

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2015

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

Fire and Rescue

Fire Ambulance Project

The joint project between Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and East Midlands Ambulance Service is now fully active at the three pilot stations in Long Sutton, Stamford and Woodhall Spa. The project builds on the highly successful co-responder work that our fire service has been doing for over 16 years. It involves specially trained firefighters attending co-responder calls in a fully equipped ambulance which allows the crew to transport patients to hospital if the attending paramedic deems this necessary. So far this has been required on 75 occasions. Whilst it is early days in the project, the initial feedback from both fire and ambulance responders is very positive and, most importantly, there has been a reduction in the time for patients to arrive at hospital.

The project is also beginning to attract a great deal of interest from around the country as people recognise the innovative way we are using public money to create better outcomes for people in Lincolnshire. Notably, I hosted the Shadow Fire Minister and Shadow Health Minister on a visit to the Fire Service to discuss the project and how it could be used elsewhere in the country. The pilot will continue to run until September of this year.

Firefighters Pension Dispute

The Fire Brigades Union's (FBU) dispute with Central Government over changes to the existing Firefighters Pension Scheme continues with seemingly little prospect of it being resolved. The legislation to implement the changes has now been passed by Parliament and the new regulations come into force from April of this year. Fortunately there have been no further strikes announced, although industrial action in the form of Action Short of Strike continues. This involves the refusal to work pre-arranged overtime by FBU members. Any negative impact caused by this action is being managed by the Service.

Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation

The public consultation about proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue Service closed on 6 February. Whilst the proposals do mean some reductions, there will be no reduction in the number of fire engines or fire stations.

It is also important to remember that our Fire Service has made significant improvements to its operational capability over the last 4 years. These improvements include an increase in the number of fire engines which are crewed by full-time firefighters. As well as Lincoln, Boston, Gainsborough, Grantham and Skegness, we now have full-time crews in Louth, Spalding and Sleaford.

The amount of training time provided to our on-call staff has also been increased from 2 hours each week to an average of 3 hours a week. In addition, the service

has continued to develop the training facility at Waddington to ensure that the levels and quality of training given to our fire crews is of the highest possible standard. There has also been significant investment in new vehicles and equipment to ensure that our firefighters are able to continue to deliver a first class Fire and Rescue Service.

Trading Standards

A key priority for the Trading Standards Service is protecting the public from unsafe goods and services. This is done in a number of ways; informing and warning of safety alerts, where there are known problems with goods (such as a washing machine that is known to be a fire risk), responding to complaints about purchased goods and services which have caused an accident or posed a danger (such as the installation of a gas fire), and by sampling and testing product categories which are suspected to be dangerous. Over the last 6 months the service has responded to 144 complaints from consumers who reported a dangerous product or service.

Recently, Lincolnshire Trading Standards, Public Health and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue have been warning residents over the potential dangers of e-cigarettes, after a dramatic increase in people using them. The popularity of the e-cigarette has soared with many people opting to use them as an alternative to smoking, but with this comes a rise in safety concerns. There are concerns that a number of people may be using incompatible products, not reading instructions on how to charge the products safely and leaving them unattended while charging. In the East Midlands, Trading Standards has received a number of complaints about incidents with over 70% of them concerning safety issues. In Lincolnshire, there have been 2 significant fires caused by charging e-cigarettes.

Work also continues to ensure that food producers understand new food information legislation requiring them to inform consumers regarding potential allergens which pose a particular risk to people with allergies such as peanut and wheat.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and Lincolnshire Enforcement

Lincolnshire has a number of 'Head Shops' in Lincoln City, Gainsborough and Boston. The largest store is KATMANDU in Boston. Other stores include Nirvana, High Street, Lincoln, Head Candy in Lincoln and Gainsborough and Marley's in Lincoln. Enforcement action has been taken against all Head Shops by Police in partnership with Trading Standards. Legislation includes the Drugs Act; Consumer Legislation and, more recently, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) legislation.

In recent months the Police, Lincoln City Council and Trading Standards have co-ordinated an operation focussed on Marley's Head Shop in Lincoln. The Operation resulted in the seizure of the entire stock, which has been sent for testing. This action and notices served using ASB legislation has caused the shop to cease trading. Trading Standards and East Midlands Serious and Organised Crime Unit are presently working together to tackle Lincolnshire / Nottinghamshire based organised crime groups. This is an example of the complex and difficult work in which our Trading Standards are involved and underlines their importance in safeguarding our communities.