

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 17 SEPTEMBER 2010

Statement from: Cllr P A Robinson, Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Community Safety and Social Cohesion.

REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRES

Despite the cost and time over-run which have dogged the setting up of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Regional Control Centres (RCCs), government policy remains committed to their opening. The principal advantages of the RCC over the present system, where each FRS has its own control centre, are:

- Increased resilience in the face of major natural disasters or terrorist attacks. The RCCs can each take emergency calls and deploy FRS assets with the same level of intelligence and local information on availability anywhere in England. The failure of an individual RCC will therefore not impede a swift and appropriate reaction to an incident.
- Every FRS in England will be able to make maximum use of the new Firelink communications and the mobile data terminals in the fire appliances, which are designed to increase FRS effectiveness and safety.

The East Midlands RCC at Castle Donington is now timetabled to open in May 2011. Derbyshire FRS will be the first control function to transfer across to the RCC, followed by Leicestershire (July), Nottinghamshire (November), and Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire (January 2012).

CONSUMER DIRECT

Lincolnshire Trading Standards was awarded the contract to run Consumer Direct for the East Midlands Region when this new service was set up in 2003. Specially trained staff working in our Customer Service Centre have provided advice to the public and acted as the “front door” of trading standards offices across the region. The main advantages of the Consumer Direct scheme have been to provide the public with a free and easily accessible service, to free up Trading Standards officers for more complicated work and to generate regional intelligence on issues such as rogue traders, doorstep crime and counterfeit goods.

In 2006 Consumer Direct was transferred from DTI to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), since which time various plans have been put forward to expand the scope of the service. In 2009 OFT placed an advertisement in the OJEU (Official Journal European Union) for a single contractor to April 2011 to provide the following:

- The delivery of a contact handling service for Great Britain for first tier consumer advice, including energy and post.
- Maintenance, hosting and design of the Consumer Direct website.
- Management of partnerships with stakeholders, such as Consumer Focus and Trading Standards

- Provision of a telephony system
- Provision and management of a case handling system and knowledgebase.
- Marketing of the consumer direct service.

This contract is likely to be beyond the scope of any of the current regional providers such as our Council, so that our involvement with Consumer Direct is due to end in March 2011. Our Trading Standards is monitoring the situation carefully to see how its own service can best be adapted to the new organisation and how the current advantages of regional cooperation can be retained.