

REPORT TITLE	UPDATE REGARDING THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL'S TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update regarding the work carried out by the Trading Standards Service and its performance in carrying out that work.

The enforcement work carried out by the Trading Standards Service supports the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27, specifically Theme 3 and 6, by updating the Committee regarding the regulatory enforcement work carried out by the Service in the past calendar year.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to :

Note and endorse the content of the report and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure that Members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee have the opportunity to monitor the performance of the Trading Standards Service. Regular monitoring of performance will ensure public oversight and enable Elected Members to make informed decisions.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report has been provided in line with a request from Members of this Committee. No other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Trading Standards Service is a regulatory, intelligence led statutory service. The Service is required to carry out the full range of statutory trading standards enforcement duties in relation to weights and measures, food standards, feed standards, product safety. The Service is also required to carry put a range of other functions, as well as non statutory functions such as, intellectual property, fair trading law, door step crime and age restricted sales legislation which includes alcohol, tobacco, vapes, solvents, knives and fireworks.
- 3.2 The Service works in conjunction with partner agencies such as HMRC, Food Standards Agency, DEFRA, Office of Product Safety and Standards, Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
- 3.3 The Trading Standards Service also works in partnership with the central government agency the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline Service (CABx) The CABx triage all first line enquires and complaints on behalf of the service. CABx will provide civil advice to consumers as the Trading Standards Service only provides a criminal enforcement service. In the past year the Service received 2178 enquiries from CABx. The Trading Standards Team Leader will review all enquiries from CABx and approximately 600 enquiries were allocated to an officer within the service for further investigation and/or intervention.
- 3.4 The Service participated in several multi-agency operations with partner agencies such as Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire Service and HMRC, including Operation Evolve (counterfeit goods) Operation Sceptre (knives), Operation Bangor (fireworks), and Operation CeCe (Tobacco). (Further details are provided in Appendix 1 of this report).
- 3.5 In conjunction with colleagues in Legal Services, the Service has instigated legal proceedings in four cases. Three cases were brought to a successful conclusion and 1 case is still before the Courts awaiting sentencing in October 2024. (A summary of the cases is provided in Appendix 1)

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 In recent years, the Trading Standards Service has struggled with recruitment and retention of qualified and competent officers. Currently the Service has three officers enrolled to undertake the statutory qualifications to become fully qualified Trading Standards Officers. As a result, to ensure the service can carry out its statutory functions, the service has had to engaged contractors.

6.2 In 2023-24, Wirral Council's Public Health Service agreed to grant fund two fixed term posts within the Trading Standards Service for two years to tackle issues related to the supply of illicit and illegal Tobacco, Vapes and Alcohol within the Borough. The Service has successfully recruited to these posts and is in the process of agreeing the scope of the project and Key Performance Indicators for the projects with colleagues in Public Health.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Information on key risks faced by the Service and associated mitigations and planned actions are included in the Directorate and Corporate Risk Registers. There are no specific risk implications relating to this report which is a general service update.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

8.1 There are no engagement or consultation implications arising out of this report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to assist Council Services to identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular decision or activity. There is no impact or equality implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.

10.2 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Update report in relation to the enforcement work carried out by the Trading Standards Service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date