

## SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE - TANDRIDGE

Friday 4 December 2009

Place: District Council Offices, RH8 0BT

Time: 10:15am

**Organisation:****Trading Standards****Attendee(s):**

**Steve Harrison, Senior Trading Standards Officer  
Economy and Environment Team**

**What role does your organisation play in improving community safety?**

The vision is "Confident Consumers, Trusted Traders". Trading Standards works towards the goal of helping consumers feel safe, confident and empowered when buying goods and services, whilst at the same time supporting and educating reputable businesses and tackling rogue trading practices, contributing to the reduction of crime and disorder in Surrey.

Trading Standards is a relatively small service, serving all 11 Districts and Boroughs within Surrey from its office in Leatherhead. The service has 64 full time equivalents and a total budget of £2.59m. There are four front line service delivery teams:

**Investigations** – wide range of investigations under criminal and civil legislation using intelligence from approximately 2,400 referrals from Consumer Direct every month.

**Safer and Stronger Communities** – tackles doorstep crime, rogue traders and supports vulnerable victims. Works to prevent the illegal sale of age-restricted products to young people, including alcohol and tobacco.

**Health and Well Being** – ensures that food meets legal compositional standards and is honestly labelled and advertised. Works to facilitate and promote healthy eating choices. Works to ensure animal health and welfare and prevent animal disease outbreaks.

**Economy and Environment** – supports Surrey businesses providing information and advice to help them meet their legal responsibilities. This Team also runs the 'Buy with Confidence' approved trader scheme.

### Recent successes

- Achieved savings of 5% following a restructuring of the service while at the same time undertaking additional duties.
- Created capacity to carry out more Financial Investigations, recruiting an experienced Accredited Financial Investigator to maximise the impact of Proceeds of Crime legislation in seizing criminal assets to ensure that crime does not pay.
- Recruited a full time Intelligence Officer to assist in the targeting of resources.
- Continued the downward trend of illegal alcohol sales to under 18s to 13% of test purchase attempts from 16% and 18% in the previous two years.
- Played a key role to secure additional £2m in Government funding over 3 years to continue an innovative Scambusters project covering 61 local authorities across the East of England, the South East, and London.
- Continued focus on protecting elderly and vulnerable residents from doorstep rogue traders producing over £165,000 in direct savings for vulnerable residents.
- Increased the coverage of homes protected by 'No Cold Calling Zones' from 3% to 5.6% of households, and received extremely positive feedback from residents in these zones
- Increased the number of approved traders in the 'Buy With Confidence' scheme to over 350 businesses.
- Assisted local businesses on 7000 occasions through inspections and providing advice and information. Among businesses, our satisfaction rating is 79%.
- Received approximately 29,000 notifications and referrals of consumer complaints from the regional Consumer Direct call centre. Among consumers, our satisfaction rating is 83%.

### LOCAL INITIATIVES

#### Buy With Confidence approved trader scheme

This was created to meet a need and in response to customer demand. It is a regional scheme covering much of the south of England. There are over 350 approved businesses in Surrey, of which 18 are in Tandridge. This valuable service is now charging businesses for membership and as a result is moving towards being self-financing. A full list of members is available from [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk) and is searchable by postcode and trade type. We continue to raise awareness of the scheme and in Tandridge a promotional flyer accompanied council tax bills to householders.

**Rapid Response to doorstep crime**

By changing policies, procedures and working practices and by building improved links with partners, particularly Surrey Police, we are now able to respond immediately to incidents of doorstep deception much more effectively. We operate a “Rapid Action Team” who can attend residents’ homes if they feel they are being ripped off by someone who has been to their home. The officers will intervene, dealing with the traders or conmen to ensure the resident is being treated fairly, and giving them support and advice.

**No Cold Calling Zones (NCCZs)**

A ‘No Cold Calling Zone’ is a defined area, often linked to Neighbour Watch, in which residents have stated they do not wish to receive unsolicited visits to their homes from businesses. The zones are set up by Surrey Trading Standards working with the local Police and the local Borough or District Councils. The main aim of the zones is to reduce the number of unwanted and uninvited callers to households soliciting services or selling goods, which in turn reduces the number of offences committed against Surrey residents. The zones also serve to educate householders and empower them to say “no” to cold callers.

There is currently one ‘No Cold Calling Zone’ in Tandridge, covering Woldingham Village. Information about the zones and how they operate can be found on the Surrey County Council website [www.surreycc.gov.uk/tradingstandards](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/tradingstandards).

**Underage Sales**

We attempt to reduce the illegal sale of age-restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco. This is achieved through sharing intelligence with partners, educating traders and engaging in controlled test purchases using volunteer young people. In Tandridge since April 2009, we have attempted to make 29 test purchases of alcohol and on 2 occasions sales were made to young people. There were three attempts made to purchase fireworks with one sale to a young child and 3 attempts at cigarettes resulting in no sales. We work closely with the local Licensing Officer and with the Police. Trading Standards also play an active role in the Surrey Tobacco Alliance with Steve Playle, one of the Trading Standards Team Leaders, being the Chair of this multi agency group which strives to reduce smoking prevalence rates.

### Food Standards

We have recently launched the 'Eat Out Eat Well' initiative. This is an initiative to encourage restaurants and other premises selling food to offer healthier choices and healthier cooking practices. Businesses that want to sign up to the scheme will be assessed by us and be accredited with a bronze, silver or gold award depending on their levels of hygiene and menu choice. The first 'Eat Out Eat Well' achiever was actually in Surrey Heath, HMP Coldingley, so perhaps, in this case, it should be called 'Eat In Eat Well'. So far there are 2 gold, 16 silver and 13 bronze members. There is one silver member in Tandridge – The Carpenters Arms in Oxted.

### Aspirations For The Future

The following are the top issues for the service:

- Doorstep crime - we need to work even harder to protect residents, especially the most vulnerable, enhancing prevention and also bringing more criminals to justice. To be intelligence led, target our work and crime hotspots, and continue our liaison with Surrey Police.
- Age restricted products – drive down illegal sales to young people, thereby contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour in communities and reducing the damaging health implications for young people.
- Protecting residents and businesses from the impact of the recession and the increase in unfair and deceptive practices, and scams, which develop rapidly during such times.
- Increase membership of BWC (Buy With Confidence) to 450 members.
- Work in the area of counterfeit goods which may pose a safety risk to consumers
- Increase the number of homes covered by No Cold Calling Zones.