

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

DATE: 10 OCTOBER 2018

**LEAD OFFICER: AMANDA POOLE
ASSISTANT HEAD OF TRADING STANDARDS**

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE AND JOINT SERVICE BUDGET

1.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

1.1 The Buckinghamshire County Council and Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service Joint Committee is asked to note the performance of the service for financial year from April 2017 to March 2018, and quarter one of the current financial year from April 2018-June 2018. The information provided covers performance against the seven high level indicators agreed by this Joint Committee and in relation to the service budget.

1.2 The information provided shows that:

- a) Overall the Service is performing well across the range of indicators and delivered some excellent results against key performance indicators in 2017-18.
- b) The Joint Service budget is underspending currently, and is anticipating a total underspend of £94,000 at the end of the current financial year (which equates to around 3% of the planned budget).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 It is recommended that:

2.1.1 The Trading Standards Joint Committee note the Service's performance.

2.1.2 The Trading Standards Joint Committee notes the Service's current financial position.



3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is required by the Inter Authority Agreement which underpins the service to:
- a) Ensure effective performance of the Service. This includes formally reviewing performance annually by considering performance against the agreed measures and agreeing performance measures for the Service in advance of the start of each financial year.
 - b) Maintain financial oversight of the Service and ensure sound financial management.

4.0 PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

- 4.1 The performance of the joint service is measured through seven key performance indicators which are detailed in the attached full year performance report.
- 4.2 There are no statutory performance indicators for Trading Standards and there is no performance benchmarking data available for comparison. Following the National Audit Office report on “Protecting consumers from scams, unfair trading and unsafe goods” published in December 2016 the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) have developed a new national Impacts and Outcomes Framework for Trading Standards. The joint service has helped to lead this development and has participated in a pilot collection of the data required. This has helped us to identify areas where we do not currently record the data in an easy way to report, and we are now streamlining our data collection around these requirements. Services who wish to use the framework will provide data for the current, 18-19, year onwards.
- 4.3 The Joint Committee are invited to note the volatility of the performance outcomes, particularly in relation to KPI’s 1, 2 & 7. This volatility is illustrated in the quarterly breakdowns of the first KPI but is relevant across each of these measures. Individual case outcomes, which often have been preceded by months or years of work, significantly affect the overall performance.
- 4.4 All the Key performance Indicators with numerical targets were met. These include:
- KPI 1 – increasing the financial savings for residents as a result of our interventions and investigations, which moved from £455,737 in 2016-17 to £559,435 in 2017-18, showing a 23% increase.
 - KPI 4 – increasing the number of Primary Authority Partnerships, which moved from 88 at the end of 2016-17 to 90 at the end of 2017-18, in spite of significant change and upheaval in the legislation governing Primary Authority Partnerships.
 - KPI 5 – increasing the number of trader approval schemes which moved from 3062 at the end of March 2017, to 3361 at the end of March 2018 – an 9% increase.

- 4.5 A key priority for the Service is protecting the most vulnerable, increasing the financial savings for residents and stopping rogue traders operating in Buckinghamshire and Surrey. KPI 2 relates to stopping rogue traders operating and is a combination of indicators which may help the Committee to understand the level of work being undertaken in this area. This indicator shows that there has been a drop compared to the previous years in some areas such as prison sentences awarded and rogue traders convicted. However, other areas, such as fines showed a sharp increase in 2017-18 compared to previous years. The number of rogue traders convicted in the first quarter of 2018-19 is already higher than the total for 2017-18, and so we are not concerned that there is an overall steady decline, rather that there can be wide volatility in this indicative data depending on the length and complexity of investigations, which regularly span across more than one financial year. It should also be noted that whilst there have been 7 convictions, they have not yet all been sentenced. KPI's 1, 3, 5 & 7, which are positive, also relate to this priority area.
- 4.6 The growth in the use of volunteers has been particularly strong. The Service now has around 165 volunteers, from a wide range of ages and backgrounds who supported the Service with over 2200 hours of their time during 17-18, a 239% increase compared to 919 hours in 2016-17. This increase has been maintained and in the first quarter of 18-19 volunteers have already contributed 747 hours to supporting the Service's priorities.
- 4.7 Our second key priority is to helping businesses to thrive and supporting economic growth. Our Primary Authority Partnerships continue to grow in number gradually, but more significantly in the depth of some of our partnerships. 2017-18 saw the Service develop some of its partnerships to deliver a variety of new work for and with partners including licensing support and brand enforcement where this links to the services priority areas.
- 4.8 Improving the health and wellbeing of communities is the third key priority for the Service, and KPI 6 discusses some of the work that the Service does to support this, and particularly highlights the work carried out at transit sheds linked to Heathrow to prevent unsafe and non-compliant goods reaching the market place. There has been a very significant increase in this work in the last three months of 2017-18 and the first quarter of 2018-19.

5.0 BUDGET 18/19:

- 5.1 The budget for the joint service was set out in the original joint service business case and set out planned savings of 12% over the first 4 years of the new shared service. This was adjusted by the Joint Committee in March 2016 to include an additional 1.5% 'marginal efficiency savings' each year from 16/17 for four years.
- 5.2 To date the Service has delivered all the savings and additional income targets set out in the original business case.
- 5.3 In March 2017 the Joint Committee agreed a revised budget for the Service, to include new additional income generation targets of 3.8% (£109,000) in 2017/18; 3.5% (£96,000) in 2018/19; and 1.1% (£31,000) in 2019/20. The

detail of this budget is set out in Annex B for information. Overall this results in overall savings targets for the shared service of approximately 27%.

- 5.4 It is currently projected that the budget will be around 3% underspent at outturn this year. The underspend has occurred due to a combination of challenges in recruitment to professional posts and holding vacancies whilst the service underwent a restructure. Overall therefore the savings projected in the joint service business plan for 2018/19 will be achieved.
- 5.5 The appropriate proportions of this (34% Buckinghamshire, 66% Surrey) will be available to the partner Local Authorities to use as they consider appropriate.
- 5.6 In the Trading Standards budget there are a number of factors which introduce volatility to the budget. It is challenging to accurately predict income and its timing especially where costs are recovered from prosecutions. Some cases go through the legal process in a matter of weeks and others can run into years. Conversely the timing and amount spent on prosecutions varies depending what approach is taken by the defence, what arguments are made and whether the defendant pleads guilty at an early opportunity.
- 5.7 The Service manages its' budget closely to even out the most volatile factors where it is possible. Future income growth targets have some associated risk which has previously been discussed by the Trading Standards Board, and where these risks escalate to become high risk these will be brought back to the Trading Standards Board for oversight.
- 5.8 A further budget update will be shared with Members of the Joint Committee at the next Joint Service Board meeting on Wednesday 21st November. This will provide an opportunity to discuss and shape budget plans for future years. The budget will then be formally considered and agreed by the Joint Committee on 28th March 2019.

6.0 CONSULTATION:

- 6.1 No external consultation has taken place.

7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 All significant risks affecting the service (which include items beyond budget and performance) are considered by the management team each quarter.
- 7.2 Where risks become higher, these are shared with the Trading Standards Board for awareness and discussion.

8.0 FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Service is delivering all elements of the business case and is anticipating an underspend, as discussed above, at the end of the financial year.

- 8.2 The strong foundation created by the shared service will enable it to achieve the additional income without damaging service delivery.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Inter-Authority Agreement provides the legal framework within which the Service operates. As set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, the Joint Committee is responsible for ensuring the effective management of the Service and maintaining financial oversight. The Service's performance is then subject to scrutiny in the participating authorities in the normal way.
- 9.2 The report makes a number of references to relevant legal processes and proceedings that the Service has been involved in over the last year. There are no other specific legal issues that need to be drawn to the attention of the Committee.

10.0 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY

- 10.1 The performance being reported will not impact on residents or staff with different protected characteristics, as such an Equality Impact Assessment has not been included.

11.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 11.1 Performance continues to be reviewed by the Service Management team and by the Joint Service Board.

REPORT DETAILS

Contact Officer(s):

Mrs Amanda Poole, Assistant Head of Trading Standards 07984 458 679
Mr Steve Ruddy, Head of Trading Standards 01372 371730

Consulted:

Annexes:

Annex A: Key Performance Indicators Full Year Report 2017/18 and Q1 of 2018/19
Annex B: Trading Standards Budget 2017/18 onwards

Sources/background papers:

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