

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL  
JOINT TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** 2 MARCH 2016

**LEAD OFFICER:** STEVE RUDDY, HEAD OF TRADING STANDARDS

**SUBJECT:** UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL REVIEWS OF TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE DELIVERY

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The new Joint Trading Standards Service for Buckinghamshire and Surrey was launched on 1 April 2015. It is able to provide a better service for residents and businesses in both counties whilst at the same time making efficiency savings and increasing income generation.

This report updates the Joint Committee on the range of national reviews looking at the future of the Trading Standards service across the UK and on how it contributes to both local government and central government priorities. In particular, it invites the Joint Committee to consider the outcome of the Local Government Association review in the context of the creation of Buckinghamshire and Surrey's own joint service and to discuss how best to contribute to the further work that the LGA will be carrying out.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Buckinghamshire and Surrey Joint Trading Standards Service Committee:

- i. notes the outcomes from the Local Government Association (LGA) review of Trading Standards and;
- ii. requests that officers continue to assist the work of the Local Government Association in helping to support and promote the benefits of larger more strategic Trading Standards services.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Joint Committee has a responsibility to provide strategic leadership and direction, effective governance and oversight of the joint service.

**DETAILS:**

1. Since the creation of the joint Trading Standards service in April 2015 there have been a range of significant developments nationally.

## **Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Vision and The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and LGA reviews commissioned**

2. In June 2015, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) published a 'vision' for the future of Trading Standards. The vision identified a range of problems with the delivery of Trading Standards services, arguing that nationally the current model of delivery was broken following significant cuts to Trading Standards and called on Government to commission detailed work on the future of the service, including reviewing the model for the delivery of Trading Standards services.
3. Also in June 2015, the Chancellor's Productivity Plan was published immediately after the Budget. In that he announced a review of Trading Standards "to ensure that consumer enforcement capability effectively supports competition and better regulation objectives". The review, being led by BIS will consider efficiency and financial sustainability for Trading Standards. It aims to better define the Government's expectations of Trading Standards. It will examine Trading Standards' ability to meet the demands placed on it by central and local government and what could help its delivery and impact, including delivery models and the scope for better regulation.
4. In July 2015 the LGA announced their own review to examine the future of Trading Standards. The objectives of the LGA review were:
  - a) On the basis of political and senior managerial input from across local government, analyse what local government needs from its Trading Standards service with reference to both the current state of the service in England and what it can be reasonably be expected to deliver in the context of further funding reductions
  - b) subsequently, explore and assess the options for the future of the service, with a view to outlining a series of recommended next steps to further explore and take forward
5. the National Audit Office (NAO) will also be undertaking a review of the wider consumer protection landscape during 2016
6. the LGA and BIS reviews have gathered a wide range of evidence and the Joint Committee has previously contributed to both reviews
7. the outcome of the LGA review was published in January 2016. The outcome of the BIS review is still awaited.

### **The LGA Review Outcomes**

8. The key messages arising from the LGA review are:
  - a) Trading Standards should remain fully integrated within local government
  - b) the mechanisms for managing local, regional and national work can provide a solid foundation for the future but could be strengthened further
  - c) larger services, often covering more than one council area, offer the most sustainable future for local Trading Standards services.

- d) central and local government need to be more honest and transparent about what is deliverable under current resource constraints.
9. The review highlights a range of reasons why services managed at scale are advantageous including that:
- a) they have the resources to be active in a wider range of specialism and, in doing so, offer national resilience
  - b) they are better placed to manage not only local priorities but also competing local and national priorities
  - c) they have the capacity to be more flexible and responsive to emerging issues, redeploying resources more easily
  - d) they are better placed to support the recruitment and development of trainees and new staff into regulatory services
  - e) they have greater ability to generate additional income
  - f) they are likely to be more sustainable in the future
  - g) they provide a firm foundation to support the NTS (National Trading Standards) led model of national trading standards work with the capacity and competence to support it effectively.
10. The Buckinghamshire and Surrey joint service illustrates the benefits of a larger service very well. The LGA report highlights some specific examples of successful shared services.
11. Page 10 of the LGA report states: *"We urge councils looking at creating larger services to learn from areas that have successfully introduced new structures (such as West Yorkshire, Devon and Somerset, and Surrey and Buckinghamshire) - in particular, how they have successfully balanced the benefits of larger services while retaining local accountability and prioritisation."*
12. The report does highlight the ongoing problem of continually increasing Central Governments expectations of the service in a time of significantly reducing resources and the increasing risk of a postcode lottery of service provision. This has knock on implications for all services as problem traders, scams and consumer crime do not stop at local authority boundaries. A problem trader in one area can have a devastating impact on residents in another.
13. The report urges Government to provide greater clarity about the prioritisation of existing statutory responsibilities asking for a clear steer from Government on which of its policy areas it needs local teams to prioritise and those policy areas which it doesn't. The report makes the point that local Trading Standards services already have well over 200 statutory responsibilities and even during the course of the review Government added three new ones.
14. The outcome of the BIS review is awaited with anticipation to see if that request of Government will be answered.

## **Taking the LGA review outcomes forward**

15. The LGA report includes proposals on how it plans to take their work forward. This includes:

- a) Commissioning further work looking at the potential benefits of larger trading standards or regulatory services, to share with members, and to encourage councils to give serious consideration to that approach
- b) seeking a set of much clearer visible trading standards priorities from Central Government
- c) considering what further support the LGA can give to councils, in particular heads of service in trading standards and regulatory services, to encourage them to take the initiative in developing proposals for new arrangements.
- d) providing further support to councils in specific areas such as commercialisation (to follow up on their 'commercialisation in regulatory services conference')

14. The Joint Committee will wish to consider the outcomes from the LGA review and to indicate how it would like to see the joint service contribute to the planned future work.

15. It is suggested that the joint service should offer itself up as a case study and use the experience and expertise to acquired in this process to assist other local authorities wishing to embark on a similar journey.

16. In addition, the report will provide some guidance in helping the joint service to identify new growth opportunities, enhance the Buckinghamshire and Surrey Joint Trading Standards Service offer and continue to increase efficiency.

### **CONSULTATION:**

17. The Joint Trading Standards Board has previously responded to both the LGA and BIS reviews.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

18. The Inter Authority Agreement for the joint service deals with risk management issues and there are no additional risk management issues arising from this report.

### **FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

19. There are no new financial or value for money implications arising from this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

20. There are no new legal issues arising from this report.

## **EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY**

21. Equalities and Diversity issues were considered fully in the process of creating the joint service and the associated business case includes an Equalities Impact Assessment. This report does not change any of the considerations included in the business case or in that Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

22. Subject to the views of the Joint Committee, the joint service will offer share its learning and experience of creating a joint service to support the LGA in this area.

23. Subject to the views of the Joint Committee, the service will continue to seek new growth opportunities to enhance the Buckinghamshire and Surrey Joint Trading Standards Service offer and to continue to increase service efficiency.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

### **Contact Officer:**

Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards - 01372 371730

---

### **Consulted:**

- Phil Dart, Director Communities, Bucks CC
  - Yvonne Rees, Strategic Director Customer & Communities, Surrey CC
  - Allan Wells, Lead Manager of Legal Services, Surrey County Council  
Susan Smyth, Strategic Finance manager, Surrey County Council
- 

### **Annexes:**

Annex 1: LGA trading standards review – summary report – January 2016

---

### **Sources/background papers:**

None

This page is intentionally left blank