

Stockton Trading Standards & Licensing Performance Report 2007/08

Service Priorities, Key Actions and Activities

We identified 10 key service priorities for the year. They were:

1. To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information
2. To prevent people being the victims of commercial crime in their own home
3. To ensure fair competition through goods and services being safe, correctly described, priced and accurately measured
4. To ensure quality food standards for healthy consumers
5. To promote good business practice and help reputable businesses to flourish
6. To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy
7. To prevent harm to residents from the effects of tobacco and alcohol
8. To ensure the implementation of a fair, transparent and effective gambling regime
9. To reduce crime and disorder in licensed premises and vehicles to help promote a safe and diverse night time economy
10. To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision

Under each priority, key actions and activities for the forthcoming year will be carried out.

These will be used by the Service to focus attention on work priorities and as benchmarks by which performance can be measured.

Priority 1

To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To provide a specialist high quality consumer advice, conciliation and case work service	Ensure that the Consumer Advice Centre operates to the standards laid down by the Specialist Quality Mark	To maintain Specialist Quality Mark accreditation	Achieved	
To ensure that consumers have easy access to consumer advice provision at a level appropriate to their need	Continue working closely with Consumer Direct North East Participate with the NETSA project to conduct a needs analysis and map the requirements of ethnic minority groups	Respond to 95% of Consumer Direct referrals within 1 working day of receipt To raise matters of concern with Consumer Direct Carry out needs analysis and map requirements Share and develop diversity material	Achieved On going Mapping exercise completed Work on-going	
To ensure that the Consumer Advice Centre continues to meet the needs of the residents of Stockton	Review the work of the Consumer Advice Centre Carry out a satisfaction survey of all those consumers for which the Consumer Advice Centre has undertaken casework	Carry out the reviews A minimum satisfaction level of 90%	Completed 96.8%	

Priority 1

To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
<p>To improve local resident's knowledge of consumer rights and increase awareness of service provision</p>	<p>Develop and deliver a consumer education programme taking into account the needs of identified groups</p>	<p>Identify community and voluntary groups with which consumer education links can be developed</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Subjects chosen were cars, mobile phones, extended warranties and holidays</p>
		<p>Develop a consumer education programme taking into account the needs of identified groups</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
		<p>Deliver 2 targeted publicity campaigns based on topical areas of concern</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
		<p>Tailored information on consumer rights and remedies to be displayed at Consumer Advice Centre covering top 4 most complained about goods/services</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
		<p>Increase consumer awareness of service provision to 90% of those surveyed</p>	<p>-</p>	

Priority 2

To prevent people being the victims of commercial crime in their own home

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To deter doorstep criminals and protect vulnerable consumers	Offer immediate response in conjunction with Operation Strongbow to reports of doorstep crime	To respond to 100% of requests for attendance at incidents of doorstep crime where appropriate	100% attendance at appropriate incidents	
To ensure an effective and consistent response to doorstep crime incidents	Review existing current procedures for dealing with doorstep crime incidents and produce documented guidance for staff	Review current procedures and produce a 'Rogue Trader Protocol' To issue comprehensive guidance to staff		Draft has been issued for comments. The protocol will be finalised by the end of May 08
To assess the effectiveness of the two pilot No Cold Calling Zones and develop the initiative further if appropriate	Carry out a review of the two pilot No Cold Calling Zones	Complete the review and make recommendations as to the future development of the initiative taking into account relevant resource implications	Completed	We received very positive feedback from residents in both zones. 97% of respondents in the first zone and 82% in the second zone said that the scheme had made them feel safer
To ensure that doorstep sellers especially those involved with the home improvement trade comply with legal requirements	Targeted enforcement exercise in conjunction with Police	Participate with Operation Rogue Trader	Completed	
To improve intelligence information and develop partnership working in area of doorstep crime	Continue participating with the Operation Strongbow network for the collection and distribution of intelligence	To pass all reports of doorstep crime to the Operation Strongbow co-ordinator	System in place – all incidents are reported	

Priority 3

To ensure fair competition through goods and services being safe, correctly described and priced and accurately measured

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure that reputable businesses flourish and to prevent illegal trading	<p>Carry out a risk based programme of comprehensive business inspections</p> <p>Carry out intelligence led visits in response to complaints and other information received.</p>	<p>To inspect: 100% of all high risk businesses 100% of all due medium risk businesses 20% of all low risk businesses</p> <p>2500 total enforcement visits</p>	<p>Highs 100% Mediums 88% Lows 17%</p> <p>2294 total visits</p>	
To ensure that businesses comply with the law	Carry out a scheduled programme of revisits to those businesses that are found to be flouting the law in order to ensure compliance	95% of premises to be brought to compliance by the end of the year	Achieved	
To ensure that goods and services available within the Borough are safe, accurately described and correctly priced	<p>Targeted project based sampling to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pricing checks at builders merchants Accuracy checks on spirit pourers in pubs Toys Accuracy of taxi meters Safety of toys 	Test 5000 items	6680 items tested	

Priority 4

To ensure quality food standards for healthy consumers

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure effective and efficient food law enforcement	Update the Food Enforcement Plan in line with government targets and priorities and local initiatives	Update and publish the Plan in conjunction with Environmental Health colleagues	Completed	
To ensure that reputable food businesses flourish and to prevent illegal trading	Carry out a risk based programme of comprehensive food business inspections	To inspect: 100% of all high risk businesses 100% of all due medium risk businesses 20% of all low risk businesses	Highs 100% Mediums 99% Lows 97%	
To ensure that food available in the Borough is accurately described and meets any relevant compositional requirements	Targeted project based sampling to include: Salt and fat levels in takeaway meals Nutritional levels of school meals Vitamin levels in fruit juices Claims on foods including healthy and reduced fat claims on butters, margarines etc	Test 300 samples	301 samples	2 sampling projects of imported foods completed – heavy metals in tinned foods and salt levels. No serious problems were found although there were a number of labelling issues
To ensure that consumers within the Borough understand new style food labels and to promote healthy eating choices	Proactive education campaigns regarding new 'traffic light labelling' on foods and salt levels in foods	Develop and deliver campaigns	On target	Consumer leaflet issued. Projects on sugar levels in cereals and salt in bread products completed
To ensure schools are aware of the nutritional requirements for school meals	Provide guidance regarding the School Meals Nutritional Standards and Guideline Daily Amounts for children	Produce and circulate guidance to all schools	Completed	Circular sent July 07

Priority 5

To promote good business practice and help reputable businesses to flourish

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure that businesses are aware of their legal obligations especially with respect to new legislation	<p>Circulate guidance to Estate Agents on the new rules regarding Home Information Packs</p> <p>Produce guidance for hotels and 'bed & breakfast' regarding safety rules for electrical appliances provided in accommodation</p> <p>Produce guidance for caterers, restaurants and takeaways regarding allergen warnings</p>	<p>Produce and circulate guidance</p> <p>Produce and circulate guidance</p> <p>Produce and circulate guidance</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>	
To improve standards in the retail car market and improve consumer confidence when buying cars	Carry out a review of the 'Good Garage' scheme	Complete the review and make recommendations as to the future development of the scheme	Review completed	
To ensure that links with local business groups are adequate and effective and that new businesses are aware of the Service	<p>Establish closer links with the Business Development Unit</p> <p>Trading Standards starter pack to be sent out to all new businesses</p>	<p>Develop links</p> <p>Produce and distribute packs</p> <p>Increase business awareness of service provision to 90% of those surveyed</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Leaflet now being issued</p> <p>-</p>	

Priority 5**To promote good business practice and help reputable businesses to flourish**

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To encourage a street café culture within the Borough	Produce a Street Café Policy Review current Consent Street Trading Policy	Obtain Cabinet approval for the Policy Carry out review	Draft policy produced Completed	Consultation document produced & agreed by Cabinet members. Public consultation planned for July 08
To ensure that the Service continues to meet the needs of local businesses	Carry out a satisfaction survey of local businesses that have had contact with the Service	A minimum satisfaction level of 85%	88.5%	

Priority 6

To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To prevent the supply of counterfeit goods in the Borough	Carry out a programme of proactive enforcement at car boot sales and markets within the Borough	Surveillance of trading activities at local car boot sales Take appropriate action based on the surveillance undertaken	Project completed	Investigations against several sellers and operator completed
To ensure that internet traders comply with the law and follow good business practice	Carry out an enforcement project looking at Stockton based Ebay traders	To bring 95% of those traders identified into compliance	Completed – 80% now compliant	10 test purchases made; 7 were counterfeit. so far 3 warrants have been executed; 5 written warnings have been issued; 2 formal cautions have been issued and 2 investigations are on-going
To ensure the effective use of intelligence sources to target rogue traders	Develop methods for the regular and effective interrogation and use of information held on the Consumer Direct database Develop methods for the regular and effective interrogation and use of the Tellpat system using the National Intelligence Model. Close links to be established with the Regional Intelligence Officer	Identify and introduce appropriate systems Identify and introduce appropriate systems	Systems introduced Delayed	Trading Standards have not been given access to the Tellpat system. Other systems are now being explored

Priority 6

To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy

<p>To tackle regional scams and deceptive trading practices</p>	<p>Participate fully with the Scambusters team</p>	<p>Identify and propose trading practices that are suitable for investigation by Scambusters</p> <p>To respond to all requests for information and assistance from Scambusters</p>	<p>On going several projects suggested & accepted</p> <p>Information sent & received to/from RIO on a regular basis</p>	
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Priority 7

To prevent harm to residents from the effects of tobacco and alcohol

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To reduce the level of sales of alcohol, cigarettes and other age restricted products to youngsters	Undertake targeted test purchasing exercises of age restricted products with young volunteers	15 test purchase exercises with at least 8 in relation to the sale of alcohol and 4 in relation to cigarettes	11 cigarettes lighters 7 alcohol 1 video 2 Fireworks	A total of 14 sales of age restricted products were made with 12 formal cautions ; 13 written warnings and 3 fixed penalty notices issued to employees and business operators. In addition 3 business operators signed undertakings to improve their procedures.
To ensure consistent and effective investigation of illegal sales of age restricted products	Review enforcement practices in light of Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 and recognised best practice	Participate in NETSA project to encourage uniformity in enforcement and identify best practice Carry out review in light of above and new legislation		Details now collected from all NETSA Authorities – review work to be carried forward into next year
To encourage joint working with Community Safety Officers and Police at a local level	To participate in targeted Operation SCARAB exercises	To participate in 75% of all Operation SCARAB exercises	3 exercises	100% of requests to participate met
Reduce levels of smoking in public and work places	To work with Environmental Health to produce an action plan for effective enforcement of the new legislation	Incorporate enforcement checks into normal inspection visits	Completed	
To ensure businesses are aware of the new legal age of 18 for the sale of cigarettes	Re-issue the 'We Don't Overlook Underage' packs with amended guidance and legal notices	Issue packs to all retailers, public houses, clubs, petrol sites etc	215 packs issued	All retailers and petrol sites have received a pack

Priority 8

To ensure the implementation of a fair, transparent and effective gambling regime

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure that all businesses are aware of the new rules and transitional provisions	Produce advice regarding the new rules	Produce and circulate advice	Completed	
To ensure that fees for gambling premise licences are in line with government guidelines and are adequate to cover service costs	Estimate services costs for issuing of licences and consider guidelines	Set and publish fees Review fees	Completed Completed	
To ensure a smooth transition to the new regime	Develop and implement a system for receiving applications	Introduce systems for receiving and processing applications	Completed	Applications now being processed as received
To ensure that officers and members have the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the new legislation	Design and deliver training and information sessions for all officers and members	Complete officer training Complete member training	Completed Completed	
To prevent illegal gambling	Carry out proactive enforcement in relation to gambling on unlicensed premises	Undertake 2 exercises	Completed	

Priority 9

To reduce crime and disorder in licensed premises and vehicles to help promote a safe and diverse night time economy

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure that reputable businesses flourish and to prevent illegal trading	Carry out programmed inspections as well as intelligence led enforcement to target problem traders	Carry out 1200 licensing enforcement visits	1093	
To ensure that work is targeted effectively at problem times and specific locations in conjunction with other agencies where appropriate	To work devise and implement a plan for out of hours enforcement work in licensed premises in conjunction with the Police	Liaise monthly with the Police Agreed programme of out of hours enforcement exercises	On target 8 exercises	
To prevent illegal plying for hire and the use of unlicensed vehicles in the taxi trade	Undertake targeted test purchasing exercises To ensure private hire operators have adequate recording of bookings and vehicle and driver details Carry out proactive enforcement in relation to taxi vehicles	Undertake 4 exercises Visits to all operators Carry out 12 out of hours enforcement exercises	Completed On target 10 exercises	
To ensure the Council's policies in relation to taxis reflects the needs of stakeholders, users and are in line with government guidelines and best practice	To review the consultation results of the new draft policy, amend as appropriate and obtain member approval	Review consultation results Obtain member and Cabinet approval as appropriate	Work ongoing	Report to committee in September 2007 – further consultation planned

Priority 10

To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure the Council's policy under the new Licensing regime is effective	To review the operation of the current policy, amend as appropriate and consult with stakeholders	Review current policy Carry out consultation exercise	Completed Completed	Review of policy and consultation now completed but still to be ratified by Cabinet
To ensure that officers have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their functions effectively	Training needs identified as part of the appraisal process to be incorporated and reviewed as part of whole service planning	Carry out appraisals and identify training needs Training requirements for the year to include: Home information packs Copyright law update Unfair commercial practices Fraud Act and doorstep selling Gambling legislation Smoke free legislation Consumer credit update County court procedures Measuring instruments directive HACCP Food factory auditing Food and animal feed officers to have 10 hours related training for competency requirements Consumer advisors to have 6 hours related training for SQM requirements DCATS training for the two trainee TSOs Average of 45 hours of training per officer per year	Completed Completed	

Priority 10

To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To develop a better system for assessing and evidencing the competency of staff	Devise and implement a system for recording and reviewing officer competency taking into account CPD and statutory requirements	Carry out review and introduce new system Assess new system and amend as necessary	Completed Completed	
To protect the health and safety of staff when undertaking enforcement duties	Implement comprehensive risk assessments that are effective and cover all key enforcement activities	Carry out review of existing risk assessments and identify new areas where they are required Amend existing, and draft new, risk assessments as appropriate All risk assessments to be finalised and implemented	On going Project to be carried forward to next year	
Ensure effective use of the FLARE database	Develop procedures for linking written correspondence, notices and cautions onto the Flare database	Identify and introduce appropriate system	Completed	
To ensure that key Trading Standards enforcement procedures are up to date and in line with recognised best practice	Review, develop and document procedures in all key areas of Trading Standards activity	Review existing procedures and devise work plan for production of new procedures Procedures to be drafted and introduced as per timetable with staff consultation and training at each stage	Review completed	Four draft procedures produced. Work carried forward to next year

Priority 10

To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision

Objective	Actions	Targets	Performance	Comments
To ensure that appropriate enforcement actions are employed for low risk premises and that enforcement is consistent across the north east region	Participate fully with NETSA project looking at self assessment and business documents	Develop and introduce a system for self assessment for certain low risk premises Review and where possible standardise and simplify business documents	Work on-going	Information pulled together from NETSA Authorities – further work to be carried forward into next year
To raise the profile of the Service	Circulate information on service provision to stakeholders, including Members	Produce and circulate executive summary of Service Plan Produce a Members bulletin to inform on current issues and stories of interest	Completed 2 bulletins issued	Topics were No Cold Calling Zones & How the service meets key objectives
To reduce the adverse impact over time that the Service may have on the environment	Quantify and record the environmental impact of the Service in areas such as the amount of paper used and recycled, the amount of printer cartridges used and recycled, business mileage and the recycling of counterfeit goods	Develop and produce internal indicators against which future performance can be measured Set appropriate targets for 2008/09	Indicators selected & monitoring on going -	

