

28th January 2014**Agenda Item: 13****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****REVIEW OF CHARGES MADE FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED TO
BUSINESS IN 2014/15****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to change the pricing structure and fees charged for advice and support provided to Nottinghamshire businesses from 1 April 2014.

Information and Advice

2. For many years, the Trading Standards Service has provided high quality advice and support to Nottinghamshire-based businesses, over and above that which the authority was required to do by statute. For many years, this was delivered for free.
3. From 1 April 2011, the authority changed its policy and began to levy charges for business advice and support on a cost recovery basis. It withdrew from Home Authority relationships, where free support was offered, and moved to statutory based Primary Authority Partnerships. The changes were the subject of Cabinet decision (resolution number CA/2011/00003).
4. Where businesses do not wish to enter into formal Primary Authority arrangements, the costs for any ad-hoc advice or support delivered in excess of the statutory minimum is also now recovered by making a charge.

The current situation

5. Last year the Service moved from a model of charging a set management fee with a lower hourly rate to one that did not have a standard management fee but had an increased hourly rate of £60 per hour. This has proved beneficial with an increase in income from Primary Authority work.
6. There are currently 17 Nottinghamshire-based businesses with Primary Authority Partnerships with the Service. These partnerships are tailored to the individual business' needs - Trading Standards offers a wide range of support including the provision of detailed compliance advice, the approval of internal systems, monitoring of consumer complaints, staff training or other bespoke support

requested. Further advice given to businesses and followed within such a relationship is binding by statute on other Local Authorities, providing the certainty businesses need to trade across local authority boundaries.

7. Based on this year's contracted support hours the cost recovered for 2013/14 using the current charging model is £38,565.
8. The approach of agreeing the level of support required for the upcoming 12 month period benefits the businesses in that they are assured an annual commitment of officer resource, and also enables the Service to plan its resources and manage budgets more effectively.

Other business advice

9. During 2013/14 the Service has to date received £975 for business support from those Nottinghamshire-based businesses that do not have a Primary Authority Partnership but that have requested ad-hoc advice. This has been charged at an hourly rate of £75 per hour.

Other considerations

10. The Service has been exploring how to cultivate long-term relationships with more businesses in order to support economic growth. Entering into Primary Authority arrangements is a key way to achieve this. It is the aim of the Service to grow this area of work in 2014-15.

Proposals

11. The Service has established Primary Authority Partnerships with a number of large Nottinghamshire businesses who are fully committed to the scheme. It is believed that there are many more businesses both large and small that would benefit from the Primary Authority arrangement. With the current climate still putting pressure particularly on the smaller businesses, it is felt that it would be beneficial to encourage businesses to sign up to a Primary Authority Partnership by retaining the current level of charges rather than increasing them.
12. It is therefore proposed from 1 April 2014 to:
 - Retain the current hourly rate charged for Primary Authority Partnerships at £60; and
 - Retain the current hourly rate for ad-hoc business support delivered at £75

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such

implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee agrees to:

- 1) Retain the current hourly rate charged for Primary Authority Partnerships at £60; and
- 2) Retain the current hourly rate for ad-hoc business support delivered at £75.

PAUL MCKAY

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 14/01/14)

25. Community Safety Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. It is responsible for discharging the Council's duties as a Trading Standards Authority.

Financial Comments (KS 20/01/14)

26. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.