

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD)

DATE: 14 DECEMBER 2015



**LEAD OFFICER: DAVID BULLEN
SENIOR TRADING STANDARDS OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND SURREY TRADING STANDARDS
WORK IN REIGATE & BANSTEAD IN 2015**

DIVISION: ALL REIGATE & BANSTEAD DIVISIONS

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

A report to provide an update on the work of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service, particularly within the borough of Reigate & Banstead in 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Reigate & Banstead) is asked to note that Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service:

- (i) Reacts to any local issues specifically drawn to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards in respect of Reigate and Banstead consumer issues.
- (ii) Responds to any Trading Standards and consumer issues highlighted by intelligence gathering and reporting. This routinely includes the Reigate and Banstead local area in any project and routine undertakings including test purchasing and sampling as appropriate.
- (iii) Responds to business enquiries and bespoke/chargeable requests from businesses based in the Reigate and Banstead focusing on Small/Medium Enterprises (SME) and national businesses. Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards actively promotes membership to the Better Regulation Delivery Office Primary Authority Partnership scheme.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report is for information only and does not contain any recommendations.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

1.1 Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Joint Service:

Following eighteen months of preparation and planning, Buckinghamshire Trading Standards and Surrey Trading Standards merged to form a new joint service on 1 April 2015 - Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service. Both Buckinghamshire County Council and Surrey County Council have a similar political, strategic and operational ethos, and whilst a common boundary is not shared, there are many similarities between the two counties in

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terms of respective population profiles and the mix and profile of businesses. As such, both counties were ideal candidates for a Trading Standards joint service.

As a joint service we will:

- provide a better quality service to consumers, businesses and our partners,
- build on the strengths and successes of the current teams,
- provide additional expertise and capacity to create a stronger, more resilient service,
- have greater impact and influence locally, regionally and nationally,
- reduce our delivery costs, offering better value for money, and
- be more innovative in developing new services and protecting residents.

The central challenge for the year ahead (2015-2016) will be to enhance the services provided for residents and businesses, maximising the benefits from the creation of the new joint Trading Standards service. This will bring together the skills, experience and innovation of the existing services in Surrey and Buckinghamshire to create a stronger more effective service, whilst reducing the cost to residents. A growing challenge is also to work with others to tackle organised cross border consumer crime, rogue traders, scams, and the growth of internet crime. In doing so we need to ensure we protect the most vulnerable in our communities who are often deliberately targeted and exploited.

Our Trading Standards service exists to:

- protect individuals, communities and businesses from harm and financial loss,
- help business to thrive by maintaining a fair trading environment,
- improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities, and
- fulfil the council's statutory responsibilities to deliver consumer and public protection services.

1.2 **New website:**

Our new joint service has just launched a new website.

www.bucksandsurreytradingstandards.gov.uk

The website has been designed to be accessible and easy to navigate so that consumers and businesses can easily and quickly access the information they need. The website also includes many new innovations, not least a new landing page which will change to reflect upcoming campaigns/priorities.

1.3 **Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved Trader Scheme:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service are working with Checkatrade to ensure residents can easily find reputable traders in their area. Locally branded for each local authority, the Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved, Buckinghamshire and Surrey partnerships include a large number of local businesses, meaning residents have a wide choice of reliable traders.



To become a Checktrade/Trading Standards Approved trader and to obtain our new 'double' accreditation, businesses must meet set standards and pass rigorous background checks.

When a consumer chooses a trader that has the County Council “Trading Standards Approved” logo they know that they will get a reputable, credible trader that has not only been vetted by Checktrade, but has also been approved by Trading Standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way. Surrey has 770 Checktrade/Trading Standards Approved members, of which 130 members are in Reigate and Banstead.

1.4 **New Volunteer Scheme:**

Trading Standards are recruiting volunteers to enhance our service delivery and to connect further with local communities. The Volunteers initiative provides the opportunity to undertake a variety of tasks, allowing an individual to volunteer for an activity or activities that are most suitable for their own particular skills and circumstances. We will not ask volunteers to undertake active enforcement work and will design volunteering roles so that volunteers should not be required to give evidence in Court as a result of their activities.

Our volunteering opportunities are advertised on do-it.org and through local Volunteering Centres but we welcome local people contacting us directly too if they would like to know more about what we can offer.

This is a new and developing initiative but we already have one volunteer who lives in Reigate and Banstead and she volunteered with us at the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service open day at Reigate Fire Station and helped us talk to members of the public about illegal tobacco.

1.5 **Scams Hub:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service are signed up to a protocol with the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST) in order to raise awareness of scams within the counties and to visit those found to be most vulnerable to them. We receive priority referrals which result from intelligence gathered by the NTSST and in some cases scam mail has been intercepted which contains money and cheques. When visiting victims of scams we provide advice and support to those identified as being at risk of financial abuse from scams and return any cheques or money which has been sent to the scammers which has been intercepted.

In appropriate cases we can arrange for call blockers to be installed in homes where residents have been scammed out of large amounts of money and have been upset by a large volume of scam phone calls

We are currently in the process of visiting just over 100 scam victims countywide and 18 of these people are residents of Reigate and Banstead.

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1.6 **Social media:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards issue regular information about our service on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and through TS @lerts.

TS @lerts is a weekly email news bulletin that contains information and alerts about rogue traders, frauds, the latest scams, prosecutions taken, product safety recalls, new legislation and much more. We currently have around 2500 subscribers to TS@lerts.

Recent TS @lerts have included information for consumers and businesses about the changes the Consumer Rights Act 2015 has brought in and the results of testing carried out on Halloween costumes for flammability requirements.

Residents and businesses can subscribe to the newsletter via <http://scc.newsweaver.co.uk/trading-standards> and clicking subscribe.

1.7 **Eat Out Eat Well:**

The Eat Out Eat Well Award has been developed to reward caterers throughout Surrey who make it easier for their customers to make healthy choices when eating out. It has three levels – Bronze, Silver, and Gold, and is symbolised by an apple logo in the shape of a heart. The level of award is based on a scoring system that takes into account the type of food on offer, cooking methods, and how the meals are promoted to customers. This scheme benefits both caterers, by promoting their businesses, and consumers, by helping them make healthier choices when eating out.

The Eat Out Eat Well award is assessed and managed by Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service and the local Environmental Health Service.

There are 17 Eat Out Eat Well members in Reigate and Banstead out of 231 in Surrey. Members include:

- Chapters Cafe, Donyngs Leisure Centre
- Harvester, Salfords
- Toyota Head Office
- HMP Downview Prison

1.8 **Business Advice Service:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service has extensive experience of advising a variety of businesses from small family companies to international blue-chip corporations. Our Trading Standards Officers provide advice to businesses to ensure that a business is fair, competitive and legal.

We operate a chargeable business advice service available to Surrey businesses. All businesses receive the first half hour of advice free of charge and after that it becomes chargeable and there are a range of charging options to suit business needs. We can be asked to advise businesses on a range of issues, for example:

- start-up advice for new businesses,
- face to face meetings to talk businesses through consumer protection legislation, statutory defences for criminal law, etc,
- provide information on changes to legislation,
- free signposting to other essential sources of information, including trader advice leaflets,
- detailed advice about printed and online marketing materials, including labels, to ensure businesses aren't misleading customers and breaking the law,
- compliance assessments to identify potential areas for improvement or ways to strengthen a business's procedures, and
- advice and information relating to animal health matters which remains free of charge.

There are 86 businesses in Reigate and Banstead that have registered with us for business advice out of 770 throughout Surrey.

We also promote the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) Primary Authority Partnership (PAP) scheme to businesses, which offers them the choice of more protection from inconsistent advice or even prosecution by other Authorities from around the country. Within Reigate and Banstead 9 businesses have entered into a Primary Authority Partnership with us, including Pfizer. Within Surrey there are a total of 63 Primary Authority Partnerships.

1.9 **Reported Complaints:**

There were 1086 complaints reported to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service by Reigate and Banstead residents between 1 November 2014 and 31 October 2015 and during the same period 648 complaints were made about businesses based within Reigate and Banstead.

Details of our latest court actions against rogue traders, the selling of counterfeit goods and other unlawful trading practices in Buckinghamshire and Surrey can be found on our website by visiting: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards/news-from-trading-standards/prosecutions-and-other-court-actions>

1.10 **Doorstep Crime/Rogue Trading:**

We are committed to protecting residents from being taken advantage of by rogue traders and also from feeling pressured on their doorsteps to make decisions that they would not otherwise make.

We have a Rapid Action Team made up of dedicated officers who respond to calls for help from consumers by attending the scene of doorstep crime incidents. We work closely with Surrey Police and other agencies to help reduce incidents of distraction burglary and rogue trading in Surrey. We normally ask Surrey Police to attend with us in order to avoid a breach of the peace and to carry out arrests if necessary. Our Rapid Action Team are on duty Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm, and can offer residents a range of support from providing information and assistance, to intervening, disrupting activities and taking enforcement action against doorstep callers.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service have received 21 doorstep crime complaints from Reigate and Banstead residents between 1 November 2014 and 31 October 2015. 5 of the complaints resulted in our Rapid Action Team providing intervention.

1.11 **Food Quality Standards:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service is responsible for enforcing food standards, for example the labelling and quality of food, to ensure consumers are not misled. We carry out this function in partnership with our colleagues in Environmental Health who are responsible for food hygiene and safety. As well as giving advice and dealing with enquires and complaints we also visit food businesses to ensure they are trading fairly.

Trading Standards and representatives of each of the 11 Districts and Borough Environmental Health Services meet quarterly to discuss issues of joint interest and to ensure consistency of approach etc. Included in this are areas such as Eat Out Eat Well, Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Primary Authority. Public Health England and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are also represented on the Group.

Matters which arise on a day to day basis requiring joint working or where we hope to assist each other are dealt with by officers making direct contact. We also worked with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) across the County to develop and deliver an allergens training package to business and EHOs.

1.12 **Animal Health:**

Animal health legislation exists to protect both human, through the food chain, and animal health. This prevents the introduction of serious diseases such as Foot and Mouth and includes requirements for maintaining records and ensuring livestock are identified. Measures also exist to protect the welfare of livestock, whether on farms, in transit or at abattoirs. In the current financial year we have a target to complete 30 high risk animal health visits which will be combined with a feed hygiene inspection in many cases. So far in this financial year we have carried out 2 visits in Reigate and Banstead. We are also committed to advising all new keepers (including existing new keepers with new species) throughout the year; so far in this financial year we have advised 6 new keepers in Reigate and Banstead.

In the last year we have had two cases of note relating to animal health in Reigate and Banstead. One case involved the seizure (and return after quarantine) of a puppy in relation to a potential rabies risk that had been brought into the country by a third party and bought by a local resident. The other case related to a horse carcass, under Animal By Products legislation, where we successfully identified the landowner and ensured the carcass was properly removed.

1.13 **Underage Sales:**

Historically the focus of trading standards work was on test purchasing and enforcement, however since early 2013 we have increased the number of advice visits carried out at retail premises.

Premises are targeted for advice visits on the basis of intelligence and risk assessment. We aim to work closely with local businesses providing advice and support to assist them to comply with their legal responsibilities in relation to age restricted products. In addition, intelligence led test purchasing is carried out in partnership with Surrey Police in accordance with the Code of Practice for Regulatory Delivery for Age Restricted Products. Between 1 November 2014 and 31 October 2015 we have conducted 8 advice visits in Reigate and Banstead.

1.14 **Fireworks:**

There have been 5 inspections carried out in October and November 2015 to premises in Reigate and Banstead who were storing and selling fireworks. The 5 Reigate and Banstead visits were undertaken in partnership with the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service.

1.15 **Petroleum:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards is responsible for ensuring that sites that store petrol for dispensing are storing it in accordance with legislation designed to prevent a risk of fire and explosion.

There were 8 petroleum inspections carried out at premises in Reigate and Banstead between 1 November 2014 and 31 October 2015.

1.16 **Investment in staff:**

All relevant staff are now members of the Trading Standards Institute and are registered for their Continued Personal & Professional Development (CPPD) scheme. This helps us to ensure the continued competence of staff and enables us to demonstrate this competence to businesses, consumers and other key stake holders. All staff are required to complete a minimum number of hours of training each year to receive their CPPD certification.

1.17 **Local Liaison and joint working:**

Officers from Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards participated in a joint roadside stop operation in Reigate and Banstead organised by the joint enforcement team and bringing together a range of partner organisations. This activity was carried out to coincide with the Anti Social Behaviour Awareness Week.

In the summer officers from Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards attended the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service open day at Reigate Fire Station.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service regularly liaise with the Reigate and Banstead Police Teams and work together to tackle issues, particularly relating to scams and doorstep crime.

2. ANALYSIS:

2.1 This report is for information only

3. OPTIONS:

3.1 This report is for information only

4. CONSULTATIONS:

4.1 This report is for information only

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no financial implications in this report

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications in this report

7. LOCALISM:

7.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Local Committee on our work taking Reigate and Banstead.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	The main areas that impact on community safety are age restricted sales and tackling doorstep crime and deception. We protect local residents in a range of ways and help to reduce the fear of crime
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	We have a dedicated vulnerable person's officer based in Surrey who works in partnership with the Adult Social Care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
Public Health	The main areas that impact on public health are age restricted sales, tackling doorstep crime and deception and promotion of the 'Eat Out Eat Well' healthy eating scheme. An officer also represents our joint service at Smoke Free Surrey and we carry out initiatives to tackle the supply of illicit tobacco.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1 The Local Committee is asked to note the report for information.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

10.1 This report is for information only.

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Consulted:

Officers of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service.

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

None

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