

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (SPELTHORNE)

DATE: 14 MARCH 2016



LEAD OFFICER: MR CHRIS GREEN
TRADING STANDARDS OFFICER

SUBJECT: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND SURREY TRADING STANDARDS
WORK IN SPELTHORNE 2015/2016

DIVISION: ALL SPELTHORNE

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

A report to provide an update on the work of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service, particularly within the Borough of Spelthorne in 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Spelthorne) 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 Spelthorne consumers.
- (ii) Responds to any Trading Standards and consumer issues highlighted by intelligence gathering and reporting. This routinely includes the Spelthorne 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 Spelthorne focusing on Small/Medium Enterprises (SME) and national businesses. Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards actively promote membership to the Better Regulation Delivery Office Primary Authority Partnership scheme.

Please note the report content is for information only.

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 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 is to enhance the services provided for residents and businesses, maximising the benefits from the creation of the new joint Trading Standards service. This brings 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 joint service has 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 Checkatrade/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 Checkatrade, but has also been approved by Trading Standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way. Surrey has 1489 Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved members, of which 128 members are in Spelthorne.



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 and we would be keen to encourage volunteers from Spelthorne.

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 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, 6 of whom are residents of Spelthorne.

ITEM 12

1.6 **Social media:**

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

TS Alerts 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 Alerts.

Recent TS Alerts have included information for consumers and businesses about dangerous Hoverboards and information alerting people to the hazard of borrowing from Loan Sharks.

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 13 Eat Out Eat Well members in Spelthorne out of over 200 in Surrey. Members include:

- Spelthorne Leisure Centre
- Baxterstorey at Salvation Army
- Page Aerospace
- Hare and Hounds Pub

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 is 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 50 businesses in Spelthorne that have registered with us for business advice out of 804 registered 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 Spelthorne 3 businesses have entered into a Primary Authority Partnership with us. Within Surrey there are a total of 79 Primary Authority Partnerships.

1.9 **Reported Complaints:**

There were 846 complaints reported to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service by Spelthorne residents in 2015 and during the same period 461 complaints were made about businesses based within Spelthorne.

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 26 doorstep crime complaints from Spelthorne residents in 2015. 9 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. 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 2015 we carried out 5 visits in Spelthorne. We are also committed to advising all new keepers (including existing new keepers with new species), and in 2015 we advised 2 new keepers in Spelthorne.

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. In 2015 we conducted 29 advice visits in Spelthorne.

1.14 **Fireworks:**

There were 10 inspections carried out in 2015 to premises in Spelthorne who were storing and selling fireworks. The 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 9 petroleum inspections carried out at premises in Spelthorne in 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:**

During 2015 officers from Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards participated in Spelthorne Partnership Action Days. These included Underage Sales of Alcohol related inspections on 9/7/15 and then on 28/10/15 inspection of a licensed premises which included “food standards” and “weights and measures”.

In February 2016 Trading Standards Officers visited premises in Spelthorne with a sniffer dog looking for illegal tobacco. In March Trading Standards Officers will be providing training to Spelthorne Council Staff on what to look for regarding illegal tobacco with a view to reporting premises to target future inspections.

Trading Standards Officers gave a talk to Spelthorne residents on “scams and how to avoid being targeted”, at the Older Persons Safety Day, hosted by Spelthorne Council on 17/02/16 at the British Airways Learning Centre.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service regularly liaise with the Police Teams across the areas 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 place in Spelthorne.

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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