

MINUTES of the meeting of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL JOINT TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE COMMITTEE** held at 2.00 pm on 24 March 2021 at Remote via Teams.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 22 September 2021.

Elected Members:

- * Fred Wilson (Co-Chairman)
- * Ms Denise Turner-Stewart (Co-Chairman)
- * Sir Beville Stanier (non-voting) Buckinghamshire Council
- * David Harmer (non-voting) Surrey County Council

In attendance

Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service

Amanda Poole, Assistant Head of Trading Standards, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service

David Pickering, Trading Standards Manager – Regulation, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service

Wendy Morgan-Brown, Head of Registration, Coroners & Trading Standards, Buckinghamshire Council

Andy Tink, Senior Principal Accountant, Surrey County Council

1/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

There were no apologies.

2/21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING [23 SEPTEMBER 2020] [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting. It was noted that Steve Ruddy's name had been spelt incorrectly.

3/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

4/21 PROCEDURAL ITEMS [Item 4]

5/21 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 4a]

There were none.

6/21 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4b]

There were none.

7/21 PETITIONS [Item 5]

There were none.

8/21 ACTION TRACKER [Item 6]

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the actions tracker.

9/21 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme with the amendment of the Tobacco report being listed in the correct year.

10/21 PERFORMANCE AND JOINT SERVICE BUDGET [Item 8]

Witnesses:

Amanda Poole, Assistant Head of Trading Standards
Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards

Key points from the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary. Members noted the following points in terms of performance:
 - Performance had been variable given the impacts and disruption of Covid
 - Courts had been impacted by Covid and therefore had been a drop in concluded cases this year. There had been five convictions this year as opposed to 16 last year.
 - Performance indicators were correct to 10 March 2021 and some were only collected quarterly.
 - Service priority 2 (annex B of the submitted report) showed a mixed picture but the number of partnerships had increased. Service priority 3 also showed a mixed picture and it was explained how there was a lot of work undertaken early in the year checking goods at Heathrow.
2. In response to a Member query about court delays, officers explained how each case needed to be looked at on its own merit with regards to the 'public interest'. It was expected that delays would run into 2022 and even 2023.
3. There were less market surveillance projects due to Covid.
4. A Member gave praise to the team for coming in on budget despite having a 15% loss on earnings and income. He also liked the snapshot information and thanked the volunteers who put in so much of their time. Officers explained that volunteer support was very much appreciated and offered to write a letter of thanks to each volunteer on behalf of the Committee. The Committee agreed to this and thanked the officers.
5. Officers provided a brief summary on the budget. Members noted the following points in terms of the budget:
 - The budget was broadly on track
 - Support from central government was a great significance in that

without it, a major overspend had been expected.

- There had been other savings around Covid for example reduced travelling and unfilled vacancies.
- Annex A of the submitted report showed the budget for next year which was expected to be affordable and deliverable.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

That officers write a letter of thanks to each volunteer on behalf of the Joint Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance be noted.
2. That the joint service budget for 2021/22 and the identified pressures that will need to be addressed be noted.

11/21 COVID RESPONSE [Item 9]

Witnesses:

Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards

Key points from the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary. Members noted the following points:
 - how the budget had been impacted by Covid and how the service had responded to additional responsibilities taken on
 - the service priorities as laid out in the submitted report
 - the variety of scams taking place and the engagement with businesses giving advice on requirement and promoting compliance
 - the work that had been paused as described in the submitted report
 - The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had recognised the increased pressures on local authority regulatory services, namely Environmental Health and Trading Standards.
2. A Member asked how the service recruited and upskilled employees for promotion. Officers explained the apprenticeship programme at level 4 which gave variety of scope of regulatory services and that a level 6 apprenticeship was being developed with employer partners.
3. A Member asked how the paused work was being co-ordinated going forward. Officers explained that this was constantly being reviewed and that some work would not be completed. Work that could go forward would be started as soon as restrictions eased.
4. In response to a Member question about staff welfare officers explained that staff fatigue could be an issue. The different ways of working had had an impact. They were proud of how the service had been able to respond in an extremely flexible and agile manner.
5. The Committee asked for their sincere thanks be passed on to the team.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12/21 TRADING STANDARDS TOBACCO WORK [Item 10]

Witnesses:

David Pickering, Trading Standards Manager – Regulation

Key points from the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary. Members noted the following points:
 - That visits were being used to gather intelligence
 - That different tactics were being used with goods being stored off premises in order to escape the sniffer dogs
 - Objectives for 2021/22 were set out and the service were working with the fire service and sniffer dogs
 - Roadshows did not happen due to Covid and work was taking place with public health on social media messaging
 - There was also work being undertaken around safety and fluids associated with e-cigarettes.
2. A Member asked about intelligence received in relation to distribution whilst businesses were closed. Officers responded that some intelligence had come from social media. They were also liaising with the smoking cessation service to share information.
3. In response to a Member question about roadshows officers confirmed that roadshows would be reinstated. The dogs were helpful in engaging people including children and their parents.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report as a reflection of activity over the financial year 2020 – 2021 and endorsed continued enforcement activities which would be undertaken in 2021– 2022.

13/21 PREVENTION WORK UNDERTAKEN BY TRADING STANDARDS [Item 11]

Witnesses:

Amanda Poole, Assistant Head of Trading Standards

Key points from the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary of all the work undertaken around scams. This included media, communications, social media, local/national alert programmes and resident/community focussed training/communication. Work was also undertaken with business against scams which was focussed at employees who may have information scammers need.
2. The Committee passed their thanks to the National Scams Team for all

the work they were doing.

3. In response to Members questions it was confirmed that:
 - Calls could be identified if they were from outside the UK
 - The National Scams Team were working at disrupting calls at source.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the Prevention work undertaken by the Service was noted.

14/21 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 12]

The Committee noted that its next meeting will be held on 22 September 2021.

Meeting ended at: 3.19 pm

Chairman

