

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **RESIDENT EXPERIENCE BOARD** held at 11.00 am on 13 January 2016 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Thursday, 17 March 2016.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr Colin Kemp (Chairman)
- \* Rachael I. Lake (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mr Mike Bennison
- Mr Robert Evans
- \* Mrs Yvonna Lay
- \* Mrs Jan Mason
- Mr John Orrick
- \* Mr Karan Persand
- Ms Barbara Thomson
- \* Mr Alan Young
- Mr Saj Hussain
- \* Mr Ramon Gray

**Also in attendance**

- \* Mr Richard Walsh, Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing.

**25/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies for absence were received from Barbara Thomson, Robert Evans, Saj Hussain and John Orrick.

**26/15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: [Item 2]**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**27/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interest.

**28/15 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

**29/15 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE BOARD [Item 5]**

The Board reviewed the responses from Cabinet.

**30/15 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]**

1. The Chairman informed the Board that based on the good feedback from the October Board meeting, where residents attended as witnesses for the Highways Customer Service Excellence item, the next Board meeting would be hosted at a Library branch, and that updates would be circulated to the Board ahead of the meeting.
2. The Board noted the updates on the Recommendations Tracker.
3. The spokesperson for the Performance and Finance Sub Group queried what the forthcoming work stream for the group was and it was clarified that Board's would have a role in scrutinising service budgets as soon as that information was made available.
4. The Chairman notified the Board that from the Surrey Fire and Rescue Transformation Member Reference Group, a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be drawn up. The Performance and Finance sub Group would be responsible for the analysis and overview of these KPIs.
5. A Member raised the potential relocation of the Grange Park Opera House in West Horsley as a potential item for scrutiny.

**Actions:**

The Grange Park Opera House was added to the Forward Work Programme as an item for consideration.

## **31/15 THE NEW JOINT TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE: UPDATE ON PROGRESS [Item 7]**

### **Declarations of interest:**

None.

### **Witnesses:**

Steve Ruddy, Head of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards  
Amanda Poole, Assistant Head of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. Officers explained to the Board that the joint Trading Standards Service went live on 1 April 2015 and was still in its infancy. The service was designed as a holistic service to protect residents and businesses in Buckinghamshire and Surrey, and build upon the local authorities' statutory responsibilities. The service aimed to provide a better service for residents and partners across the two counties as a more resilient team.
2. Officers provided an update on paragraph 3.1.3 of the report; a rogue trader defrauding over £100,000 from Surrey residents was prosecuted and jailed before Christmas 2015 and £114,000 of their assets will be used to pay back the residents affected.
3. Officers reported the expansion of Primary Authority Partnerships continued and that local businesses were coming to Trading Standards as they saw the benefits of joining their scheme.
4. Trading Standards officers said that their Health and Wellbeing workstream was developing well, and gave two examples of current work: continued work against 'legal highs' and the 'Eat Out Eat Well Award' campaign.
5. Officers outlined the partnership between Trading Standards with Checkatrade; the latter increased the checks and introduced enhanced criteria in order to gain membership on the scheme, and when compared to the previous confidence based scheme, officers reported that figures demonstrate an increase in membership since the partnership began. Officers reported that Trading Standards had also joined the national TrustMark scheme.
6. Cabinet Member Richard Walsh commented that the Trading Standards service was working well and that the partnership with Buckinghamshire was proving successful. The joint Trading Standards model needed to plan ahead and operate in a way that would not be clipped and reduced but rather remains to provide an essential service to the community. The business model chosen would give Trading Standards the ability to find income sources with the aim of the Service becoming self-financing in the future, with profits being invested back into developing and protecting communities.

7. Members raised concerns that smaller local businesses felt trapped into having to purchase a full membership for Checkatrade under the new partnership with Trading Standards. Officers explained that the new Checkatrade arrangement was not a full membership, and that it was available at a discount to the full membership price. The new scheme would not cost significantly more than the previous Buy with Confidence scheme. Trading Standards had looked at options with other partners; however prices would have been significantly higher.
8. Members commented that the Trading Standards website had improved greatly, however 'the consumer' was not part of the thread of rhetoric on the site and most links pointed consumers to the Citizens Advice Bureau.
9. Members questioned how Surrey's residents, as consumers, could receive the best information and advice for their 'smaller' issues. Officers explained that the Citizens Advice Bureau was separate to Trading Standards, however all reports received by the Citizens Advice Bureau were seen by Trading Standards. It was also reported that a Trading Standards Team analysed the data received through this information stream, and build up evidence and look for patterns. When trends developed and suggested a sustained issue in an area or business, Trading Standards would get involved and act on cases as they built up.
10. Members agreed with Officers that managing customer's expectations was important and recommended that a statement should be added to the Trading Standards web pages in order to explain how Trading Standards aggregated issues and complaints, including from data received from outside agencies.
11. Members commented that the service should ensure that information about Trading Standards be made available and accessible to all residents, including those without internet. Members queried how their literature was distributed. Officers agreed that communication could be further improved, and understood that not all elderly or vulnerable adults may have access to information online. However, it was reported that the service produced a 'scams pack' for residents and worked with police and other agencies to help distribute this information. Officers agreed to ensure that Checkatrade information was made available in Libraries, and would explore other options for information distribution.
12. Officers informed the Board that intelligence was received from monitoring of social media streams. Members suggested the introduction of a 'hashtag' for the aid of linking complaints to Trading Standards, and for residents to help raise awareness of issues in their area.

### **Recommendations:**

- Explore options to give local (including new) businesses flexibility to become a "vetted" trader beyond the Checkatrade scheme to provide better choice for Surrey businesses to help provide enhanced consumer security for Surrey residents.

- Include a clear statement on the website to help manage consumer expectations about the service Surrey Trading Standards can provide, the process for reporting scammers and reassurance from TS on how organisations are monitored.
- Ensure that communication/literature regarding rogue traders and scams is available to those who don't have access to the internet (E.g. doctors surgeries, Libraries and via Councillors).
- Produce a hashtag for reporting concerns on social media and communicate to all Members.

**32/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: [Item 8]**

The next full public meeting will be held at 10.30am on 17 March 2016.

Meeting ended at: 1.05 pm

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**Chairman**