

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

24 October 2017

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Jim Lindridge and Brenda Loynes

Officers: Andrew Carter, Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration
Sylvia Pinkney, Head of Public Protection
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

36. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Shane Moore.

37. Declarations of Interest

None

38. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2017

Received

39. Trading Standards Service Plan 2017/18 *(Interim Director of Public Health)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To consider the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2017/18

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Head of Public Protection reported that the annual service plan, submitted as an appendix to the report, detailed the previous performance of the Service, the main challenges facing it and a plan of work to be undertaken in the forthcoming year. The priority areas for service delivery were set out in detail with the high priority areas being Rogue Traders, Tackling Underage Sales and Product Safety. The service would also look to address Scams and Cons, False Description of Goods, Counterfeiting and Illicit Tobacco, Loan Sharks, Weights and Measures and Misleading Pricing.

The Head of Public Protection highlighted the department's work on social media and e-crime, no cold call zones, telephone scams and other enforcement work. Officers had also worked with banks, post offices and building societies to ensure they were aware of the risks that rogue traders could pose to their clients and what could be done to help them. Work involving mail order and telephone scams as well as underage sales continued, details of which was provided. The Head of Public Protection commented that much of the department's work was intelligence led and using legal action where necessary was always considered by officers and there had been a number of successful prosecutions.

In response to clarification sought, the Head of Public Protection outlined the "no cold call zone" signing up arrangements.

With regard to the supply of illegally modified IPTV boxes (internet television), a Member questioned the value in terms of investing resources to investigate such crime, given the difficulties securing a prosecution. Members were provided with an example of a specific supplier who had been prosecuted for selling boxes across the country and the various other options available of tackling crime of this type were outlined. The impact on legitimate traders in terms of losing customers was highlighted and it was noted that in some cases a proportion of the proceeds of crime would transfer to the local authority.

The Head of Public Protection responded to queries raised by Members in relation to examples of sales of counterfeit goods, the arrangements in place to monitor internet sales to ensure consumers remained protected. Clarification was provided regarding the approach that had recently been adopted by Trading Standards in Hartlepool whereby sites that were suspected of selling counterfeit goods received a Trading Standards "post" on facebook informing the account holder and anyone visiting the site that the site was being monitored. The Head of Public Protection agreed to provide a breakdown, following the meeting, of the types of counterfeit goods that had been sold.

A Member raised concerns in terms of unscrupulous traders routinely preying on vulnerable and elderly and taking advantage of their goodwill. A

query was raised as to what could be done to prevent unsolicited letters reaching vulnerable consumers. The Head of Public Protection commented on the obligation upon Royal Mail to deliver and the limited powers available to prevent such issues other than the option to redirect post in an attempt to limit the amount of unsolicited letters received. Whilst Trading Standards aimed to identify common scams and notify consumers through press releases and other media such as the internet and “ringmaster”, sadly, on some occasions, consumers were drawn into these scams and, in many cases, making one purchase opened up the consumer to many other scams.

Members were pleased to note the recent public health grant funding that had been secured until June 2018 to fund an officer post to develop a series of measures aimed at helping people to help themselves and to educate and inform agencies and organisations who could provide support. Views were expressed regarding the benefits of this post.

In concluding the debate the Chair welcomed the report and supported the priorities identified for 2017/18.

Decision

- (i) That the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2017/18 be approved.
- (ii) That a breakdown be provided, following the meeting, of the counterfeit goods that had been sold by type.

40. Departmental Annual Procurement Report – Regeneration Services Committee *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To advise Committee of contractual activities where the annual value of the anticipated contract exceeds £60,000 for goods and services or £100,000 for works.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director presented the report which outlined the range of services delivered through a combination of direct provision by the Council’s own staff, contracts with the private and voluntary sector and

partnership agreements with strategic partners. The report provided information on existing contracts and opportunities for Members to provide input to the strategic direction for the future delivery of these services.

To achieve these objectives the Department had produced a departmental annual procurement report for Members to review and included appendices which set out the financial information relating to individual contracts.

These appendices contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (para 3)

A Member highlighted that he wished to raise queries in relation to the confidential appendices which would need to be debated in closed session.

41. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for part of the discussions on the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 40 – Departmental Annual Procurement Report – Regeneration Services Committee (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*) –

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (para 3)

40. Departmental Annual Procurement Report – Regeneration Services Committee (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*) This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (para 3)

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

Members continued their discussions on the procurement report, details of which were set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

The report and associated appendices were noted.

42. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 13 November 2017 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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