

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 June 2006.

Present:

Councillor John Appleton
" David Booth
" Richard Chattaway
" Michael Doody
" John Haynes
" Barry Longden
" Dave Shilton
" Heather Timms
" John Vereker
" John Wells

Also Present: Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Councillor Alan Farnell

Officers:

Victoria Cooke, Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate
Anthea Davies, Assistant Head of Trading Standards
Sarah Duxbury, Corporate Legal Services Manager
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate
Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety, Community Protection Directorate
Nicole North, Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

1. General

(1) Appointment of Chair

Councillor John Wells, seconded by Councillor Barry Longden, proposed that Councillor Richard Chattaway be appointed Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Richard Chattaway be appointed Chair of the Committee.

(2) Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor John Haynes, seconded by Councillor Barry Longden, proposed that Councillor John Wells be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor John Wells be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

(3) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mike Perry

(4) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as follows –

The following Members declared personal interests arising by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillors as listed below:

Stratford-on Avon District Council – Councillor John Appleton

Warwick District Council - Councillors Michael Doody and Dave Shilton

Rugby Borough Council – Councillor Heather Timms

(5) Minutes of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 May 2006

The minutes of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 May 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

Members agreed that any future minutes of meetings would be provisionally agreed by the Chair and Spokespersons at their briefing meetings in order to ensure accuracy in reflecting discussions at the meetings.

Members requested a report from the Monitoring Officer on the steps taken to ensure Standing Orders on agendas and reports were complied with.

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. Briefing on the issues facing Trading Standards over the next 12 months

Anthea Davies outlined the specific issues and pressures facing Trading Standards over the next 12 months. These were:

Consumer Direct West Midlands – a national initiative set up to provide easy access to telephone and on-line “first tier” advice. It was noted that there was no longer any control locally on the volume of enquiries received which were allocated according to the area code of the enquirer, a policy was needed to ensure the service meets the needs of the most vulnerable. A paper would be

brought to the Committee in July looking at setting priorities and levels of resource required to cope with the increased volume of complex enquiries.

Healthier Communities – Trading Standards had been tasked to lead on healthier communities and were currently looking at partnership working to address issues such as debt, loan sharks and rogue doorstep traders as well as issues such as nutritional labelling and healthy eating.

Community Safety – Trading Standards are involved in a number of partnership initiatives which are proving effective in combatting rogue traders and doorstep sales and the recently enacted Enterprise Act has provided Trading Standards with new tools to curb the activities of persistent offenders..

Alcohol sales to underage youths – Trading Standards continue to work where they can to reduce the sale of alcohol and cigarettes to youths. It was noted that the number of sales was down to 6% from 30% a few years ago. Business seminars are also held to ensure that traders are aware of the law and Trading Standards are considering other means of educating young people as to the risks of underage drinking.

Adult Services – Trading Standards are working together with Adult Services, sharing information to provide better access to services and improve the lives of the more vulnerable people.

CEntSA – This is a regional group of Trading Standards Authorities that has been in place for a year. Current regional initiatives include the unlicensed credit trading project which has led to some significant results in the county, the development of a Scambusters team and the Regional Intelligence Unit as well as other project work.

Retail Enforcement Pilot Project – Warwickshire County Council, together with Warwick District Council, Stratford-upon-Avon District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council are currently trialling a new approach to enforcement work which involves co-ordinating and streamlining routine planned inspections across various functions including trading standards, environmental health and health and safety to reduce burdens on business and improve efficiency..

Avian Flu - Following ongoing liaison with Defra, a contingency plan is now in place so that Warwickshire Trading Standards is ready to react to a pandemic if it arises and provide support locally or regionally.

Competency of Staff – Work is currently ongoing to ensure competency of Trading Standards staff in all areas. Recent recruitment difficulties together with a number of impending retirements have prompted a review of salaries and career structures regionally and nationally. The nationally recognised qualifications for Trading Standards work have recently been reviewed and a new framework is now in place. Warwickshire Trading Standards are taking

the opportunity to encourage staff to undertake the new qualifications and the introduction of a career structure will help to address the current problems.

Future Reports – July Consumer Direct West Midlands and
Consumer Advice Policy
EFQM Peer Review Process and

Improvement Plan

September Review of Anti-Counterfeiting Policy

Following the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted:

1. Trading Standards work concerning debt problems is education and enforcement concerning loan sharks lending people large loans they were unable to repay and to give people a better understanding of the credit agreements they were signing up to.
2. Overloading of vehicles is not currently a high priority for the service. Trading Standards do get involved in some multi agency Road Traffic exercises for animal health work..
3. Members were interested to note the recruitment difficulties facing Trading Standards and the future impact of retirement on the Service.
4. Members requested a seminar be held at Old Budbrooke Road with officers from Trading Standards to look at pressures faced and local, regional and national issues.
5. Trading Standards receive good co-operation from the Police when their assistance is required and would be open to getting involved with partnership boards including partners such as Police, Adult Services, Truancy etc. Members agreed that the current regional agenda within Police meant this was a good time to make suggestions on a local level about local enforcement. It was noted that there would be a seminar held after the 27 June Council meeting where discussions would be held on the proposed changes and the County Council's involvement. The Chair added that it was important that the Committee looked at how the responsibilities for social and non-criminal acts and local governance linked together and the accountability of the Police to Members and the public.
6. Consumer Direct is currently nationally funded and has been signed up to by all but a few Trading Standards Authorities nationally.
7. A nominal annual fee is paid to CEnTSA as well as resources required to house one co-ordinator in the Warwickshire offices. It was felt that this was a good initiative that works well in terms of shared experiences and resources and is well worth the resources put in.
8. No funding is received from trademark holders but they do work together with Trading Standards and offer non-financial support in terms of storage of evidence and provision of experts etc.
9. Previously there were two recognised qualifications available, the DTS, (Diploma in Trading Standards), the DCA (Diploma in Consumer Affairs). A degree in Consumer Protection is one route to the DTS. Trainees have been employed and sponsored by Watwickshire over the past three years.

A new Trading Standards Qualifications Framework is now in place allowing modular progress which will encourage more people to achieve qualifications and competence in a wider range of trading standards work. Existing staff and new recruits are being encouraged to train on this new framework. .

10. Members noted their concern at the recent report regarding Chip and Pin scams. It was agreed that Members would be added to the address list to receive the Trading Standards Consumer E-mail Alert on scams.

11. While there are plans to do more work with partners on healthy eating, there are already some healthy eating promotions in place such as the Cyril the Seal booklet produced as part of the commitment to consumer education and to encourage healthy eating being distributed to Primary and Junior schools.

The Chair noted that the presentation had given a useful insight into the issues facing Trading Standards and had highlighted many potential strands of work, which would be discussed by the Chair/Spokes at their next briefing.

4. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to this Committee

Members agreed the future work programme with the following changes:

25 July 2006

Consumer Direct West Midlands (Anthea Davies)

Peer Review Process and Improvement Plan (Anthea Davies)

7 November 2006

Review of Anti-Counterfeiting Policy (Anthea Davies)

To be timetabled

Trading Standards Seminar at Old Budbrooke Road (Anthea Davies)

Impact of the Police Reform Bill

CDRP Performance Reports (Kate Nash to revert to Members on the best way of receiving Performance Reports from CDRPs)

Kate Nash reported that the update on Distraction Burglary and Doorstep Crime had been requested from Lancashire Trading Standards and she was awaiting a response from them.

5. Any Other Items

There were no other items.

.....
Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 3.30 p.m.

