



meeting **Departmental Briefing (Communities)**

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5

REPORT OF THE ACTING STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITIES

Modernisation of the Trading Standards Service

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform members of some of the key developments in the Trading Standards Service

Background

2. The Trading Standards Service, though small in terms of the County Council, enjoys a very high profile with the communities of Nottinghamshire. Key to the provision of a diverse range of consumer support, business support and enforcement activities are a network of local, regional and national partnerships.
3. The service is going through a period of great change. Though our core purpose of providing a regulatory and advice service to communities, businesses and visitors to Nottinghamshire remains, the methods of delivery and legislation underpinning it is rapidly changing. This report highlights four key areas to illustrate this.
4. Nottinghamshire County Council Trading Standards has recently led a successful bid to the department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) on behalf of the East Midlands for funding for a "Scambusters" unit. This has drawn in £750,000 of new money for a regional team to tackle organised cross border criminality in areas such as doorstep crime and business scams. The team will be based in Nottinghamshire.
5. On similar principles to the "Scambusters" unit the service is also a partner in a regional Illegal Money Lending Unit. Once again this has

drawn in new resources to support the work of Trading Standards across the region in tackling “loan sharks” who operate across borders. The unit is again based in Nottinghamshire, the bid having been led by the City Trading Standards Service.

- 6 The legislative base for Trading Standards is also being modernised. Decades old Acts, such as the Trade Descriptions Act have been replaced by new business and consumer regulations which reflect the modern global trading environment and give stronger protection by allowing Trading Standards Officers access to a wider range of civil and criminal sanctions.
7. Overarching all of the work Trading Standards carry out we now have the ability to use the Proceeds of Crime legislation to more effectively punish the criminal behaviour of rogue traders. Instead of running the risk of an appearance in Magistrates Court and a small financial penalty miscreants are now in real danger of losing their assets, not only cash but houses and vehicles, if they are unable to prove that they have not been funded by criminal activity. Nottinghamshire Trading Standards is one of the first services in the country to have its own Accredited Financial Investigator to carry out this task.
8. The Trading Standards Service is now looking forward into the 21st Century with renewed vigour and has a whole range of new partnerships and sanctions to enable it to make Nottinghamshire a fair and safe place to live, visit and do business.

Financial Implications

9. The Trading Standards Service expenditure is approximately £3 million per annum.

Personnel Implications

The service currently employs 70 staff.

RECOMMENDED

Members are asked to note this report.

Steve Calvert,
Acting Strategic Director, Communities

