



**Surrey County Council's Local  
Committee  
22 September 2006  
Trading Standards Service**

**KEY ISSUE:**

The service provided by Trading Standards in Runnymede during 2005/06 and the challenges and issues we face in 2006/07.

**SUMMARY:**

Community Safety is the essence of our work. Following the Business Delivery Review undertaken by Surrey County Council, Trading Standards has emerged with approximately a 15% reduction in staff numbers. This has inevitably forced some changes in the delivery of our work.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**To note the initiatives being taken by the Trading Standards Service.**

## **1. Performance Highlights**

- 1.0 During the year to date the service received the following awards:
- Brindley Medal – Highly Commended - for the innovative and high profile regional approach to tackling doorstep crime.
  - Trading Standards Institute award for the “Press Campaign of the year” for making a national impact with the “House of Horrors” campaign which generated £4M worth of positive publicity for the County Council.
- Other performance highlights include:
- 1.1 The public launch of the new Consumer Direct South East consumer call centre took place (handling simple advice requests, and referring complex cases, vulnerable people and issues requiring intervention, to Trading Standards). The trend throughout the County has been for an increase in complaints by about 50%.
- 1.2 Trading Standards contributed 2 full time staff to the 4 Surrey Together Teams last year. The Team has been extremely proactive in reducing antisocial behaviour of young people. A programme of 203 undercover test purchases was carried out in the County, to reveal whether shopkeepers were illegally selling alcohol or cigarettes to young people. The results were that 35 shops were found to sell to youngsters. 1 shop was prosecuted in Runnymede for selling alcohol to a 14 year old volunteer.
- 1.3 The Rapid Action Team tackles the scourge of rogue traders who operate by cold-calling on elderly and vulnerable residents. The Team meets the threat posed by these traders by confronting them and disrupting how they work. In Runnymede, the Team was called out 17 times in 2005/6 to assist local residents in respect of transactions totalling £40,000. Countywide, we provided an immediate response and support for residents in their own home on 45 occasions, saving them £128,256
- 1.4 Following the public launch of the Buy with Confidence approved trader scheme – membership is continuing to rise steadily and there has been increasing demand from local business and residents.
- 1.5 Launch of “no cold calling zones” in Guildford in partnership with Surrey Police and Neighbourhood Watch. This has led to a reduction in distraction burglary and doorstep crime in the area.

## **2.0 Enforcement activity**

- 2.1 There have been excellent enforcement successes; the first use of an ASBO (anti-social behaviour order) for a doorstep cold calling roofer who targeted and intimidated vulnerable elderly people; the first use of Proceeds of Crime legislation by the service, leading to the forfeiture of £350,000, and imprisonment, for those behind a major car clocking conspiracy.

- 2.2 Out of 74 investigations last year, 9 traders in Runnymede had enforcement action taken against them for serious legal infringements. These included 2 instances of spirit substitution, a clocked car, a trader claiming to be SCC approved, and sale of pornographic videos.
- 2.3 Trading Standards led a successful bid for additional funding from the DTI to create two new regional “Scambuster” teams.
- 2.4 The Service has also provided proactive educational work, which has helped to reinforce the message that residents should not buy at the door. A performance of “Trickster” the educational musical was held at Spelthorne Village Hall, and was attended by residents from the Runnymede Age Concern area. 25 educational talks were delivered to elderly groups in Surrey. 1460 schoolchildren were educated by our officers in schools.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

- 3.1 All of the above has been achieved in the challenging climate of the Business Delivery Review. Certain areas of service have regrettably been cut. There is no longer a Mobile Advice Centre, and there are insufficient resources to carry out a “House of Horrors” project in the current year. The service ended the year smaller and restructured, but still an effective holistic service, keen to face the challenges of the future.

<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Surriya Subramaniam</b>
<b>LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Surriya Subramaniam</b>
<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>	<b>01372 371764</b>
<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>	<b>None</b>