



**REPORT OF TEAM MANAGER TRADING STANDARDS EAST MIDLANDS
"SCAMBUSTER" TEAM...**

TRAVEL TO BELGIUM

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for an investigator from the Scambuster team to travel to Belgium to take an evidence statement and receive documentary evidence in connection with a current investigation.

Information and Advice

2. The County Council currently hosts the Trading Standards East Midlands Scambuster team. The team is currently investigating a suspected large scale fraud. The investigation has recently been assessed by legal reviewers, including a QC who is an expert in major fraud prosecutions and a barrister from the Office of Fair Trading, who described it as 'well structured and focused'.
3. One of the key witnesses lives in Belgium and is not expected to travel to the UK for the foreseeable future. This witness is considered vital to the success of the case. The evidence is based on a great deal of complex correspondence including e-mails and letters. In order to ensure the continuity of evidence chain, the exhibits must be handed over personally to the investigator.
4. It is proposed that the investigator flies to Belgium and spends the day with the witness working through the information and formulating a statement. It is proposed that the investigator stays overnight and returns to the UK the following day.
5. The estimated cost of travel and accommodation is £200. The Scambuster Team is funded by external grants from the National Trading Standards Board and Trading Standards East Midlands. Nottinghamshire provides the service under a contract to these bodies and there is no cost to the authority in doing so. The cost of this trip will be borne by the Scambuster team and so no cost falls on the County Council.

Other Options Considered

6. Alternative means of taking a statement, eg by phone, are considered less satisfactory and would not permit the documentary exhibits to be collected. Other means of travel (eg by car) would be more time consuming and no cheaper than flying.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

7. To enable the investigation to proceed.

Statutory and Policy Implications

8. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That approval be given for an investigator to travel to Belgium with an overnight stay to collect evidence in connection with a current investigation.

Paul Gretton

Team Manager Trading Standards East Midlands "Scambuster" Team

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Steve Wyatt

Constitutional Comments (SLB 10/07/2012)

9. Administration Committee has authority to consider the matters set out in the report. The Council's Travel and Accommodation Policy says that all Officer travel outside the UK must be approved by Administration Committee.

Financial Comments (MB 10/07/12)

10. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 5 of the 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.

Nil

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All