

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 28 MARCH 2013
title: 'THINK JESSICA' CAMPAIGN
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: BILL ALKER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To make Members aware of the 'Think Jessica' campaign aimed at awareness raising of scams, particularly aimed at protecting the vulnerable and the elderly in our area.
- 1.2 To gauge Parish's support for an awareness raising event to be staged in the Ribble Valley in July 2013.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Community Objectives – One of the Council's stated ambitions is to keep the area safe and healthy. By protecting elderly and vulnerable people from scams, we will be fulfilling this ambition.
 - Corporate Priorities –
 - Other Considerations –

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As a Council we receive a number of consumer alerts from Trading Standards across a wide variety of scams perpetrated in Lancashire.
- 2.2 These are emailed to Parish Councils, Councillors and staff on a regular basis.
- 2.3 There are real concerns from Trading Standards that elderly and vulnerable residents in Ribble Valley are being targeted by professional scammers.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 We have been alerted to the Think Jessica campaign which has been running since 2007. It is a registered charity supported by numerous agencies including Trading Standards, Police and Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 3.2 It is committed to raising awareness of the danger and financial implications caused by postal and telephone scams.
- 3.3 As well as the agencies listed at 3.1 above, the campaign is promoted by national organisations such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, Action Fraud, the Trading Standards Institute and the Metropolitan Police.
- 3.4 Further details can be found at www.thinkjessica.com. A briefing pack is enclosed as an Appendix to this report.

- 3.5 Primarily the target audience for scams is older customers and consumers across all social groups.
- 3.6 Anyone can be affected by scams as they are customised to fit the profile of the recipient.
- 3.7 Lancashire residents lose around £64 million pounds to fraud every year and this is money which is being used to fund serious crime.
- 3.8 An example of the breakdown of scams in Lancashire is as follows:
- Prize draws - 72.4%
 - Psychics - 18.7%
 - Lottery - 3.6%
 - Charity - 2.6%
 - Phishing - 1.0%
 - Medical - 0.6%
 - Money transfer - 0.6%
 - Fraud - 0.3%
 - Home working - 0.1%
 - Chain letters - 0.1%
- 3.9 The idea now is to try to gauge support from parishes and agencies for the staging of a Think Jessica event, probably in Ribble Valley Town Hall during July 2013.
- 3.10 Other agencies who we need to contact would be Age concern, registered social landlords, Victim Support as well as the Police, Trading Standards and Citizens Advice Bureau.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – The budget will need to be identified for campaign materials, accommodation and catering – probably £1500.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – No implications identified.
 - Political – No implications identified.
 - Reputation – By raising awareness of scams this will enhance the governance aspect of the Council’s work.
 - Equality & Diversity – It is important we get the message out to all our customers.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 People in Lancashire and in Ribble Valley in particular are increasingly falling victim to scams.
- 5.2 Think Jessica is a national campaign which raises awareness of the ways which people can fall victim to scams.

- 5.3 By raising awareness, particularly amongst the elderly and vulnerable, it is hoped that people will be more aware and better equipped to avoid scams in the future.
- 5.4 Gain support for the staging of a Think Jessica event in Ribble Valley Town Hall during July 2013 subject to funding being identified.

BILL ALKER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Briefing Notes on the Think Jessica campaign.

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF: BA/EL/280313/PARISH