

7c. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Registration Service

On 2 March 2015 the second phase of the Immigration Act 2104 was implemented which introduced further changes to prevent sham marriage. From this day, the waiting period for all couples giving a Notice of Marriage/Civil Partnership was extended to 28 days (from 16 days), and for those couples where one or both are a non-EEA national, the waiting period may be extended to 70 days under the Government's new Referral Scheme. The extension period is determined by the evidence and documentation provided by the couple. This extension provides the Home Office with time to investigate suspect marriages further and, where appropriate, take action with the couple before they try to marry.

There has also been a tightening up of documentation required to give a Notice of Marriage/Civil Partnership, including the need for documentation to be valid within a 3-month period.

This is a national change for registration services across England and Wales and is part of the Government's public protection and counter fraud agenda.

Trading Standards

Cot Bed Safety Case

Following a complex investigation by Trading Standards, on 16th March a Company (Baumhaus Limited) and its' Director both pleaded guilty to offences under the General Product Safety Regulations of placing an unsafe product on the market. The product was a cot bed which presented a serious strangulation hazard to very young children. The problem came to light when a parent was watching their toddler climbing out of the cot through a visual baby monitor and watched as their head became trapped in a gap at the end of the cot and their body was left hanging below. Fortunately due to the quick actions of the mother no serious harm occurred and following her report the Trading Standards team then worked hard to get other cots recalled or their design amended so that they no longer presented the same hazard.

Both defendants will be sentenced on 13th April.

Joint Service

The Joint Trading Standards between Buckinghamshire and Surrey is now (from 1st April) in operation. The first Joint Committee was held on 1st April where Buckinghamshire County Council was represented by Martin Phillips and Surrey County Council represented by Helyn Clack, the Cabinet Member for Community Services in Surrey.

The joint service aims to provide a better quality service to consumers, businesses and our partners, building on the strengths and successes of the current teams. We will have access to a wider range of expertise and capacity to create a stronger, more resilient service. The joint service will have greater impact and influence locally, regionally and nationally and will be more innovative in developing new services and protecting residents.

Local Priorities Budget

The Local Priorities Budget is the funding provided for members to allocate in their communities via the County Council's LAFs. It is with regret that, in the current period of austerity, I have had to reduce the amount by £100,000 to £780,000 from 2015-16. The apportionment of this budget across the 19 Local Areas had not been reviewed since the original transportation monies were allocated in 2008. In applying the reduction, I have taken the opportunity to review the total allocation of this budget using a formula developed by our Research Team based upon:

- Local population
- The risk of being vulnerable
- Accessibility and transport
- Health, ageing and social isolation
- Social cohesion

The new allocations will provide a base budget of £30,000 per local area, and distribute the remaining balance by the needs-based formula, illustrated below.

Local Area	Local Priorities Allocation (£30k min. per LAF)
Amersham	£40,100
Beaconsfield	£38,300
Beeches	£40,400
Buckingham	£39,900
The Chalfonts	£38,700
Chepping Wye Valley	£41,200
Chesham & Chiltern Villages	£44,200
Gerrards Cross & Denham	£39,500
Gt Brickhill, Wing & Ivinghoe	£39,500
The Missendens	£38,300
Greater Aylesbury	£51,700
Haddenham & Long Crendon	£39,200
High Wycombe	£52,000
NW Chilterns	£39,600
SW Chilterns & Marlow	£41,500
Waddesdon	£37,900
Wendover	£38,800
Wexham and Ivers	£41,100
Winslow and District	£38,000
Total	£780,000

Community Safety

Safer Bucks Plan

The Safer Bucks Plan for 2015/16 identifies priorities in some new and emerging crime and disorder areas such as fraud, cyber-crime, exploitation of children and adults whilst retaining focus on key areas such as domestic violence and substance misuse. The Plan is due to be approved by mid-April and will be a published document, available to all. The County Community Safety Team will then draw together the actions that will sit under the plan, and are shared across the broader partnership.

Project Evolve

Project Evolve, which provides housing support for IOM offenders and other probation clients with an acquisitive crime background, has been extended for a further 11 months until 31 March 2016. A variation to contract has also been applied so that Evolve also includes the Wycombe Connections Floating Support contract, which provides 5 dispersed flats owned by Paradigm. A pre-tenancy waiting list is also managed by Connection Floating Support where selected probation clients are prepared for upcoming tenancies. WDC provide 2 Band B nomination rights per year.

Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Awareness Campaign

During the week commencing 24 November 2014, Community Safety at BCC delivered the biggest Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) awareness campaign of recent years. The reporting of incidents of DVA in Buckinghamshire has been increasing year on year for the past 5 years, but 2014 experienced the highest increase in reports of DVA incidents in recent years. In particular, the final week of November (24-30) experienced an above average increase of 42%. The campaign itself was delivered through roadshows and media, one of which was Mix 96 advertising. Due to the success of this campaign we have used Mix 96 advertising between 09 February 2015 and 29 March 2015 to build on reporting and awareness of DVA.

MARTIN PHILLIPS
CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT