

Report



Meeting **County Council**

Date **18 January 2007**

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The County Council meeting gives me another opportunity to share with you issues, events and activities ongoing in the Community Safety and Partnerships portfolio. I hope all Councillors find the report of interest and will be very happy to provide further information on any subject it covers.

Community Safety

Nottinghamshire Community Safety Board

- 2 The Nottinghamshire Community Safety Board met just prior to Christmas and heard an excellent presentation by consultant Mike Ward on "Reducing Alcohol Related Harm in Nottinghamshire". The Board agreed that a tactical group should meet to pick up on some key issues outlined in the presentation and develop local responses prior to the next meeting in March. The Board also considered how it will work with LAA structures and CDRPs, on the basis that the main purpose is to reduce duplication of effort and help focus on key strategic issues.

Anti-social Behaviour in Rushcliffe

- 3 Proposals have now been received from Rushcliffe Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) for the money identified from NCC towards tackling this issue. Over the two year period the CDRP has prioritised:
 - Contribution towards the posts of Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator (1 fte) and Anti-social Behaviour Officer (2 fte)
 - A range of youth related projects and initiatives, that will include work with young people experiencing domestic violence
 - Improvements to IT equipment to improve data collection and facilitate data sharing.

Gating Orders

- 4 The Guidance and Application Form have now been finalised and circulated to CDRPs. Officers in the Safer Communities and Highways Teams will be briefing CDRPs. Applications for Gating Orders in Cotgrave, Mansfield Woodhouse and Sutton Lawns are now progressing.

Motorcycle Nuisance

- 5 A campaign with partners and the police to undertake targeted work in motorcycle nuisance hot-spot areas is being finalised prior to action on the ground. CDRPs had been asked to identify hot-spot areas and the 12 identified have been sent to police colleagues in the Off Road Motorcycle Team for their views. The project will focus on probably no more than 6 hotspots and will be evaluated to assess whether more resources need to go into this work. The campaign will be supported by media and publicity around the county.

Boy racers at Junction 27

- 6 The potentially life threatening use of this junction of the M1 and the A611 that joins it as a race track by up to 400 people and their cars every Sunday is now a piece of focused work with partners. I recently visited the site and was astonished at the scale of the problem and of the risks posed by the racers to other motorists. The problem was resolved (moved on) in the City by use of an injunction and this approach is now to be tried in Ashfield. Information on those racing gained by the Police will be sent to DVLA who can notify insurers that cars are being used for racing which could be used to invalidate insurance.

Community Safety and Education

- 7 Requests have been made to support two initiatives that develop Community Safety work within schools. The use of Junior Crimestoppers within schools to encourage children and young people to report crime is seen as an opportunity to make them aware of their responsibilities as young citizens. Proposals are also being considered to fund the development of work within schools that focus on anti social behaviour – what it is and the cost to society.

Young Witness Service

- 8 The County Council is a key funder of the Young Witness Service (YWS), one of the court services managed by Nottinghamshire Victim Support. The YWS has recently won a national Justice Award for outstanding achievement in caring for witnesses. The YWS workload has tripled in two years, with nearly 200 young witnesses receiving their support in the last year. The feedback shows almost all of them praising the service for making them feel better about giving evidence. The YWS has worked closely alongside domestic violence specialist courts to support children affected by abuse.

White Ribbon Campaign

- 9 On 6 December 2006, I accompanied the Chairman of the County Council to an event to show our support for the White Ribbon Campaign against Domestic Violence. I strongly support the campaign and wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

Racial Harmony Calendar

- 10 In November I visited Haggonfields Primary School in Worksop to present a 10 year old pupil at the school with a special award for her work in producing an exceptional piece of racial harmony artwork. This was part of the 'Show Racism the Red Card' initiative and her entry has been featured in the 2007 Racial Harmony Calendar. Activities of this nature are particularly important to our young people as they influence their attitudes and behaviour towards racial harmony in later life.

Sutton Lawns

- 11 I was able to join a group of interested parties on a visit to the Sutton Lawns area at Sutton in Ashfield. This reflects very starkly the impact anti-social behaviour can have on our communities both socially and economically. I left determined to ensure that our efforts are re-energised and that the County Council plays a very active role in helping to improve the structure for the local community. I am also very aware that to improve the situation will not be easy and will require significant partnership working.

Violent Crime and Young People

- 12 On 7 December I joined the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People at a presentation by the Police on Violent Crime and Young People. This gave an interesting insight into the unique challenges that this aspect of anti-social behaviour poses.

Partnerships

Community Cohesion Strategy

- 13 The Cabinet, at its meeting on the 8 November 2006, received and endorsed the draft Community Cohesion Strategy for Nottinghamshire. The County Council is currently consulting with partners on the draft strategy and it is anticipated that a number of local partners including District Councils, Police and Fire Service will sign up to the strategy.

Community Cohesion Fund

- 14 The County Council has set aside a budget of £50,000 per annum to support community cohesion projects. To date some 15 projects have been supported and a further 20 applications have been received, of these 12 will be recommended for support. It is also proposed to establish a time limited post of Community Cohesion Manager to oversee and implement the community cohesion strategy. The projects supported are wide ranging and will have a positive impact within local communities and people of all ages, and will also lead to improved service delivery.

Volunteering

- 15 Work on the LAA volunteering stretch target is progressing; a first meeting of the Volunteer Development council was held in December, with a further meeting planned for the spring which will aim to bring together appropriate organisations to work on each defined setting.

Parish councils

- 16 With the Leader and the Chairman, I intend to host a reception for the chairs and clerks of the 8 Quality Parish Councils in the county, firstly to congratulate them on their status, and secondly to begin discussions with them about devolution of services, to find out which services they might be interested in commissioning or delivering at the parish level.

Neighbourhood governance

- 17 With the Leader and the Deputy Leader, I am commissioning work around neighbourhood governance; so that we can be clear what we mean, and what we expect from councillors and service providers at the neighbourhood level. The county council already works alongside 8 town councils, 153 parish councils and 37 parish meetings, 12 Neighbourhood Management Teams, 19 Community Action Teams, 2 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, 4 Area Based Initiatives, a cluster of wards in the Neighbourhood Element, and a multitude of community based groups, organisations and networks across the county – but I am keen to make sure that all these models and structures actually provide better services, and better accountability at the local level.

District Based Activities

- 18 The County Council continues to be very active with all partners at District level across the County. Some areas we are working on include:

Ashfield

- Integrated Services for Kirkby
- Neighbourhood Governance
- Safer Neighbourhoods

Bassetlaw

- A comprehensive review of the Local Strategic Partnership

Broxtowe

- A 'fit for purpose' review of the LSP covering structure, nature and purpose.
- A climate change conference in the Spring to help identify what local communities can do to promote climate friendly activities.

Mansfield

- Progress on a Family Intervention project.
- The problems of alcohol related harm.

Newark and Sherwood

- A LSP review of key areas of work and priorities for the next 2 to 3 years.
- Promoting and communicating the value of the LSP and Community Strategy to local people.

Rushcliffe

- The LSP has held events to enable forward planning and to allow the partnership to recognise and celebrate its achievements.

Representations

- 19 I represented the Leader at an Experience Nottingham event to help improve the way we manage the reputation of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. This is crucial in encouraging people to come and stay in the area and to attract new business. Whilst the event had a key focus on Nottingham, it is crucial that the County Council works in partnership with all the relevant agencies to promote the area positively.

Service Issues

Emergency Planning

- 20 I am delighted to report further progress in our joint application with Newark & Sherwood District Council for Beacon Council status in Emergency Planning. The purpose of the Beacon Scheme is to identify, highlight and promote good practice in local government. Since my last report we have hosted an assessment visit and have received revised assessment scores. Pleasingly, our overall score has risen from “Good” to “Excellent”, and we were rated as “Outstanding” in respect of partnership working and equalities and diversity. The final stage of the application process is a presentation in London in January, and we will know in March if our application has been successful.
- 21 In a recent notable incident, Ashfield District Council suffered a significant fire at their headquarters building. One wing of the building (housing kitchen, canteen and legal services) was damaged severely. Staff were evacuated successfully, with no serious injuries. The District Council activated their Business Continuity plans and a control centre was established in a nearby building. Members of the County Council Emergency Planning Team, joined by representatives from other departments, were active in providing support to the District Council. The Rest Centres plan was invoked, amid fears that a wider area may be affected by in the incident. However no further evacuations were made and the plan was stood-down. The headquarters building was able to return to operation the following day, minus the damaged wing. All public services were resumed and legal services were re-housed in spare capacity elsewhere in the building.

Registration Service

- 22 I am pleased to note a significant step in the modernisation of the Registration Service. The Statistics and Registration Service Bill, introduced recently into Parliament, contains provisions to provide for registrars and Superintendent Registrars to become local authority employees. These provisions are based on those which appeared in the Registration Service Bill introduced into Parliament by late last year, but which failed to successfully complete its passage through Parliament.
- 23 Under provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Bill, registration post-holders will become employees of the local authority which appointed them. It ratifies existing terms and conditions, and pension rights (unaffected by the change of status), and gives continuity of service for unfair dismissal and redundancy purposes. Existing responsibilities under the Registration Acts are unaffected. The Bill also provides for certain amendments to be made to the Registration Service Act 1953, such as provision for the future appointment of registration officers as local authority employees.
- 24 Repair work has been progressing at our Newark Register Office, following the fire there in November. The offices have been cleaned and returned to use, and the ceremony room is expected to become available again during February. Contingency arrangements for holding marriages and civil partnerships have operated successfully throughout this period.

Trading Standards

Tobacco

- 25 From 1 October 2007 the government is to raise the legal minimum age for purchasing tobacco from 16 to 18 years. This is in line with other age restricted products such as alcohol, butane lighter fuel and fireworks. Smoking is dangerous at any age, but the younger people start, the more likely they are to become life-long smokers and to die early. I welcome these proposals since the law change will hopefully contribute to reducing the number of teenagers who smoke, in turn, reducing the number of people with preventable diseases. We will co-ordinate our publicity on this matter with the national campaign which is expected this spring.

Alcohol

- 26 During the Christmas and New Year period Trading Standards Officers conducted alcohol test purchase exercises using juveniles. 41 attempted test purchases were made resulting in 36 refusals and 5 sales. With regards the sales appropriate legal action is being considered.

Intellectual Property

- 27 At present Trading Standards' use of Copyright Protection Legislation has been very restricted. However, I welcome the proposal to enact section 107A of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 which will make it a duty of the Authority to enforce the act and will give officers powers to make test purchases, enter premises and seize goods for the purposes of the act. In implementing these provisions the Government is supporting its belief that there is a need for strong enforcement of Intellectual Property rights and is providing

Trading Standards nationally with £5 million in 2007/08 to support the implementation of the new powers. It is not yet known how much of this money will be received by this Authority.

Partnership Working

28 On Sunday 17th December I joined teams of Trading Standards and Police Officers at Thoresby Market. Operation Cracker was intended to address the possibility of stolen or counterfeit goods being sold at the market. Vehicles were stopped on the way to the market as well as stalls being visited. Not only the purpose of the operation was fulfilled but serious Road Traffic offences were discovered also. Trading Standards carried out 12 seizures of counterfeit goods with an estimated value of £30,000. The outcome made a 4 00 am start on Sunday morning well worthwhile!"

Prosecutions

29 At Newark Magistrates' Court a DVD films and computer software counterfeiter was fined £600 with £361 costs. At Worksop Magistrates' Court a seller of counterfeit clothing was given a 12 month conditional discharge and had to pay £400 costs. At Nottingham Crown Court a seller of counterfeit clothing, with a previous conviction for similar matters, was given a 6 month prison sentence suspended for 2 years, and fined £1,000 with £1,300 costs.

Regulatory Reviews

30 Through its regulatory role, the Trading Standards Service continues to attract considerable attention from central Government and the Consumer and Business Communities.

Key issues ongoing include:

- An initiative from Gordon Brown through the Better Regulation Executive to adopt a more stringent approach to risk based inspections.
- A review by Lord Davidson into the implementation of EU legislation. This has concluded that whilst over implementation may not be as widespread as is sometimes claimed, there were areas where 'gold plating' and 'double banking' have lead to unnecessary regulatory burdens. The main area of concern in the consumer field, related to the over complexity of remedies available to consumers over faulty goods. A simplified system is to be introduced by 2009.
- A review by Professor Richard Macrory of Regulatory Penalties. This recommends an interesting range of sanctions to be made available to ensure that rogue businesses redress the harm they cause. The end result could be a 'toolkit' of penalties to promote and enforce compliance.

Media Interest

31 Activities across the Portfolio continue to attract considerable media interest. Recent examples include:

- The Mini Motos Campaign.
- Exposure on International and Lottery scams.

- The Christmas Alcohol Campaign of test purchasing branded spirits.
- The outcome of prosecutions.

Councillor Glynn Gilfoyle

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS