

Supplementary Agenda

Buckinghamshire Council and Surrey County Council Joint Trading Standards Service Committee



Date & time	Place	Contact
Monday, 4 November 2024 at 2.00 pm	Paralympic Room at the Gateway Offices, Bucks	Joss Butler, Committee Manager joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

7 JOINT SERVICE BUDGET

(Pages 3
- 6)

The Joint Committee regularly reviews and sets the Service budget.

The information provided shows that the Joint Service budget is forecasting a break even position against the budget for 2024-25 agreed by the Joint Committee in April 2024. However, within this there are some pressures (income) being offset by holding vacant posts. Legal costs remain uncertain.

The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for April 2025 onwards is currently being undertaken in both partner local authorities and the Service approach is being developed in consultation with the Trading Standards Board.

8 TRADING STANDARDS VAPES ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

(Pages 7
- 18)

Vapes are a key tool to stop adults from smoking tobacco. They are much safer than smoking tobacco and can be used to effectively manage nicotine addiction as adult smokers seek to quit smoking tobacco. However, the market for disposable vapes grew very rapidly and the Service continues activity to tackle the significant problems in this market. Of particular concern is nicotine addiction in children who previously did not smoke tobacco. Latest data shows 7.2% of 11–17-year-olds vaped regularly or occasionally in April 2024, compared to 3.2% in 2021 with 1.9% having never previously smoked tobacco .

The report in Annex A follows up previous reports brought to the Joint Committee last year and in May 2024 covering the two key issues from a Trading Standards enforcement perspective: the problems relating to the safety of the vapes themselves, affecting all users; and the sharp rise in under 18's (who did not previously smoke tobacco) vaping.

The report at Annex A covers some of the latest policy and proposed legislative changes as well as the work the Service has been doing in this

area.

9 OFFICIAL FOOD STANDARDS AND FEED CONTROLS SERVICE PLAN 2024-2025

(Pages 19 - 34)

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires Trading Standards services to produce an annual Official Food Standards and Feed Controls Service Plan (known as the 'FSA Plan'). The Plan is given as Annex A.

The overall structure follows guidance from the FSA and includes the necessary facts and statistics to ensure the document is valid as a statutory plan.

This 'statutory' Plan is required to be submitted to the 'relevant Member Forum for approval'. In approving this Plan, the Committee will be establishing a framework that will meet the expectations of the Food Standards Agency.

Whilst the FSA Plan is a public document and will be made available via the website (and in printed version to anyone on request) we will produce additional information for the public in April in a more resident friendly and accessible format which reflects the work of the Service in this area for the past year.

10 2024/25 HALF YEAR PERFORMANCE (APRIL TO END SEPTEMBER)

(Pages 35 - 46)

The Buckinghamshire Council and Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service Joint Committee is asked to note the summary of performance of the service from April 2024 to end-September 2024 (Annex A).

The information provided shows that the Service is performing well across the range of indicators where data is available. There are three new indicators where data is not yet fully available, and this is under development.

**Terence Herbert
Chief Executive**

Published: 30 October 2024

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2024

**LEAD OFFICER: AMANDA POOLE
HEAD OF TRADING STANDARDS**

SUBJECT: JOINT SERVICE BUDGET

1.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- 1.1 The Joint Committee regularly reviews and sets the Service budget.
- 1.2 The information provided shows that the Joint Service budget is forecasting a break even position against the budget for 2024-25 agreed by the Joint Committee in April 2024. However, within this there are some pressures (income) being offset by holding vacant posts. Legal costs remain uncertain.
- 1.3 The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for April 2025 onwards is currently being undertaken in both partner local authorities and the Service approach is being developed in consultation with the Trading Standards Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Trading Standards Joint Committee:
 - 2.1.1 notes the forecast outturn for the joint service budget for 2024/25

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is required by the Inter Authority Agreement which underpins the service to:
 - a) Maintain financial oversight of the Service and ensure sound financial management.

4.0 BUDGET 23/24:

- 4.1 The costs of the Joint Service are divided between the partner Local Authorities in the proportion: 34% Buckinghamshire and 66% Surrey, which includes any under or over spends.



- 4.2 There are several factors which introduce volatility to the budget. The service has an income budget of £658k, equivalent to 23.9% of its gross budget. It is challenging to accurately predict income and it's timing especially where costs are recovered from prosecutions, or where market conditions are changing.
- 4.3 In terms of the larger scale economic situation, including the way that local authority budgets are under pressure, we have particularly seen the impact of this on our Primary Authority Partnerships, including with our network of Primary Authority advice providers (other local authorities). We are forecasting £45k less income compared to budget for the year which we are offsetting through holding vacant posts.
- 4.4 In relation to court outcomes that at times lead to costs being recovered, this remains unpredictable. Between 2020 and the start of this year we had seen no trials for more complex cases go ahead, instead they were repeatedly adjourned – delaying the costs. However, in positive operational news, this year we have had two longer trials begin (one went the full 5 days before the defendant was found guilty, in the other the defendant pleaded guilty on day 1). The uncertainty around this adds to the difficulty of accurately forecasting court related costs and affects the recovery of those costs. The Service manages its' budget closely to even out the most volatile factors where it is possible.

2024/25 Forecast Outturn

- 4.5 The agreed budget for 2024/25 totals £2,753,000.
- 4.6 The current forecast is to breakeven. However, within this there are some pressures (income) being offset by holding vacant posts. Legal costs remain uncertain.

Summary by expenditure type	Full Year 24/25 Budget £'000	End of Year Forecast £'000
Employee related spend	3,143	3,058
Non-staffing expenditure	267	307
EXPENDITURE:	3,410	3,365
INCOME:	-658	-613
Total Net Expenditure	2,752	2,752
<u>Buckinghamshire Council Contribution</u>	936	936
<u>Surrey County Council Contribution</u>	1,817	1,817

2025/26 Planning

- 4.7 Medium Term Financial Planning is underway in both Councils, but it is too early in the process to have a final proposed budget for the Joint Committee to consider, this will be brought to the spring meeting. However, in the meantime the TS Board have been and will continue to be engaged in developing budget ideas.

5.0 CONSULTATION:

- 5.1 No external consultation has taken place. However, finance teams from both partner Councils are involved in developing budget proposals as part of the medium term financial planning which will be brought back to this committee at the Spring meeting.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 All significant risks affecting the service (which include items beyond budget) are regularly considered by the management team (two monthly for red and amber risks, 6 monthly for green risks).
- 6.2 Where risks become higher, these are shared with the Trading Standards Board for awareness and discussion.

7.0 FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Service has delivered all elements of the original business case. Reasons for the forecast budget outturn position for 2024/25 are given above.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The 2015 Inter-Authority Agreement provides the legal framework within which the Service operates.
- 9.2 There are no specific legal issues that need to be drawn to the attention of the Committee.

10.0 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY

- 10.1 The budget forecast outturn being reported will not impact on residents or staff with different protected characteristics, as such an Equality Impact Assessment has not been included.

11.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 11.1 The budget will continue to be monitored and managed by the Service Management team and will be reported back to the Joint Committee at each of its meetings.

REPORT DETAILS

Contact Officer(s):

Mrs Amanda Poole, Head of Trading Standards 07984 458 679

Consulted:

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

ENDS

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2024

LEAD OFFICER: AMANDA POOLE, HEAD OF TRADING STANDARDS

SUBJECT: TRADING STANDARDS VAPES ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

1.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- 1.1 Vapes are a key tool to stop adults from smoking tobacco. They are much safer than smoking tobacco and can be used to effectively manage nicotine addiction as adult smokers seek to quit smoking tobacco. However, the market for disposable vapes grew very rapidly and the Service continues activity to tackle the significant problems in this market. Of particular concern is nicotine addiction in children who previously did not smoke tobacco. Latest data shows 7.2% of 11–17-year-olds vaped regularly or occasionally in April 2024, compared to 3.2% in 2021 with 1.9% having never previously smoked tobacco¹.
- 1.2 The report in Annex A follows up previous reports brought to the Joint Committee last year and in May 2024 covering the two key issues from a Trading Standards enforcement perspective: the problems relating to the safety of the vapes themselves, affecting all users; and the sharp rise in under 18's (who did not previously smoke tobacco) vaping.
- 1.3 The report at Annex A covers some of the latest policy and proposed legislative changes as well as the work the Service has been doing in this area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Trading Standards Joint Committee:
- 2.1.1 notes the latest policy approaches and considers any local approach it wishes the Service to take.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

¹ Survey by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH): [Use-of-vapes-among-young-people-in-Great-Britain-2024.pdf](https://www.ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Use-of-vapes-among-young-people-in-Great-Britain-2024.pdf) (ash.org.uk)



3.1 The Joint Committee is required by the Inter Authority Agreement which underpins the service to:

a) Ensure effective performance of the Service.

4.0 Vapes Enforcement - Details:

4.1 Details are given in the report attached as Annex A

5.0 CONSULTATION:

5.1 No external consultation has taken place. Trading Standards is working closely with the Public Health Teams in both partner Councils on this issue.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 All significant risks affecting the service (which include items beyond budget and performance) are regularly considered by the management team (two monthly for red and amber risks, 6 monthly for green risks).

6.2 Where risks become higher, these are shared with the Trading Standards Board for awareness and discussion.

7.0 FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The report explores how money announced by the Government to support Trading Standards enforcement is being spent and touches on potential new funding that was broadly announced by the previous government but has not been confirmed in any detail by the current Government.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The 2015 Inter-Authority Agreement provides the legal framework within which the Service operates. As set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, the Joint Committee is responsible for ensuring the effective management of the Service.

8.2 The report includes information regarding likely new legislation requiring enforcement which is related to vapes.

9.0 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY

9.1 Tobacco smoking prevalence is greater in lower socio-economic groups and adds to health inequalities. Having a safer alternative to smoking tobacco will help to reduce those health inequalities over the longer term. However, the sharp rise in non-smoking children taking up vaping, and becoming addicted to nicotine with unknown long-term health impacts are of considerable concern.

10.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 The Service is carefully monitoring the national policy developments and will be alert to funding that becomes available so that we can access this where appropriate to undertake a higher level of enforcement in this area.

REPORT DETAILS

Contact Officer(s):

Mrs Amanda Poole, Head of Trading Standards 07984 458 679

Consulted:

Annexes:

Annex A: Trading Standards Vapes Enforcement Update Report – October 2024

Sources/background papers:

ENDS

This page is intentionally left blank

Trading Standards Vapes Enforcement Update

This paper is an update on the latest position with vapes, both at a national policy and funding level, and an update on our local work related to vapes.

National Position:

Following the previous Government's intention of "Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping" the new Government appear to be following the same approach, and the Tobacco and Vapes Bill was in the Kings Speech in July. On 24th October 2024 the Government announced a ban on single use disposable vapes, intended to come into force from June 2025. This appears to be in addition to the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, although we await confirmation of this and further detail about the Tobacco and Vapes bill such as when that legislation will come into force. [Tobacco and Vapes Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

Funding associated with the new legislation has not been confirmed and the latest suggestions are that it is part of the Spending Review, so we are unlikely to have confirmation of what funding may be available for what purposes until Spring 2025.

Where the opportunity arises, representations will be made to the Government via the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) as to how any money allocated could be maximised. The previous most likely options suggested that the funding would not be allocated to each LA individually.

Separately Trading Standards are able to make use of a small amount of funding from central government through 'Op Joseph' for specific elements related to vapes enforcement. We continue to make use of this for storage and disposal costs, which are significant considering the complexity of the products and the need for care in both areas to avoid fires and health risks of unknown chemical components of illegal vapes.

Vapes continue to regularly make national media stories and headlines including these in the last couple of months:

[Number of UK adults who vape reaches record level, report finds | Health policy | The Guardian](#)

[Northallerton man jailed after sex abuse in exchange for vapes - BBC News](#)

[Sharp rise in vaping among young adults who never regularly smoked - BBC News](#)

[Steep fall in young smokers in past decade - BBC News](#)

[Is vaping bad for you and how are the rules changing? - BBC News](#)

[Call for crackdown on illegal youth vaping sales - BBC News](#)

[How a 14-year-old boy became addicted to Spice through vapes - BBC News](#)

[Pupils unwittingly smoking spiked vapes University of Bath study finds - BBC News](#)

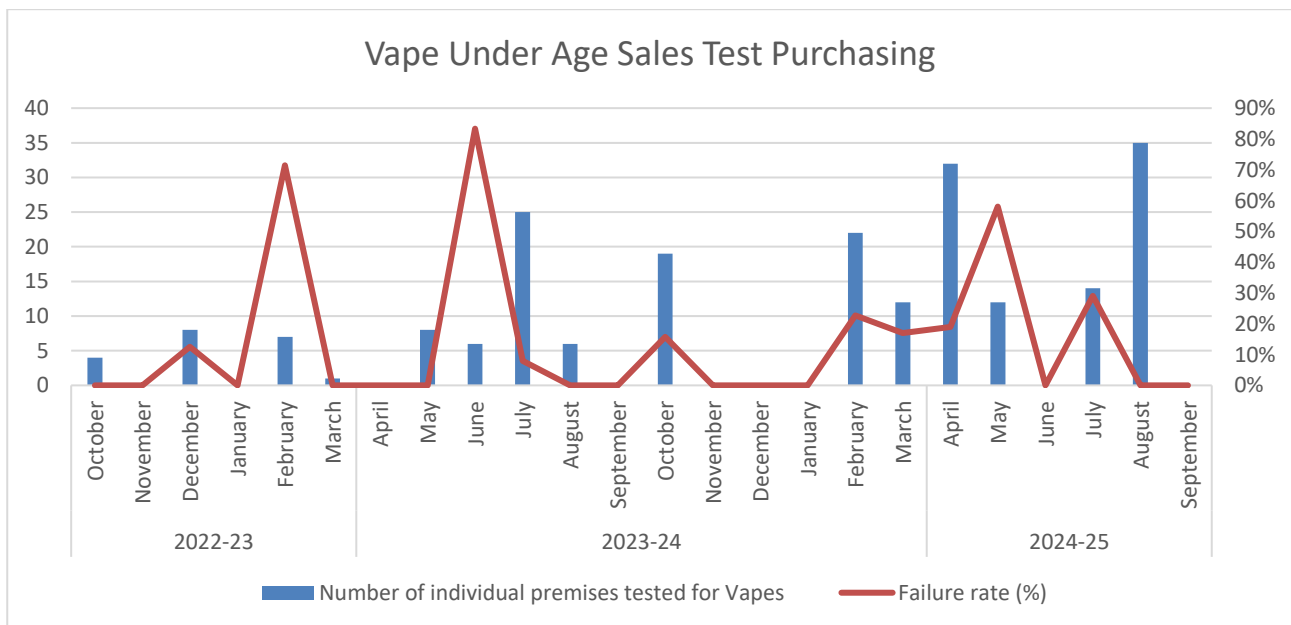


Local Position:

From April 2024 to the end of September, locally we have received 72 complaints about illegal vapes and alleged underage sales of vapes (compared to 256 last financial year and 214 in the previous year). These reports have been received from a mixture of residents and partner organisations such as the police. Although beginning to show a reduction, these numbers remain starkly higher than any other area of our work including other age restricted products.

The Service is continuing to do a high level of underage test purchasing of vapes (92 so far this year, compared to 98 in 23/24 and 24 in 22/23). The failure rates vary between operations which may have different test purchasers and may be in different locations. However, there are promising signs that retailers are beginning to pay this issue more attention with no sales across 35 attempts in the summer in Surrey and some qualitative feedback in Bucks suggesting that they can't sell to under 18's because they know Trading Standards are checking up. More test purchases are planned to keep awareness of underage sales at the centre of vape sellers minds.

In the graph below the blocks show the number of attempts made each month of the last two years by an underage volunteer to buy vapes – the numbers are given on the scale on the left-hand side. The line relates to the percentages on the scale on the right-hand side and shows the failure rate (what percentage of shops sold vapes to an underage volunteer).



Since April, 11 warnings have been given to premises who have sold vapes to under 18's. All these are or will be followed up with further test purchases to ensure that they have

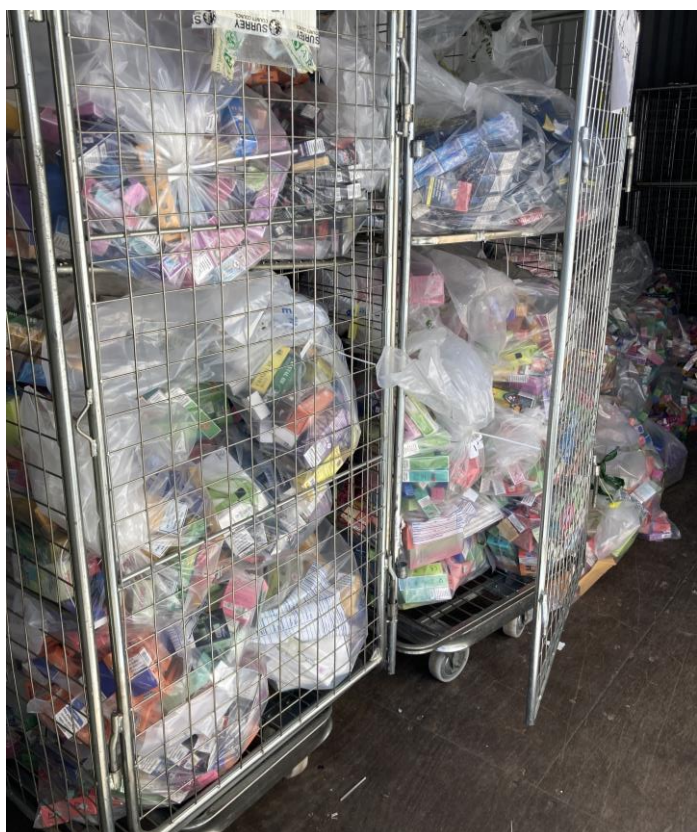


taken on board the warning and adjusted their selling accordingly. A further three cases are in the investigation stage.

Following the success of having a fixed term officer to focus on the enforcement of illegal tobacco, vapes and age restricted products in Bucks funded by Buckinghamshire Council's Public Health Team, Surrey's Public Health Team have also offered funding for an equivalent post in Surrey. We are trying to recruit a fixed term officer but at the time of writing the report have not yet been successful finding a suitable candidate.

We are conducting frequent enforcement activity around vapes, not only carrying out under-age test purchases but also looking for illegal vapes for sale which are then seized to remove them from the marketplace. This latter activity is carried out in local retail premises and in other locations which we become aware of. We work closely with partners, including the police, licensing teams and schools, to share information and sometimes to conduct enforcement operations. We also now have access to sniffer dogs who have learnt to identify vapes enabling us to locate hidden vapes in the same way as we have been doing for some time to identify hidden tobacco.

Some of the illegal vapes seized by the Service were recently taken away for destruction and recycling:



13 investigations into illegal vapes as the primary issue of concern have been completed this year with advice / written warnings being the outcome in all cases so far, alongside which the businesses loses the seized vapes. As with underage sales, the Service carries out repeat checks on businesses where previous problems have been found and advice given to ensure this has been appropriately acted upon.

In two cases illegal vapes were found alongside illegal tobacco that was repeatedly being supplied by the two premises over a sustained period of time, and the illegal tobacco was hidden in a variety of sophisticated hides. These two businesses were shut for 3 months by court order and below is one of the local news articles that ran about it [Two shops selling illegal vapes shut down by council | Bucks Free Press](#):

Bucks Free Press

News Sport What's On Your Area Nostalgia E-Editions Announcements

News Coronavirus Crime Politics Opinion

Two shops selling illegal vapes shut down by council

26th July

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AYLESBURY



By Charlie Smith

Local Democracy Reporter

[Xhttps://twitter.com/CharlieSmithNQ](https://twitter.com/CharlieSmithNQ)

Share   

Two shops that sold illegal vapes and counterfeit cigarettes and tobacco in Aylesbury have been shut down by Buckinghamshire Council.



There are six investigations ongoing either where the situation is complex or where the illegal vapes have been found recently.

Sharing our work in this area with both residents and businesses to raise awareness of the issues remains important and below are some examples of social media posts about our activity:

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards · 3 May · 🌐

Our officers and a sniffer dog were very busy in High Wycombe yesterday on the trail of illicit tobacco and illegal vapes .

As you can see by the photo it was a successful day! Having sniffed it all out, the very smart sniffer dog proudly guards it .



Trading Standards @Bucks... · 23/08/2024 · 🌐

#DidYouKnow 20.5% of 11 to 17 years olds tried **vaping** in 2023

This week we were out with a volunteer and @SurreyPolice to see if any shops sold to an underage person.

Happy to report that no-one did!

Report illegal tobacco/vapes or underage sales: orlo.uk/NOIIX



Trading Standards @Bucks... · 06/08/2024 · 🌐

Success in cracking down on illicit vapes!

@SurreyFRS Chief Fire Officer, Dan joined us for the day in Addlestone recently, where we seized 239 illegal vapes and imported food with unauthorised additives.

Here's how to report illegal **tobacco** and vapes: orlo.uk/I368v



Trading Standards @Bucks... · 02/09/2024 · 🌐

We were out with our colleagues from @Thames Valley Police in Aylesbury last week, on the look out for illegal **tobacco** and vapes.

As you can see we were once again successful!




We continue to support schools in Surrey by providing information through the Healthy Schools initiative and asking them to contact us if they have an issue with vapes they would like us to support them with.

[Advice and wider support - managing vapes in schools | Healthy Surrey](#)

We are also working with our Public Health colleagues in Buckinghamshire as part of the whole system approach on a pilot scheme to identify how we can work with businesses near schools to support them to not supply illegal vapes, tobacco and alcohol.

[Vaping | SchoolsWeb \(buckscc.gov.uk\)](#)

The Tobacco Control strategy groups in each authority have offered us the opportunity to discuss information sharing with the smoking cessation support organisations and this has yielded some useful information but we continue to work to improve the channels to support this process.

We continue to provide advice to businesses on their obligations to sell legal vapes and only to over 18's. This advice may be direct to a single business or through our Primary Authority Partners, particularly the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS).

Following the [advice to their members](#) about selling vapes we have recently been working with the Association of Convenience Stores on using digital proof of age, which has been evolving over recent years and is viewed as a more effective and modern option for ensuring age restricted goods are sold to the right people. The precise timing of the solution coming to market is yet to be fully confirmed but to ensure readiness, we have been working closely with The Association of Convenience stores to add to an existing suite of 14 guides to develop assured advice for their members clarifying the acceptance of appropriate digital proof of age.

This solution will enable retail members to check the validity of digital proof of age using a common approach. Retailers will be able to train colleagues on that common approach, and ACS can issue guidance on how to conduct those checks and complete a transaction using digital proof of age. ACS are aiming to produce the industry-standard guidance that may also be used by other retailers / acceptors of proof of age and are working together with the national Proof of Age Standards Scheme on this.

Issuing guidance in this way means local regulators don't need to individually review it in each shop as it has been done centrally, they just need to ensure it is being implemented correctly, thus reducing the burden on both businesses and enforcers.



“We enjoy working with trading standards and our members really value the high quality and reliable information we can give through this partnership. We also benefit from a different perspective on regulation and we find that their input is extremely helpful when we are developing new ideas” **James Lowman ACS**



This page is intentionally left blank

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2024

**LEAD OFFICER: AMANDA POOLE, HEAD OF TRADING STANDARDS /
ANDREW POLLARD, DEPUTY TRADING STANDARDS
MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: OFFICIAL FOOD STANDARDS AND FEED CONTROLS
SERVICE PLAN 2024-2025**

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires Trading Standards services to produce an annual Official Food Standards and Feed Controls Service Plan (known as the 'FSA Plan'). The Plan is given as Annex A.

The overall structure follows guidance from the FSA and includes the necessary facts and statistics to ensure the document is valid as a statutory plan.

This 'statutory' Plan is required to be submitted to the 'relevant Member Forum for approval'. In approving this Plan, the Committee will be establishing a framework that will meet the expectations of the Food Standards Agency.

Whilst the FSA Plan is a public document and will be made available via the website (and in printed version to anyone on request) we will produce additional information for the public in April in a more resident friendly and accessible format which reflects the work of the Service in this area for the past year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

The Joint Committee approves the Official Food Standards and Feed Controls Service Plan 2024-2025 (the FSA Plan).

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The approval of the Plan will meet the requirements of the FSA Framework Agreement and Code of Practice. It will also provide direction and structure for food standards and feed controls that will help to protect consumers and businesses in Buckinghamshire and Surrey.

DETAILS:

1. The Plan reflects the implementation of the revised risk scheme and Code of Practice that was introduced in June 2023. Our service participated in the pilot run by the FSA that developed the new scheme. It was not possible to integrate the effect of the risk scheme into our existing information management database so it was managed on a parallel basis using spreadsheets and we continue to do this. The FSA have begun work with our database provider to integrate the new scheme into the database with the aim that it will be useable from spring 2025 onwards.
2. The new scheme presents a more dynamic and targeted approach to risks posed by food businesses. The businesses have an inherent risk that can be adjusted on the basis of information and intelligence received, such as complaints, and then appropriate interventions can be considered. This requires us to review our risk profile on a more frequent basis and unlike the previous scheme risk can be changed in year which makes managing the work more challenging. It does however mean our work dealing with the greatest risks during the year is recognised by the FSA.
3. The focus of the FSA Plan continues to be on those food issues that most impact on the health, nutrition and economic welfare of Buckinghamshire and Surrey's consumers, particularly the vulnerable. With higher tier Councils having the role as the lead for Public Health, we are liaising with both the Directors of Public Health to ensure that interventions we carry out in this area are supporting this work appropriately. Where we provide consumer / business education and information, this is tied into the Public Health work being led by the Councils to ensure coherent messages.

4. CONSULTATION:

No external consultation has taken place. The draft Plan has been shared with the Trading Standards Board for consideration.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

If the service fails to provide controls deemed to be satisfactory to the Food Standards Agency's requirements the FSA could decide to provide the

service for the authorities and impose the cost of this provision on the Councils. In addition to the monetary issue there could also be a substantial reputational loss.

6. Financial and Value for Money Implications

The provisional resource allocated to the provision of the controls is £252,645. This includes staff and sampling costs and is within the existing joint service budget.

7. Legal Implications

The Food Standards Agency is an independent government department overseeing the protection of public health in relation to food safety. Under s40 of the Food Safety Act 1990, the Joint Committee must have regard to any codes of practice (statutory guidance) published by the Food Standards Agency in determining a strategy for food standards work. The FSA plan at Annex A has been prepared to comply with this requirement. Failure to have in a place a compliant FSA plan may result in the Service being sanctioned by the FSA.

8. Equalities and Diversity

There are no implications from the Plan

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- The controls are currently being implemented by the service

Contact Officer:

Andrew Pollard – 01372 371680

Amanda Poole – 07984 458 679

Consulted:

Annexes:

Annex A: Official Food Standards and Feed Controls Plan 2024-2025

This page is intentionally left blank

Official Food Standards and Feed Controls Service Plan

2024 – 2025



CONTENTS:

Section		Page
1	Aims & Objectives	3
2	Background	6
3	Demands and Prioritisation	8
4	Liaison with Other Organisations	11
5	Food and Feedingstuffs Safety and Standards Promotion	12
6	Food Surveys & Projects	12
7	Organisational Structure	13
8	Enforcement Information	13
9	Quality Assessment	13
10	Review Against previous Plan	14
11	Resources	14
12	Staff Development Plan	15

1. Aims & Objectives

Our Service Priorities

The Trading Standards service exists to:

- protect individuals, communities and businesses from harm and financial loss
- help businesses to thrive by maintaining a fair trading environment
- improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities
- fulfil our statutory responsibilities to deliver consumer and public protection services across Buckinghamshire and Surrey

Our key actions: We will support the delivery of Buckinghamshire Council's strategic aims, and the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030.

1. Protecting the most vulnerable. Tackling fraudulent, illegal and unfair trading practices with a particular focus on disruptive activities.

2. Enabling businesses to get the help and support they need to thrive and grow. Delivering public protection through supporting businesses to comply with their legal responsibilities and ensuring a level playing field.

3. Improving wellbeing and public health; tackling the supply of unsafe, dangerous or age restricted products and working to maintain the integrity of the food chain from farm to fork, including food quality, nutrition, and animal health.

4. Actively promoting and contributing to a culture that generates a positive and inclusive environment and empowers the workforce, communities, and residents.

These aims and objectives align with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Strategy for 2022-27 which is **food you can trust**.

This means that:

- Food is safe
- Food is what it says it is
- Food is healthier and more sustainable

The work that we do will help support and deliver these outcomes within Buckinghamshire, Surrey and nationally through our Primary Authority Partnership work.

For animal feed work we will ensure we follow the priorities identified in the FSA strategy, namely

Priority 1: Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems

Priority 2: Effective monitoring of feed on farms

Priority 3: Effective monitoring of storage arrangements at feed premises

Priority 4: Verification of the accuracy of feed labelling

Priority 5: Effective monitoring of consignments of feed originating from non-EU countries, at points of entry

Food Hygiene Primary Production Priorities:

Priority 6: Effective identification, registration and inspection of food businesses producing higher-risk fresh produce operating at the level of primary production

2. Background

The merged service was created in 2015 and is managed by a Joint Committee which comprises Cabinet Members and Directors from both authorities.

The service covers the geographical areas of Buckinghamshire and Surrey although our Primary Authority Partnerships include businesses that have bases nationwide.

Surrey background

Surrey is the most urbanised shire county in England with 83% of inhabitants living in urban areas and yet 73% of land in Surrey is green belt and 25% is designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The County of Surrey is one of the most densely populated shire counties and is strongly influenced by its proximity to London. 85% of housing is in 15% of the county. 85% of the county is countryside, of which 38% is still farmed. Although Surrey is an affluent area, with earnings being 42% higher than the national average, it has areas which are disadvantaged and can be overlooked if specific measures are not taken. Business diversity is great, although there is little in terms of heavy industry.

The population of Surrey in 2021 was 1,203,108.

Buckinghamshire background

Buckinghamshire (excluding Milton Keynes) is a large rural county of 156,509 hectares close to London. The population was 553,100 in 2021.

The county is one of contrasts - the north is predominantly rural, with small market towns, whilst the south is more urbanised. The two largest centres of population are urban areas encompassing the towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe, with total populations of around 88,000 and 83,500 respectively. These urban areas accommodate nearly 40% of the total population. Over a quarter of Buckinghamshire is included within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty and a further third is protected as Metropolitan Green Belt, mostly in the south of the county. Within rural areas agriculture is the predominant land use, over 70% by area.

Business and the economy

We have established 93 Primary Authority relationships with food and feed related businesses and organisations and continue to raise awareness of this opportunity with other appropriate businesses.

Both Buckinghamshire and Surrey are areas of light industry and high commercial development. There are comparatively few large manufacturing premises but we have the administrative and decision making offices of some very substantial national and international food companies within the areas. These include such companies as Coca Cola, Waitrose, Premier Foods, Hovis Limited, Dairy Crest, Kerry Foods and Hill's Pet Nutrition. We also have partnerships with trade associations such as the Association of Convenience Stores and Health Food Manufacturers Association.

There are a significant number of transient importers of foodstuffs who change at regular intervals in Surrey due to the proximity of the London airports.

Service background

Responsibility for food enforcement is shared between two tiers of local government - County Council, Unitary and District/Borough councils. Buckinghamshire became a unitary authority in 2020 and Surrey has eleven district/borough councils.

Food liaison groups in Buckinghamshire and Surrey have representatives from each authority and there are forums to ensure appropriate coordination and cooperation on food issues. They meet regularly, every quarter.

Trading Standards is responsible for food standards, which includes food composition, ingredients and labelling of food. The Unitary, District and Borough Councils' Environmental Health services are responsible for matters of food safety, hygiene, cleanliness and the food borne causes of illness.

3. Demands and Prioritisation

In 2023-24 240 complaints and requests for advice were received across the service about food and feed issues

These food contacts will be considered in the context of the risk rating of the food business. If the risk remains the same the contact will be noted as intelligence.

In addition to this reactive demand, the Service carries out a similar proportion of proactive work in this area, which is described further in the Food Surveys and Projects section. This year we will plan to carry out interventions for food businesses assessed as being due an intervention before April 2025. It should be noted that the projects will also involve a variety of interventions such as visits and sampling.

We will also carry out the feedingstuffs visits and sampling that have been agreed as part of the National Trading Standards regional coordinated work in line with the priorities in the FSA National Enforcement Strategy. These help to deliver the necessary interventions that nationally help to guarantee food and feed exports.

Profile of food premises in Buckinghamshire and Surrey

The service has participated in the Food Standards Agency pilot scheme to develop the risk scheme that is now part of the Code of Practice. The scheme changes the way we are able to assess when food businesses need an intervention. A big difference is that risk can be changed within year to reflect increased risk and need for an intervention. The risk can be changed if we receive information, for instance a complaint about an allergen issue, that makes the risk to the marketplace higher and the scheme indicates when the intervention should be made. This means that our risk profile will undoubtedly change in year and the anticipated intervention profile will change accordingly. The indicated profile in the plan is a snapshot of anticipated risk and sometimes we will need to reprioritise our interventions. The risk matrix with intervention expectation is below. The Food Standards Agency are working with our information database provider to embed the new scheme into our electronic database but whilst this is under development we are using spreadsheets to identify our interventions.

Inherent Risk Profile	5	12 Months	24 Months	60 Months	72 Months	120 Months
	4	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	36 Months	48 Months	72 Months
	3	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months	60 Months
	2	Priority Intervention 3 Months	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months
	1	Priority Intervention 1 Month	Priority Intervention 3 Months	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months
		1	2	3	4	5
Compliance Assessment						

As at 1st April 2024:

Number of Food Businesses	22,383 (We are averaging 120 new food businesses a month)
Number of Manufacturers, Importers, Packers, and Processors	339
Number of Food Businesses due an intervention in 1 month	61
Number of Food Businesses due an intervention in 3 months	41
Number of Food Businesses due an intervention in 6 months	20
Number of Food Businesses due an intervention in 12 months	1288

Profile of feed premises in Buckinghamshire and Surrey

- Of the feedingstuffs premises the National Trading Standards Board risk methodology which determines the categories of premises we should visit has shown that we will need to visit 114 premises. Of the 92 inland inspections

and 22 high risk food primary producer businesses, 20 will be carried out by our officers, and 94 will be carried out by the Trading Standards South East (TSSE) contractor/s. Of the 12 farm-based premises all 12 will be carried out by our officers.

We have the resources to carry out the feedingstuffs visits as they will be funded by the Food Standards Agency.

4. Liaison with other organisations

We work in partnership with

- Other parts of the Councils, in particular our colleagues in Public Health
- Central Government Agencies with responsibility for food standards (DEFRA; Food Standards Agency and Department of Health)
- Chartered Trading Standards Institute
- Buckinghamshire Environmental Health
- District Councils
- Business organisations
- Trading Standards South East Food & Feed Focus Groups
- Other Local Authorities
- Food Liaison Groups
- Other charitable organisations such as the Coeliac Society and Allergy UK
- Earned recognition schemes such as Red Tractor.

5. Food and feedingstuffs safety and standards promotion

Our publicity programme will be targeted at publicising the findings of our work on issues impacting on the health, nutrition and economic welfare of consumers and providing both consumer and business education.

We carry this out by:

- Attending and participating in appropriate community events, seminars and exhibitions.
- Using social media
- Issuing regular press releases and participating in interviews with the media
- Promoting and taking part in national and local campaigns
- Giving talks to consumer and business groups and organisations when appropriate
- Attending and participating in appropriate meetings and workshops at both local and national level

6. Food surveys & projects

Each year officers undertake various projects where: information is gained that can usefully assist consumers to make informed choices; or to protect the functioning of the market and help businesses achieve compliance.

In 2023-24 the following are examples of projects that were undertaken

- Saturday Night - Artificial colours in Indian takeaway dishes – found 47% contained non permitted colours – Ponceau 4R and Sunset yellow – not permitted in sauces
- Breaking Bad - Deoxynivalenol (DON) in wheat flour – 12 were tested, all were satisfactory in relation to DON, however 10 had unsatisfactory labelling with 4 due to lack of or incorrect allergen labelling
- Grotty Grains – Looking for mycotoxins in maize cereals – all satisfactory, some labelling non compliances

Issues that could affect consumers health

- Checking levels of lead in milk
- Checking the nutrition accuracy and claims of canned fruit & vegetables and to assess against current guidelines and legislation.
- Determining the levels of mycotoxins, specifically aflatoxin, zearalenone and deoxynivalenol, in breakfast cereals
- Checking for the presence of artificial colours in ethnic takeaway meals
- Checking the deoxynivalenol levels in wheat flour
- Surveying food samples for gluten content and to assess for compliance with legislation concerning the use of “Gluten Free” labelling
- Testing samples of fresh or frozen fish, shellfish, or meat for amphenicols, nitrofurans and tetracyclines

Issues that could potentially mislead consumers when buying food

- Testing the alcohol content of beer/cider samples produced by small scale independent breweries
- Checking for extraneous water in whole frozen chicken and frozen poultry cuts

Overall most samples were compliant for levels of substances that could cause harm. More common were minor labelling issues that depending on the risk posed were taken up with the food business or noted for intelligence purposes.

Projects for 2024-25 will be:

“Groundnut Day”- to establish if aflatoxins are present in retail samples of peanut butter and peanut products. If present, levels will be quantified to determine if the sample is harmful to health.

“Manky mince”- to evaluate level of fat, collagen: meat protein ratio and meat species of minced meat

“Oil rigged” - To sample food oils and cooking oils to check the fat profiles and assess whether any substitution may have taken place. Fat related nutrition and health claims will also be assessed based on the analysis. (request additional test for Extra Virgin Olive Oil)

“Double Glazed” - to establish the presence or absence of milk and/or egg allergens in both prepacked and non-prepacked foods which do not declare the presence of these allergens

“How nice is your Spice?” - to establish if the mycotoxins Aflatoxin and Ochratoxin A are present in samples of spices. If present, levels will be quantified to determine if the sample is harmful to health.

“Pre-packed peril” - To look at prepacked for direct sale foods, particularly (but not limited to) bread and bakery products, for the presence of undeclared milk, sesame and soya

7. Organisational structure

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service is governed through a Joint Committee comprising of the relevant Cabinet Members from both partner authorities. The Service also has an advisory Board comprising of councillors and senior managers from each authority. The legal framework for the Service is set out in an Inter Authority Agreement.

The service operates from two locations, one in Aylesbury and one in Reigate.

8. Enforcement information

The Service has a documented Enforcement Policy - this is available on our website: [Trading Standards enforcement policy - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/trading-standards-enforcement-policy) .

9. Quality assessment

The joint service is continuing to develop work systems and practices that will enable the best outcomes to be delivered.

Officers have regular meetings with their team supervisors when their work is reviewed. Regular team meetings review food issues and suggestions for improvement.

10. Review of 2023– 2024 activities

All 10 Hampshire and Kent Public Analyst projects we committed to were delivered and non-compliances addressed with the relevant food businesses.

The Service took part in a Food Standards Agency targeted sampling project looking at imported American snack foods.

The Service carried out 166 interventions prioritised using the new risk scheme (this excludes informal sampling or test purchase visits). However, the incoming intelligence meant we needed to adjust the food businesses that were then assessed to pose greater risk and prioritise these, leaving some interventions to be carried forward to this year.

We successfully prosecuted a food business in Surrey for failing to comply with an improvement notice. The notice was served as the business were not providing proper information about allergens and placing consumers at risk despite repeated advice. The business is no longer trading.

[Trading Standards crack down on Dorking Royal Chicken and Pizza shop for poor allergen labelling | Leatherhead Living \(wordpress.com\)](#)

[Dorking takeaway fined for 'dangerous' restaurant practices and told to pay £3k - Surrey Live \(getsurrey.co.uk\)](#)

We served a compliance notice on a business that was marketing a food that was classed as novel in that it was new to the marketplace and as such need to have Food Standards Agency approval. This approval had been sought and the application was rejected but the business continued to supply the product. After serving the notice the business has ceased supplying the product.

11. Resources for 2024/25

Officers (FTE equivalent)	Food work	Feedingstuffs work	Totals
Operational	3	0.56	3.56
Managerial	0.5	0.04	0.54
Support	0.1	0.05	0.15
Totals	3.6	0.65	4.25

Costs	Food work	Feedingstuffs work	Totals
Staff costs (including overheads)	£184,000	£32,400	£216,400
Project and sampling costs	£30,000	£6,245	£36,245
Total costs	£214,000	£38,645	£252,645

12. Staff development plan

Authorised food and feed officers are qualified in accordance with Food Standards Agency Food and Feed Codes of Practice.

We operate a staff performance conversation scheme and managers work closely with officers to enable us to identify training needs and provide ongoing training. These needs may be met by coaching within the day to day work or through external formal provision. All officers are members of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) and as such undertake CPPD which is CTSI verified.

Where significant changes to food or enforcement law and food technology occur relevant training will be identified and provided by one of the means above.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2024

LEAD OFFICER: MICHELE MANSON, TRADING STANDARDS MANAGER

SUBJECT: 2024/25 HALF YEAR PERFORMANCE (APRIL TO END SEPTEMBER)

1.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- 1.1 The Buckinghamshire Council and Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service Joint Committee is asked to note the summary of performance of the service from April 2024 to end-September 2024 (Annex A).
- 1.2 The information provided shows that the Service is performing well across the range of indicators where data is available. There are three new indicators where data is not yet fully available, and this is under development.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Trading Standards Joint Committee:
 - 2.1.1 notes the Service's performance.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is required by the Inter Authority Agreement which underpins the service to:
 1. Ensure effective performance of the Service. This includes reviewing performance by considering performance against the agreed measures.

4.0 PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

- 4.1 The performance of the joint service is measured through key performance indicators agreed by the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee reviews performance at all their meetings. This report relates to the first half of the year, from April to the end of September.
- 4.2 The report also references new performance indicators that were requested. Some of these new indicators we do not yet have full robust data for but are shown for completeness. Issues to be resolved with these indicators include



the need to re-programme our database to record and report this information which the database provider is working on; agreeing definitions that will allow us to be consistent; and agreeing approaches to impact calculations that will allow us to be robust, which we are working with partners on. We anticipate that this will be complete by the end of the financial year enabling us to report fully from next year.

- 4.3 There are no statutory performance indicators for Trading Standards and there is no formal performance benchmarking data available for comparison of the key performance indicators. However, the Service contributes data to the “Impacts and Outcomes Framework for Trading Standards” (developed by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO)) which shows the combined national impact of Trading Standards Services. The annual report for 23-24 will be published within the next month and will be circulated to the Joint Committee.
- 4.4 **A key Service priority is to protect the most vulnerable, tackling fraudulent, illegal and unfair trading practices.** As part of this the Service seeks to increase the financial impact of our interventions with vulnerable people (particular in relation to scams). To the end of September, the financial impact of our interventions related to scams and frauds was over £2.1 million compared to just under £3.2m in last year.
- 4.5 A change for the Service this year has been to make an intentional move towards using disruption as a key tool to tackle criminality, rather than relying as heavily on an investigation/prosecution approach. The Service is working to put things in place to increase our competence in this area as well as to be able to report the activity consistently and robustly. This remains work in progress. However the report highlights work to obtain closure orders of two shops repeatedly selling illegal tobacco, and the financial impact of this is conservatively calculated at £90,000. The report in Annex A summarises other activities in this area.
- 4.6 **Our second key priority is to help businesses to thrive and grow by maintaining a fair trading environment.** Research shows that a positive regulatory environment can contribute significantly to economic development and sustainable growth, improving the openness of markets and creating a less constricted business environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. It can protect compliant businesses by enabling fair competition and promoting a level playing field and provide business with the confidence to invest, grow and create new jobs.¹ Supporting businesses to understand what they need to do to be compliant is a vital part of a positive regulatory environment, ensuring that they can confidently focus their resources in the right areas .
- 4.7 This year has continued to be difficult in terms of the number of Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs). The impacts from last year continued in the early part of this year seeing our number of PAPs reduce. This means we are currently some way away from our target number for the year. However, we are optimistic that by the end of the year we will meet the target as we are now gradually increasing our numbers and almost all the partnerships affected by Woking BC’s withdrawal have been resolved.

¹ [Regulation and Growth \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 4.8 A new indicator for this year is business satisfaction, which is measured through a voluntary satisfaction survey, and is currently extremely positive.
- 4.9 **Improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities is the third key priority for the Service;** this includes tackling the supply of unsafe, dangerous or age restricted products and working to maintain the integrity of the food chain, including food quality, nutrition, and animal health. The data shows the Service is still undertaking a very high level of underage test purchases, and the majority of these are vapes. Recent indications suggest there is an improving picture with businesses telling our test purchasers that they can't sell because of Trading Standards and no sales from 35 attempts in the most recent activity. Complaint levels also appear to be reducing from their peak. However, the Service will not be complacent, and we will continue with our test purchasing activities.
- 4.10 The new indicator in this area is from a suite designed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which we will be required to report formally next year. The FSA are helping to work with our database provider to enable this to be reported accurately.
- 4.11 The report in Annex A summarises the activity in this area and there is a separate, more in depth, report to this Joint Committee on activity in relation to vapes.

5.0 CONSULTATION:

- 5.1 The Trading Standards Board have been consulted on which performance indicators they would like to be discussed at the Joint Committee. No external consultation has taken place.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 All significant risks affecting the service (which include items beyond budget and performance) are regularly considered by the management team (two monthly for red and amber risks, 6 monthly for green risks).
- 6.2 Where risks become higher, these are shared with the Trading Standards Board for awareness and discussion.

7.0 FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Two of the indicators seek to demonstrate the financial impact of some areas of the Services work, one of which is currently under development. Collectively these indicators suggest that the financial impact is greater than the cost of running the Service.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The 2015 Inter-Authority Agreement provides the legal framework within which the Service operates. As set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, the

Joint Committee is responsible for ensuring the effective management of the Service and maintaining financial oversight. The Service's performance is then subject to scrutiny in the participating authorities in the normal way.

- 8.2 The report makes a number of references to relevant legal processes and proceedings that the Service has been involved in over the last year. There are no other specific legal issues that need to be drawn to the attention of the Committee.

9.0 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY

- 9.1 The performance being reported will not impact on residents or staff with different protected characteristics, as such an Equality Impact Assessment has not been included.

10.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 Performance continues to be reviewed by the Service Management team and by the Joint Service Board.

REPORT DETAILS

Contact Officer(s):

Mrs Michele Manson, Trading Standards Manager 07971 663 107
Mrs Amanda Poole, Head of Trading Standards 07984 458 679

Consulted:

Annexes:

Annex A: Performance Summary Report April 2024 – September 2024

Sources/background papers:

ENDS






Trading Standards




Summary of performance indicators April- September 24-25

Priority Area 1: Protecting the most vulnerable





Priority Area 2: Helping businesses thrive and grow

Priority Area 3: Improving wellbeing and public health

Description	2023-24 totals	YTD	progress
Financial impact of scam interventions with vulnerable people	£3,191,024	£2.168.405	
No. of vulnerable residents supported	952	402	
No. of people who have engaged with webinars & associated YouTube content	New indicator	766	
Estimated financial impact of disruptive activities	New indicator	Calculator under development	
No. of disruptive activities undertaken	New indicator	New indicator. Minimum 27	

Description	2023-24 totals	YTD	progress
Number of Primary Authority Partnerships	162	152	
Business Satisfaction	New indicator	100%	
% of requests for business advice completed within 10 working days	69%	77%	



Description	2023-24 totals	YTD	progress
No. of premises tested for selling age restricted products (failures)	124 (16)	127 (44)	
No. of illegal goods seized	119,589	110,481	
No. of unsafe or non-compliant imported goods prevented from entering the Country (time lag)	71,641	66,004	
Percentage of food businesses that improve or maintain their compliance score after being subject to an official control.	New indicator	New indicator	





Service Priority Area 1: Commentary

Protecting the most vulnerable. Tackling fraudulent, illegal, and unfair trading practices with a particular focus on disruptive activities

Commentary

As a result of a diverse range of innovative interventions undertaken by the Service, residents saved over £2.1 million in the first half of the year (compared to just over £3.1m in the whole of last year). Since April 402 individuals targeted by unscrupulous criminals received tailored one to one support (see case study below).

The very strong start to the year was supported by a public campaign designed to raise awareness of our offer of free call blockers and to encourage greater take up. One outcome of this campaign was identification of a significant opportunity to improve our resident experience, moving away from a time-consuming paper-based process to an automated system. Anyone, be they a resident, carer, family member, fire officer or charity worker can now request a call blocker and/or door camera with the click of a button. This, combined with automation of the back office, means we can process requests in a more timely manner. We have installed 22 door cameras in the past 6 months which is more than in the whole of last year. There are now a total of 75 door cameras installed by the Service in the homes of our most vulnerable residents. We have also installed 80 call blockers this year, with a total of 710 active call blockers at the end of September preventing over 43,000 thousand scam and nuisance calls from reaching vulnerable residents.

Our quarterly webinars continue to go from strength to strength with over 700 people attending and being educated in topics such as AI & Cyber-crime, Courier Fraud and Doorstep Crime. Similarly, our YouTube channel for those unable to attend on the day has been viewed 1,934 times. All our webinars utilise live British Sign Language interpretation and subtitles and similarly our easy read resources (such as credit card sized pre-shopping advice) is proving incredibly popular.

We are fortunate to have a strong cohort of eager, enthusiastic and passionate volunteers who continue to be active within their communities, contributing over 4,000 hours of their time helping spread anti-scam messages through talks, writing articles for community and special interest publications and sharing their knowledge through local radio. They are integral to making their local communities more confident and resilient to frauds.

Surrey County Councillor Kevin Deanus, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience, and Dan Quin, Surrey Chief Fire Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue became SCAMBassadors. Formal recognition of how they use their profile and influence to help spread critical messages and champion the work of Trading Standards. The leadership of Kevin and Dan has also meant that the entire Surrey Fire and Rescue Service recently received recognition as a SCAM Organisation. Our next campaign is Safeguarding Adults Week (w/c 18 Nov). Our various social media channels continue to deliver effective and efficient communications to local communities, residents and partners, from product recalls which pose a risk of injury or death, to alerting the Neighborhood Watch Alert Network to criminals operating within their areas. Our most popular posts are those which give a glimpse into the workings of Trading Standards. A recent post highlighting how we use traditional methods to test petrol pumps for accuracy generated almost 21,000 impressions (see picture in priority area 3).

Commentary Continued

The Service is developing its' use of **disruption** as a tool to address criminality and has restructured to deliver disruption activity more effectively across the range of our work. We are now developing ways to record and report disruptions, and on definitions that can be used to consistently measure the impact of these disruptions, working with partners in the police and across our profession nationally to ensure robustness of our approach. Whilst the numbers are likely to increase once we have a robust recording/reporting system in place, at least 27 disruptions have occurred in the first half of the year. They include 19 seizures of illegal tobacco +/- vapes; and several multi-agency operations where multiple types of criminality of concern to different partners is approached at the same time to have more appropriate impact. In one operation suspects known to us for doorstep/home improvement fraud were arrested for this and benefit fraud alongside their vehicles being seized. In July the Service provided evidence enabling Buckinghamshire Council to seek court orders to close two businesses for three months who were repeatedly supplying illegal tobacco. The closure orders were granted and both businesses at those premises remain closed. The action was positively welcomed by local communities and based on a very conservative methodology in use by Newport Trading Standards the financial impact of those two disruptions is estimated to be £90,000.

The first half of the year has seen some signs of progress within the **court system**, unfortunately countered by capacity issues within the prison service affecting sentencing options for judges. By the end of September, the two longer trials scheduled had both started, with one defendant being found guilty after trial and the other pleading guilty on the first day of his trial (despite the four-year wait from the original trial date).

Prosecution outcomes: To the end of September, six defendants have been convicted (compared to a total of 4 last year) coming from five guilty pleas and one person being found guilty following a five-day trial. The convictions relate to the supply of illegal tobacco, money laundering, fraud and unfair trading offences. Not all sentencing has been completed but sentences to date include 9 months suspended imprisonment, 200 hours of community orders, 20 rehabilitation days and fines.

41 **investigations** have been completed in the first half of this year into a range of illegal and unfair trading practices including unfair trading, fraud, underage sales, money laundering, supplying illegal tobacco and vapes.

Case study of tailored support: The Trading Standards Prevention Team were contacted by concerned neighbours of an older resident who was being targeted by a trader without any valid identification or documentation. The resident required a fuse box replacement, for which the trader demanded a total payment of £5920.20. The trader did not replace the fuse box and the resident was left without any electricity to his property. In addition to this doorstep fraud the resident was also targeted by online criminals who had obtained access to the resident's home computer. Due to a series of life changing events the resident was finding it difficult to resolve these issues independently. Following assistance and interventions by the Trading Standards team remedial electrical work has been completed to make the property safe and a call blocker installed to prevent nuisance and fraudulent telephone calls.





Service Priority Area 2: Commentary

Enabling businesses to get the help and support they need to thrive and grow. Delivering public protection through supporting businesses to comply with their legal responsibilities and ensuring a level playing field.

Commentary

There were currently 152 live **Primary Authority Partnerships** at the end of September, we now have 156 (October 2024). The Business environment continues to change with businesses merging, moving and being mindful of their expenditure. Within our Single point of Contact Network, we have retained Woking Environmental Health for 3 Partnerships and completed the transition of the remainder. Although we have recruited West Northamptonshire and Eastleigh Environmental Health to join the network spare capacity in this regulatory area remains limited. Surrey Fire and Rescue are in the process of reviewing their Primary Authority provision to determine their path for the future.

In the meantime, we have been reviewing the existing partnerships to ensure they deliver benefit and actively recruiting to trading standards partnerships. Four further partnerships have been revoked since the beginning of April for a variety of reasons (business finances, receiverships, non-responsive). Since April we have welcomed Capello Ltd, The Foodservice Packaging Association, Quantum Solutions Group Ltd and QA Schemes Support Services Ltd. We continue to negotiate with other businesses and are confident that we will meet the year target for numbers of partnerships.

The Association of Convenience stores was proud to mark 10 years of our Primary Authority Partnership, reflected in a changed the branding on their assured advice:



We are reducing the number of Pay As You Go (PAYG) partnerships (unless there are exceptional circumstances) through the promotion of our minimum 5 hours option at renewal. To date this had reduced the PAYG partnerships from 42% to 27% of the overall group which helps us with budget forecasting.

The business team continues to work with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to provide a legal backstop service with 1 new referral and 4 currently under investigation. We continue to participate in the ASA Pricing in Advertising Expert Group and have met with the ASA and the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to discuss the planned Digital Markets, Competitions and Consumers Act 2024. We have also provided opinions relating the advertising of offensive weapons, mystery shopper pharmaceutical purchases and claims relating to the Cancer Act 1939.

Commentary Continued

Following a successful pilot of a legal backstop arrangement with the Office for Students, Last year the funded contract has been confirmed for 24/25. To date the referred establishments have positively worked with us delivering improved contract terms and conditions for students. Since April, we have received 5 new referrals and the Office for Students has published the first 3 cases which received industry media attention.

[Trading Standards referrals see terms in student contracts changed at three higher education providers - Office for Students](#)

Case study 1:

A company supported by Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards since its inception through the Primary Authority scheme recently sought advice on placing its digital vending machines in a national pub chain. These machines are equipped with cutting-edge digital age verification software to ensure only eligible individuals can purchase age-restricted products. After evaluating the technology in pub environments and considering suitable placement options, the decision was made to initially launch the vending machines with non-age-restricted items such as playing cards, sunglasses, and games. With this innovative pivot, the area manager for the pub group was highly impressed with the concept and facilitated an introduction to key decision-makers at the national chain. As a result, the chain immediately requested an additional 50 machines. With the support of trading standards, this development has paved the way for a future rollout of potentially thousands of machines nationwide.

“Protecting young people from accessing age-restricted products has always been central to our mission. The expertise and guidance provided by Bucks and Surrey Trading Standards have been instrumental in our journey, allowing us to explore new opportunities with confidence and a strong foundation of compliance. By working closely with the officers, we’ve been able to innovate and scale our business while ensuring compliance in an agile, rapidly evolving market,” said **Harry Maitland**,

Some examples of our social media posts targeted towards businesses are shown below:





Service Priority Area 3

Improving wellbeing and public health; tackling the supply of unsafe, dangerous or age restricted products and working to maintain the integrity of the food chain, including food quality, nutrition, and animal health.

Commentary

Age restricted sales – 127 underage test purchases have been made, with the priority remaining on vapes (93) but with a number of test purchases of other products, sometimes at the request of or alongside partners (police, fire, and licensing teams) including alcohol (33% sales), knives (10% sales) and 1 gaming machine (where the underage volunteer was able to get access to the machine). Where sales are made to the underage volunteers, these are followed with investigation and licence reviews are requested when appropriate. Since April, 11 warnings have been given to premises who have sold vapes to under 18's. All will be re-tested to ensure that they have taken on the advice given.

We are continuing to tackle the sale of **illicit tobacco** focusing on disruptive activities, including locating and seizing illegal stock, with over 80,000 cigarettes and over 23kg of hand rolling tobacco seized in the first half of the year. For the first time the Service, working in collaboration with partners, pursued Closure Orders as a way of disrupting the illegal tobacco trade. In two cases where illegal tobacco (and illegal vapes) were repeatedly being supplied over a sustained period of time and the illegal tobacco was hidden in a variety of sophisticated hides, the businesses were shut for 3 months by court order. One of the local news articles that ran about it can be accessed here: [Two shops selling illegal vapes shut down by council | Bucks Free Press](#). Following a separate investigation, a business and it's Director pleaded guilty and were fined for supplying illegal tobacco. A local news article about this case, including pictures of the hide used for the tobacco can be found here: [High Wycombe shop owner fined £1,000 for selling illegal cigarettes | Bucks Free Press](#)

Preventing unsafe items being imported through Heathrow: We have stopped over 66,000 unsafe and non-compliant items entering the UK market since April 2024, these included cosmetic products, nutritional supplements without compliance documentation and unsafe electrical goods.

With high energy prices continuing to put household budgets under pressure **electric blanket safety testing** was undertaken in September with 5 venues across Buckinghamshire and Surrey. Test days were completed at Walton-on-Thames, Farnham, Epsom, High Wycombe and Aylesbury. 55 blankets were tested with a failure rate of 49% which is an improvement on the previous failure rates of around 70% - 80%, but still remains unacceptably high. We were able to replace failed blankets due to a donation from our Primary Authority Partner Dreams.

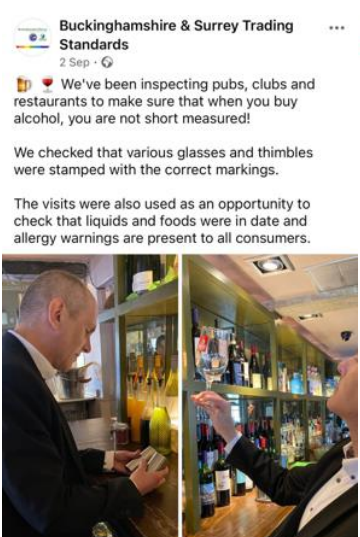
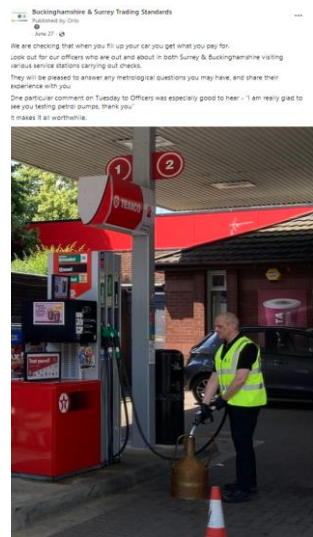
Commentary Continued

Ensuring people get what they pay for is important whilst household budgets remain under pressure and the Service has been testing petrol pumps and pub measures for accuracy. We will shortly also be testing more weighing machines used for selling food by weight. As well as getting a lot of feedback whilst our officers are out doing this type of work, our social media posts also generate positive curiosity with comments including “What are those?” referencing our brass check pump measures, “What are you doing” and “It’s really good to see you out testing petrol pumps, thank you”.

Food work – Following the Food Standards Agency issuing new industry guidance, we conducted a project to look at the safety of slushie drinks and candy floss showed that very few sellers were following voluntary labelling advice. Slushies contain glycerol to create the slush effect and prevent complete freezing. Whilst of low toxicity, large quantities of glycerol consumed by young children over a short period of time can lead to glycerol intoxication, causing shock, hypoglycaemia and loss of consciousness, in two cases this has led to hospitalisation, so it is important that parents, especially of very young children, are aware. We are working with the retailers concerned to improve their labelling.

Animal Health & Welfare – In September Surrey was brought into the **Bluetongue** ‘restricted zone and infected area’. This was shortly followed by Buckinghamshire being brought into the area which now covers most of the eastern area of England and is gradually spreading west. The aim of the zone is to contain and slow the spread of the disease, which is spread by an infected midge biting an animal. The disease affects cattle, sheep and camelids (Alpacas and Lamas). Trading Standards are using materials provided by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) on our website and via social media to provide information and guidance to livestock keepers on what it means to be in this zone and what symptoms to look out for in their animals. Using APHA information ensures we are providing current and consistent information.

Page 45



This page is intentionally left blank