

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE)**

**DATE:** 18 November 2013  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Andrew Pollard  
 Business Advice & Partnership Manager

**SUBJECT:** Surrey Trading Standards work in Elmbridge during 2013

**DIVISION:** ALL ELMBRIDGE DIVISIONS

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

A report to provide an update on Surrey Trading Standards work affecting Elmbridge Borough in 2013, including changes.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Local Committee (Elmbridge) is asked to note**

- (i) the content of the report and provide feedback to help us enhance our understanding of, and response to, local needs and issues.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 Surrey Trading Standards have responsibility for dealing with unsafe or unfair trading practices and applying regulations in relation to quality, quantity, safety, description and price. We also enforce regulations covering the composition, labelling and advertising of food and ensuring animal health and welfare on farms, minimising the risk of spread of animal disease.
- 1.2 We support and educate reputable businesses, providing information and advice on consumer and regulatory issues.
- 1.3 We tackle rogue traders and deceptive business practices, protecting all Surrey residents, particularly the most vulnerable, from anti social behaviour, doorstep deception, scams and other illegal practices

## **2. ANALYSIS:**

### **2.1 Business Advice:**

Surrey Trading Standards operates a business advice line 5 days a week for businesses based in Surrey. We offer free initial advice on consumer protection legislation and free signposting to other sources of information, including trader advice leaflets.

In 2013 we have dealt with 215 enquiries from businesses based in Elmbridge seeking advice on such things as civil rights when dealing with customers and how to label food.

We also promote the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) Primary Authority scheme to businesses, which offers them more protection from prosecution. Businesses in Elmbridge that have signed up for a Primary Authority partnership include Dairy Crest and Hi Spirits, a spirit drink distributor.

We recently gave a talk on our services to the Elmbridge Business Network to make them aware of the free services that we have on offer to businesses in Elmbridge.

### **2.2 Buy With Confidence approved trader scheme:**

The Buy With Confidence (BWC) scheme is an approved register of businesses, which have been thoroughly vetted and approved by Trading Standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way.

Surrey has 443 members; 22 members are in the borough of Elmbridge; there has been an increase in Elmbridge membership of 1 member since 2012 and 2 applicants are awaiting approval.

A new 'Buy with Confidence Directory' is now available through the SCC Contact Centre, Local District and Borough Councils including libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaus in Elmbridge.

We have attended events in the Borough including the Elmbridge Business Network and more recently the Cobham & Downside Residents Association evening, where the directory has been distributed.

Surrey Trading Standards have been promoting the Buy with Confidence approved trader scheme with a pull up display in The Dittons, Walton and Molesey libraries at various times between August and October this year.

BWC members, until recent legislative changes, could also join the 'Support With Confidence' (SWC) scheme. SWC provides a list of care and support services (including financial advisors, solicitors, disabled adaptations, plumbers and cleaning companies), who have undergone appropriate training and background checks and enables residents to select care using funding under the new national regime of Self Directed Support.

There are a total of 54 SWC Members in Surrey including 3 based in Elmbridge – Caring Solutions, a company specialising in bathroom adaptations for the disabled/elderly, ABW Heating, and R P Brown plumbing.

### 2.3 **Eat Out Eat Well (EOEW):**

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.

There are currently 160 active members of the healthy eating scheme in Surrey with 28 of these based in Elmbridge. Members include The Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex, The Good Earth and Princess Alice Hospice.

Surrey Trading Standards work in partnership with Elmbridge Environmental Health to identify possible EOEW members, carry out assessments and to help develop and publicise the scheme.

A number of nutrition training courses for EOEW members to help them achieve Gold have been carried out at Elmbridge Borough Council.

### 2.4 **Doorstep Crime/Rogue Trading:**

Surrey Trading Standards Rapid Action Team has recorded 13 interventions in the last 12 months regarding doorstep conmen in the borough of Elmbridge. The Rapid Action Team is made up of dedicated officers who respond to calls for help from consumers and other organisations by offering advice and attending the scene of alleged doorstep crime. Surrey Police are always in attendance as part of partnership working and consumer/officer safety.

### 2.5 **TV show (Hunting the Doorstep Conmen):**

This two part series ran at 9pm on BBC1 during July 2013 on national TV. Hunting the Door Step Conmen (episode 2) featured Surrey County Council's Trading Standards Service Rapid Action Team challenging and confronting Door Step Traders, executing warrants at two addresses where suspects were arrested for rogue trading incidents concerning fraudulent building work and money laundering. Viewers included consumers and businesses in the Elmbridge BC area.

### 2.6 **No Cold Calling Sticker Scheme:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards were one of the first authorities in the country to develop a no cold call sticker scheme. We work closely with Surrey Police and other agencies to help reduce incidents of distraction burglary and rogue trading. Our sticker initiative is designed to empower residents, giving them the confidence to deal with cold calling traders.

"Stop Cold Calling" leaflets with "Superstickers" have been distributed to 150,000 Surrey partners including approximately 10,000 to Elmbridge contacts including libraries, Elmbridge BC, Elmbridge Reablement Team and Walton Stroke Group.

2.7 **Scam Hub project:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service is taking part in a major project in the South East of England, including Elmbridge, known as the "Scam Hub".

Recently, the Metropolitan Police intercepted a large consignment of scam mail at Heathrow Airport. This was known as 'Operation Sterling'. Amongst the consignment was a list of scam victims. Surrey Trading Standards has been in receipt of approximately 1000 of these names located within the county. As part of the project, the service is making contact with all of these people to offer support to those identified to be at risk of financial abuse from scams.

A total of 107 possible victims within Elmbridge Borough have been contacted.

2.8 **Working with the Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT):**

The IMLT have been set up to tackle loan sharks who lend money without the appropriate licence issued by the Office of Fair Trading. Loan Sharks rarely, if ever, give any paperwork and if payments are missed they often use intimidation and violence to get money from their 'clients'. Surrey Trading Standards work in partnership with the IMLT including taking part in several targeted campaigns across Surrey using social and economic "mapping techniques". The IMLT have also completed training with Elmbridge Housing Association staff to make them more aware of loan sharks and money lending.

The IMLT are training Surrey Police and are willing to run sessions for Council and Housing Association staff and local Benefit Fraud Investigation Teams.

There is presently no Intel regarding specific 'hotspots' for loan shark activity in the Elmbridge area.

2.9 **Social media-** Including TS @lerts:

Trading Standards issue regular information about our service on facebook, twitter and through TS@lerts.

TS @lerts is a weekly email news bulletin produced by Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service that contains information on rogue traders, frauds, scams, product recalls, etc. For example, there has been a recent product recall on FlexPen products that may contain the wrong amount of insulin, which if the faulty batch was used could have life threatening consequences. The latest bulletins can be found at <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/latest-news-for-business-and-consumers>

Evaluation of the TS @lerts service showed that initial mailing to approx 450 people in Surrey is then disseminated to over 8,000. A proportion of this information will have been received by people in the Elmbridge area. To sign up to TS @lerts contact [trading.standards@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@surreycc.gov.uk)

#### 2.10 **Animal Health:**

Animal health legislation exists to protect both human, through the food chain, and animal health. This prevents the introduction of serious, notifiable 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.

Animal Health visits are based on Intel and DEFRA requests; there is nothing additional to report at this time.

#### 2.11 **Petroleum:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards has been involved with improvements to a number of Petrol Filling Stations in the Elmbridge area, as well as our normal licensing activities. The licensing function includes the service having a role overseeing the ongoing processes, both physical and managerial, to reduce the risk of both fire and explosion.

#### 2.12 **Under Age 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. This year there has been 9 advice visits to premises in Elmbridge. 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. There has been no intelligence led test purchasing in Elmbridge in 2013.

#### 2.13 **Food Standards:**

Surrey Trading Standards is responsible for enforcing food standards e.g. the labelling and quality of food, to ensure consumers are not misled.

We carry out this function in partnership with our colleagues at Elmbridge Environmental Health who are responsible for food hygiene and safety. As well as giving advice and dealing with enquiries and complaints we also visit food businesses to ensure they are trading fairly.

In 2013, we have so far visited 58 food premises in Elmbridge.

#### 2.14 **Local Liaison:**

We have regular meetings between Elmbridge BC Environmental Health and Surrey Trading Standards as part of ongoing partnership working arrangements.

**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 Trading Standards is a relatively small service, serving all 11 Districts and Boroughs within Surrey from its office based in Redhill. Annual savings were identified in a Public Value Review carried out in 2011. This has been achieved through restructuring the service, reducing management costs, reducing the number of teams, and increasing income, which is vital to the service. At the same time we have managed to maintain the service and front line posts. The service has a current annual budget of just over £2.45m of which there is an income expectation of over £300,000.

**EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:**

6.1 There are no particular identified equalities and diversity implications that are raised by this report, however, Equalities Impact Assessments have been carried out in relation to key areas of the Service that are customer facing. Advice and education about doorstep crime is provided to vulnerable groups and we do talks for professional groups who can cascade our community safety messages to members of the public.

**7. LOCALISM:**

7.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Local Committee on the work taking place 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	No significant implications arising from this report
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.

**9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

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**Consulted: Officers of Surrey Trading Standards only**

**Annexes: None**

**Sources/background papers: None**

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