forced to work in agriculture, factories and enterprises such as car washes, without pay under threat of violence and/or deportation.