

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE)



DATE: 27 June 2016

LEAD OFFICER: Nadine Davis
 Senior Trading Standards Officer

SUBJECT: Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards work in Elmbridge in 2015

DIVISION: All Elmbridge Divisions

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

A report¹ to provide an update on the work of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service, particularly within the Borough of Elmbridge in 2015/16.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

- (i) Reacts to local issues specifically drawn to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards's notice in respect of Elmbridge consumer issues.
- (ii) Responds to Trading Standards and consumer issues highlighted by intelligence gathering and reporting. This routinely includes the Elmbridge 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 Elmbridge focusing on Small/Medium Enterprises (SME) and national businesses. Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards actively promotes membership to the Regulatory Delivery Primary Authority Partnership scheme.

Please note the report content which is for information and not recommendation.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

¹ Based on data from our Civica data recording system

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.

A central challenge for the year 2015-2016 was to enhance the services provided for residents and businesses, maximising the benefits from the creation of the new joint Trading Standards service. In bringing together the skills, experience and innovation of the existing services in Surrey and Buckinghamshire we aimed to create a stronger more effective service as well as reducing the cost to residents. A growing challenge was and remains, working 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, for example, 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 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 currently has 2046 Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved members. 142 of those are based in Elmbridge.

The partnership with Checkatrade is not exclusive and we have begun exploring further options to expand this type of support for both businesses and consumers through partnership with additional trade organisations.



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.

Recently, a volunteer visited a range of food premises in Elmbridge as part of an allergens at caterers project and left Eat Out Eat Well leaflets at over 25 premises.

Our volunteering opportunities are advertised on do-it.org and through local Volunteering Centres. We also welcome local people contacting us directly if they would like to know more about what we can offer. We have 7 Surrey volunteers to date, but non from Elmbridge.

This is a new and developing initiative and we would welcome volunteers who live in Elmbridge.

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

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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 have 47 trueCall units installed in Surrey, 1 of which is in Elmbridge.

Last year, approximately 200 scams victims were visited in Surrey. This year there are already several hundred Surrey consumers on the Scams Hub which we hope to visit over the coming months.

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, product safety recalls, new legislation and much more. We currently have over 2800 subscribers to TS@lerts.

This years TS @lerts have included information for consumers and businesses about the new Consumer Rights Act 2015, information on numerous scams such as ticket fraud and details about The Queens Award for Enterprise which has been awarded to trueCall (a system available to vulnerable consumers in Buckinghamshire and Surrey).

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 Buckinghamshire and 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 in partnership with Public Health England and local Environmental Health Services.

We have recently been highly commended in the Regulatory Delivery Primary Authority Awards 2016 for helping to support 33 branches of Sports and Leisure Management Ltd T/A Everyone Active leisure centres to achieve Gold assessments in the Eat Out Eat Well healthy eating award. The judges described it as “An innovative example of Primary Authority improving public health enabling consumers to make healthy eating choices.”

There are approximately 50 Eat Out Eat Well members in Elmbridge and 230 throughout Surrey. The members include a range of premises such as cafes, schools, clubs and staff restaurants within businesses, for example:

- **Woodlands Park Hotel**, Woodlands Lane, Stoke D’Abernon KT11 3QB
- **Season’s Cafe** – Squires Garden Centre (Long Ditton) Surrey KT6 5HN
- **The Ship Hotel**, Monument Green, Weybridge KT13 8BQ
- **St George’s Hill Lawn Tennis Club**, Warreners Lane, Weybridge KT13 0LL
- **Brooklands Cafe** at Alliance Boots, Weybridge KT13 0NY
- **ACS Cobham International School**, Cobham KT11 1BL
- **Feltonfleet School**, Road, Cobham KT11 1DR

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 on a comprehensive range of subjects.

We operate a chargeable business advice service. All Buckinghamshire and Surrey businesses receive the first half hour of advice free of charge. Subsequent to that it becomes chargeable, but there are a variety of charging options available.

We offer a wide spectrum of support to businesses, enabling them to choose the services that most suit their needs. 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 are not misleading customers and breaking the law,
- compliance assessments to identify potential areas for improvement or ways

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to strengthen a business's procedures, and

- advice and information relating to animal health matters which remains free of charge.

Of approximately 840 businesses registered for business advice in Surrey, 117 businesses are in Elmbridge.

We also promote the Regulatory Delivery (RD) previously Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) Primary Authority Partnership (PAP) scheme to businesses.

Primary Authority enables businesses to be involved in their own regulation. They are able to form partnerships with Local Authorities of their choice.

Being in a Primary Authority partnership helps businesses manage relationships with local authorities across the UK, simplify regulatory processes and reduce the cost of compliance.

As well as significant financial savings, a PA can also help reduce the risk to a business and ultimately ensure it is both profitable and productive.

In 2015 the service was a finalist at the BRDO Primary Authority of the Year Awards and an officer was nominated for Primary Authority Officer of the year. As mentioned above, this year we were highly commended for our Eat Out Eat Well work. It is believed to be the first time that Primary Authority has been used to offer a healthy eating award to the premises of a multi-site business.

The following Elmbridge based businesses have entered into a Primary Authority Partnership:

- **'Dairy Crest'** (Large national dairy food company), Esher,
- **'Taste Trends'** (Supply frozen desserts to caterers), Cobham,
- **'High Spirits'** (Spirit drink distributor), Walton -on-Thames,
- **'Ashleigh & Burwood'** (Fragrant candle supplier), Walton -on- Thames,
- **'Brookwood Partnership'** (School catering provider), Walton –on-Thames,

In Buckinghamshire and Surrey, there are a total of over 100 Primary Authority Partnerships.

1.9 **Reported Complaints:**

Over 15 thousand complaints were received by Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service last year. Approximately 600 complaints related to known traders in the Elmbridge area.

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.

Approximately 354 doorstep crime incidents reports were received in Surrey between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, 45 of which related to Elmbridge residents.

1.11 **Food Quality Standards:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service are 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. When the new allergens legislation was introduced, we worked with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) across the County to develop and deliver an allergens training package to business and EHOs.

Food interventions were carried out at 30 high risk premises in Surrey between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 and 164 food visits were completed.

Of the 30 food visits, 3 were in Elmbridge. These comprised of 1 large bakery, 1 importer and 1 small manufacturer.

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1.12 **Animal Health:**

Animal health legislation exists to protect both animals and humans. It is intended to prevent 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. Last year we met our target of visiting 30 high risk animal health premises. These visits were combined with feed visits where possible.

In addition to completing visits to high risk premises, we are also committed to advising all new stock keepers (including existing new keepers with new species). 63 new keeper checks were carried out by phone or visit in Surrey last year. 2 of the new keeper notifications were for one Elmbridge premise.

1 particular premises in Elmbridge was visited on several occasions following complaints, but no legislative breaches were found.

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 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 we conducted 93 Intelligence led under aged sales visits which included test purchases, advice visits and follow ups to licence applications. 10 visits were carried out in Elmbridge.

1.14 **Fireworks:**

34 fireworks inspections were carried out in Surrey between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, 3 of which were to premises in Elmbridge. 2 of the 3 visits in Elmbridge were undertaken in partnership with the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. The visits were risked according to Intelligence and all new premises (other than supermarkets with a Primary Authority) were visited.

19 Elmbridge businesses renewed their licences last year and 2 new licences were issued. There is one premise in Elmbridge which has a licence to sell fireworks all year round.

1.15 **Petroleum:**

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

21 Intelligence led higher risk petroleum inspections were carried out across Surrey between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016. No premises in Elmbridge required a petroleum inspection.

1.16 **Investment in staff:**

All relevant staff are now members of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) 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. 34 staff in Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards have now also gained Chartered Trading Standards Institute Practitioner status.

1.17 **Local Liaison and joint working:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service regularly liaise with the Elmbridge 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 in Elmbridge.

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.

Contact Officer for report:

Nadine Davis
Senior Trading Standards Officer

Consulted:

Officers of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service.

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

None

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Trading Standards Contacts:

Telephone - **0300 123 2329**

- Option 1** – Consumer Advice or to report a trader
2 – Business Advice
3 – Advice for Farmers
4 – For other Trading Standards, Police or Law enforcement bodies/agencies

All other callers to remain on the line for reception.

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