

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL AND SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2024**

**LEAD OFFICER: MICHELE MANSON, TRADING STANDARDS MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: 2024/25 HALF YEAR PERFORMANCE (APRIL TO END SEPTEMBER)**

**1.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

- 1.1 The Buckinghamshire Council and Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service Joint Committee is asked to note the summary of performance of the service from April 2024 to end-September 2024 (Annex A).
- 1.2 The information provided shows that the Service is performing well across the range of indicators where data is available. There are three new indicators where data is not yet fully available, and this is under development.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Trading Standards Joint Committee:
  - 2.1.1 notes the Service's performance.

**3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is required by the Inter Authority Agreement which underpins the service to:
  1. Ensure effective performance of the Service. This includes reviewing performance by considering performance against the agreed measures.

**4.0 PERFORMANCE DETAILS:**

- 4.1 The performance of the joint service is measured through key performance indicators agreed by the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee reviews performance at all their meetings. This report relates to the first half of the year, from April to the end of September.
- 4.2 The report also references new performance indicators that were requested. Some of these new indicators we do not yet have full robust data for but are shown for completeness. Issues to be resolved with these indicators include



the need to re-programme our database to record and report this information which the database provider is working on; agreeing definitions that will allow us to be consistent; and agreeing approaches to impact calculations that will allow us to be robust, which we are working with partners on. We anticipate that this will be complete by the end of the financial year enabling us to report fully from next year.

- 4.3 There are no statutory performance indicators for Trading Standards and there is no formal performance benchmarking data available for comparison of the key performance indicators. However, the Service contributes data to the “Impacts and Outcomes Framework for Trading Standards” (developed by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO)) which shows the combined national impact of Trading Standards Services. The annual report for 23-24 will be published within the next month and will be circulated to the Joint Committee.
- 4.4 **A key Service priority is to protect the most vulnerable, tackling fraudulent, illegal and unfair trading practices.** As part of this the Service seeks to increase the financial impact of our interventions with vulnerable people (particular in relation to scams). To the end of September, the financial impact of our interventions related to scams and frauds was over £2.1 million compared to just under £3.2m in last year.
- 4.5 A change for the Service this year has been to make an intentional move towards using disruption as a key tool to tackle criminality, rather than relying as heavily on an investigation/prosecution approach. The Service is working to put things in place to increase our competence in this area as well as to be able to report the activity consistently and robustly. This remains work in progress. However the report highlights work to obtain closure orders of two shops repeatedly selling illegal tobacco, and the financial impact of this is conservatively calculated at £90,000. The report in Annex A summarises other activities in this area.
- 4.6 **Our second key priority is to help businesses to thrive and grow by maintaining a fair trading environment.** Research shows that a positive regulatory environment can contribute significantly to economic development and sustainable growth, improving the openness of markets and creating a less constricted business environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. It can protect compliant businesses by enabling fair competition and promoting a level playing field and provide business with the confidence to invest, grow and create new jobs.<sup>1</sup> Supporting businesses to understand what they need to do to be compliant is a vital part of a positive regulatory environment, ensuring that they can confidently focus their resources in the right areas .
- 4.7 This year has continued to be difficult in terms of the number of Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs). The impacts from last year continued in the early part of this year seeing our number of PAPs reduce. This means we are currently some way away from our target number for the year. However, we are optimistic that by the end of the year we will meet the target as we are now gradually increasing our numbers and almost all the partnerships affected by Woking BC’s withdrawal have been resolved.

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<sup>1</sup> [Regulation and Growth \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 4.8 A new indicator for this year is business satisfaction, which is measured through a voluntary satisfaction survey, and is currently extremely positive.
- 4.9 **Improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities is the third key priority for the Service;** this includes tackling the supply of unsafe, dangerous or age restricted products and working to maintain the integrity of the food chain, including food quality, nutrition, and animal health. The data shows the Service is still undertaking a very high level of underage test purchases, and the majority of these are vapes. Recent indications suggest there is an improving picture with businesses telling our test purchasers that they can't sell because of Trading Standards and no sales from 35 attempts in the most recent activity. Complaint levels also appear to be reducing from their peak. However, the Service will not be complacent, and we will continue with our test purchasing activities.
- 4.10 The new indicator in this area is from a suite designed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which we will be required to report formally next year. The FSA are helping to work with our database provider to enable this to be reported accurately.
- 4.11 The report in Annex A summarises the activity in this area and there is a separate, more in depth, report to this Joint Committee on activity in relation to vapes.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION:**

- 5.1 The Trading Standards Board have been consulted on which performance indicators they would like to be discussed at the Joint Committee. No external consultation has taken place.

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

- 6.1 All significant risks affecting the service (which include items beyond budget and performance) are regularly considered by the management team (two monthly for red and amber risks, 6 monthly for green risks).
- 6.2 Where risks become higher, these are shared with the Trading Standards Board for awareness and discussion.

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

- 7.1 Two of the indicators seek to demonstrate the financial impact of some areas of the Services work, one of which is currently under development. Collectively these indicators suggest that the financial impact is greater than the cost of running the Service.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The 2015 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.

- 8.2 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.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY**

- 9.1 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.

## **10.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

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

## **REPORT DETAILS**

### **Contact Officer(s):**

Mrs Michele Manson, Trading Standards Manager 07971 663 107  
Mrs Amanda Poole, Head of Trading Standards 07984 458 679

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### **Consulted:**

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### **Annexes:**

Annex A: Performance Summary Report April 2024 – September 2024

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

**ENDS**