

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 16 MAY 2014

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

FIRE AND RESCUE

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue is one of the most cost effective fire services in the UK, thanks largely to its large contingent of “Retained Duty” firefighters. However, in the present financial situation of our council, the FRS will be obliged to contribute to the cuts in spending. Whilst it is true that fires, and particularly fire deaths, have fallen steadily in recent years, the rural nature of Lincolnshire means that reductions in the number of fire stations would result in an unacceptable increase in response times to emergencies. Lincolnshire FRS is therefore embarking on a new range of fire-related activities, made possible by recent legislation, to derive income for our county.

Trading Company

A new “trading company” is to be set up to permit the FRS to market its training and service capacity on a commercial profit basis to other fire services and to businesses seeking non-statutory services. In the past, FRS have been restricted by legislation to being “non-profit making”, being able only to recharge their costs. The legislation has now been changed to allow FRS to trade commercially, and several trading companies have been set up and proved successful. Devon and Somerset FRS have formed “Red One Ltd” and the scope of their activities is explained on their web page. Lincolnshire FRS “Urban Search and Rescue” (USAR) site at Waddington is generally regarded as world class and may prove to be a key part of the new company.

Primary Authority

The extension in April this year by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) of Primary Authority to cover fire safety has been greeted enthusiastically by business, and enabled FRS to enter into contracts with large commercial groups. For instance, Hampshire FRS has formed Primary Authority partnerships with B&Q, Nuffield Health, Majestic Wine, Royal Bank of Scotland, Orchid Pubs and Home Retail Group. Lincolnshire FRS has entered into a similar contract with the British Frozen Foods Federation (whose HQ is in Newark) which represents some 200 businesses including ASDA, Aldi and Iceland. The principal reason for the extension of the Primary Authority scheme is to standardise fire safety advice across a sector of industry. Our county’s economic reliance on the food industry makes this a most appropriate business arrangement.

Fire Ambulances

Members will be aware of the current co-responding scheme which is manned by Lincolnshire FRS. The service exists to provide life saving first aid where firefighters can attend a victim before East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) can be expected to arrive. Currently Lincolnshire FRS attends many more co-responding calls than fires. Lincolnshire FRS and EMAS made a successful bid to DCLG for £491K to trial a new concept in UK of ambulances jointly manned by FRS and EMAS as an extension of the current co-responding scheme. The FRS stations at Long

Sutton, Woodhall Spa and Stamford have been selected as trial sites for the new scheme which is planned to go operational with 3 new “fire” ambulances later this year.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Exercise Cygnus

Emergency Planning have begun work in preparation for Exercise Cygnus, planned to take place in October 2014. Lincolnshire has been selected as one of the areas in the UK to play an active part in a national exercise to test plans to meet the onset of a widespread new form of pandemic illness across the country. The exercise will lack the visual aspects of recent exercises such as Watermark and Georgiana, but is designed to test national plans to meet a threat which is high on the national risk register.

TRADING STANDARDS

Unsafe Cigarettes

Lincolnshire Trading Standards are involved in a major campaign to reduce the sale of unsafe cigarettes. Cigarettes branded “Jin Ling” are manufactured in Russia and smuggled into Western Europe. These cigarettes are not equipped with the automatic self-extinguishing capability of fire-safe cigarettes now manufactured by the major firms in Europe, which reduces the danger of smokers inadvertently causing fires when falling asleep or leaving cigarettes unattended. The “tobacco” content of some Jin Ling cigarettes is believed to be suspect, and, being smuggled into the EU, are sold “under the counter” without tax, at a price much less than that charged for standard brands. A full account of Jin Ling cigarettes is available on the internet.