



**Stockton-on-Tees**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **Trading Standards and Licensing Service Delivery Plan 2009/10**



**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**



**2003-2004**  
*Rethinking Construction*  
**2004-2005**  
*Crime and Disorder Partnerships*

Front page picture – Infinity Bridge, Stockton, courtesy of R Gant

## Contents

		Page
Section 1	Introduction	1
Section 2	Core Responsibilities of the Trading Standards and Licensing Service	3
Section 3	Community, Organisational and Local Objectives	5
Section 4	Government Objectives	9
Section 5	Service Profile	13
Section 6	Partnership Work	15
Section 7	How Do We Compare?	19
Section 8	Consumer Needs and Expectations	23
Section 9	Business Needs and Expectations	27
Section 10	New Initiatives and Responsibilities	31
Section 11	Service Priorities, Key Actions and Activities for 2009/10	35
Section 12	How to Contact Us	51



## 1 Introduction

The Borough of Stockton-on-Tees covers an area of 20,400 hectares and is an area of contrasts - a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages, whilst maintaining a strong industrial presence. The population is around 189,100, living in approximately 81,000 households. The population has increased by almost 7% since the 1991 census, compared with a 2% fall for the north east as a whole.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has a vital role to play in providing quality services to the people of the Borough. The Council is performing strongly and is committed to improving services for local people through strong leadership, effective partnerships and investment in priorities. Stockton has just maintained its place amongst the country's high performing authorities for the sixth year in succession with a 4\*\*\*\* score, the highest level awarded, in the recent Comprehensive Assessment (CPA) results. Value for money remains strong, financial capacity is sound and resident satisfaction is at an all time high.

Within this setting the Trading Standards and Licensing Service provides an important regulatory function, carrying out a range of duties aimed at protecting consumers and reputable businesses. This protection is provided in relation to virtually the full range of personal and household goods and services, from the purchase of daily necessities to the arrangement of a mortgage.

The overarching goals of Stockton's Trading Standards and Licensing Service can be described as follows:

- To create informed confident consumers
- To create informed successful businesses
- To ensure a safe and fair trading environment

For 2009/10 the Service has identified ten main priorities to help in working towards these goals. All work will be underpinned by mechanisms designed to review, develop and modernise the Service and to help bring about continuous improvement.

In order to gain a better understanding of Trading Standards and Licensing, this Plan will also outline the context within which the Service operates. This includes setting out core responsibilities, the new challenges and pressures for the forthcoming year and the needs and expectations of local consumers and businesses. The work plan for the year have been designed taking into account these needs, expectations and new responsibilities.

It is also important to stress the aspects of Trading Standards and Licensing work which provide key involvement with both community and corporate objectives. Of particular importance here is the role of the Service in promoting safer and healthier communities, improving liveability and the quality of life and helping to regenerate the local economy.

The Service does not operate in isolation and takes part in a number of joint working initiatives with numerous partners across a range of activities. The Service will embrace partnership working where it can be used to improve service delivery.

This Service Delivery Plan is primarily aimed at informing Members, local residents and businesses operating within the Borough. It will also be used by the Service itself to focus officer attention on work priorities for the forthcoming year and as a tool by which performance can be measured.

Any feedback on this Plan, good or bad, is welcomed and can be made in writing to Trading Standards and Licensing, 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX, via e mail on [trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk) or by telephone on 01642 526560.



## 2 Core Responsibilities of the Trading Standards and Licensing Service

The work of the Service aims to promote open and competitive markets whilst empowering consumers making it easier for them to resolve problems. Only in a safe and fair trading environment, which protects both consumers and reputable business activity, can the local economy succeed and flourish.

The Service's key areas of responsibility can be shown as follows:

Responsibility	Description
Fair Trading	Tackling counterfeiting, doorstep selling, disrupting the informal economy and dealing with misleading statements about the price, quality or description of goods and services
Consumer Advice	Advice and assistance for consumers and traders with problems and disputes arising from the supply of consumer goods and services
Product Safety	Monitoring consumer goods to ensure that they are as safe as possible and do not present a risk to health
Age Restricted Sales	Ensuring certain age restricted products, for example alcohol, tobacco, videos, solvents, butane lighter fuel and fireworks, are not supplied to children
Food Standards	Ensuring that food is correctly described and labelled throughout the supply chain, and that compositional and nutritional standards are met
Weights and Measures	Work relating to the accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment in use for trade and the accuracy of quantity declarations made on products
Consumer Credit	Monitoring the credit licensing regime and ensuring transparency in credit transactions, documentation and advertisements
Fertilisers and Animal Feed	Registration and inspection of certain animal feed establishments and ensuring that both fertilisers and animal feeds are correct labelled and safe to use
Road Traffic	Work regarding unroadworthy vehicles, overloaded goods vehicles and weight restricted areas
Specialist Services	Metrology and Calibration Centre <sup>1</sup> Product testing laboratory <sup>1</sup>
Licensing Act	Licensing of alcohol sales, public entertainment and late night refreshment
Gambling Act	Licensing of gambling activities including casinos, bingo, betting shops, gaming machines and lotteries
Transportation Licensing	Vehicle, driver and operator licences for both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles
Other Licensing	Includes charitable collections and fund raising, skin piercing, hairdressers, street trading, sex shops, scrap metal dealers, explosives, poisons, animal welfare establishments and zoos

<sup>1</sup> A specialist centre, Tees Valley Measurement, is jointly funded by Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool councils and is subject to a formal written partnership agreement. The Centre provides specialist metrology facilities and a screening laboratory for product testing.



### 3 Community, Organisational and Local Objectives

#### Community Objectives

The Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2021, is produced by Stockton Renaissance, the local strategic partnership for the Borough drawing together representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. The Strategy sets out a vision of economic renaissance, enhanced well being, achievement and quality of place to be delivered by focusing on five core improvement and three supporting themes.

The Trading Standards and Licensing Service have an important role to play in helping to meet these themes:

Core Improvement Theme	Areas of Trading Standards and Licensing Work that Link to the Improvement Theme
Economic Regeneration and Transport	Active targeting of rogue traders and trading malpractice Work to disrupt the informal 'black' economy Tackling product counterfeiting Advice, assistance and practical help to local businesses Risk based, comprehensive inspection of businesses Provision of a wide-ranging calibration service Operation of a Teesside wide "Good Garage Scheme" Licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles
Environment and Housing	Rules on energy labelling for informed choice Testing the accuracy of 'green' claims Controls on construction products, hazardous substances and packaging requirements Fertilisers and pesticides enforcement and sampling Monitoring the provision of Home Information Packs, Energy Performance Certificates and Display Energy Certificates Regulating estate agents and property misdescriptions Setting emission levels for taxis
Safer Communities	Ensuring the safety of all consumer goods Help in tackling anti-social behaviour caused by the under age sale of alcohol and fireworks Tackling illegal money lending Dealing with doorstep crime Road traffic overloading and unroadworthy vehicles Licensing of explosives and poisons
Children and Young People	Under age sales enforcement Promoting healthy eating and nutritional standards Sampling of school meals Gambling Act enforcement
Healthier Communities and Adults	Smoke Free Stockton initiative Think B4 U Drink campaign Food standards work, labelling, composition and sampling Promoting healthy eating and nutritional standards Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy Controls on the advertising and labelling of tobacco products Animal feed enforcement and sampling Licensing of skin piercing and animal welfare establishments

### 3 Community, Organisational and Local Objectives

Supporting Theme	Areas of Trading Standards and Licensing Work that Link to the Supporting Theme
Stronger Communities	Promotion of a fair, safe and equitable market place Consumer advice provision Consumer education initiatives
Older Adults	Creation of No Cold Calling Zones Stockton Doorstoppers Initiative
Arts, Leisure and Culture	Licensing of public entertainment, late night refreshment and alcohol sales Work to ensure a fair and transparent gambling regime

### 3 Community, Organisational and Local Objectives

#### Key Organisational Priorities

The Council Plan forms a business plan for achieving the Council's contribution to the core and supporting themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy. It sets out the overall vision and ambitions of the Council, describes progress, and charts the way ahead with a series of specific objectives and targets. It also sets out key priorities aimed at developing the Council and ensuring organisational and operational effectiveness.

The work of the Trading Standards and Licensing Service links to these organisational priorities in a number of ways:

Key Organisational Priority	Areas of Trading Standards and Licensing Work that Link to the Priority
Effective Performance and Resource Management	Specialist Quality Mark for Consumer Advice Centre Internal quality management procedures Monitoring performance levels internally and within the corporate performance monitoring framework All CPA indicators above the upper threshold level Very positive peer review of the Service carried out in February 2007 Internal self assessment of Licensing Section carried out in January 2008 with related improvement plan Monthly budget monitoring Active member of North East Trading Standards Association Partnership working in areas of crime prevention and health and safety promotion Introduction of Teesside wide Good Garage Scheme Links to regional Scambusters Team Setting up of regional Illegal Money Lending Team Joint working arrangements with Consumer Direct Formal joint agreement for the Metrology Centre (Tees Valley Measurement)
People Development and Learning	Corporate and professional competency frameworks Commitment to train staff and update skills and knowledge Two officers currently working towards the Trading Standards professional qualification Positive results from recent staff survey Participation in 'Setting the Standard' initiatives Participation in Stockton's Management Development Programme
Focusing on Residents and Customers	Customer First Programme – the Service achieved stage 2 accreditation in October 2008 and is now committed to working towards Customer Service Excellence Standard Annual programme of consultation with consumers and businesses Ongoing satisfaction surveys Use of the Viewpoint panel Creation of No Cold Calling Zones

### 3 Community, Organisational and Local Objectives

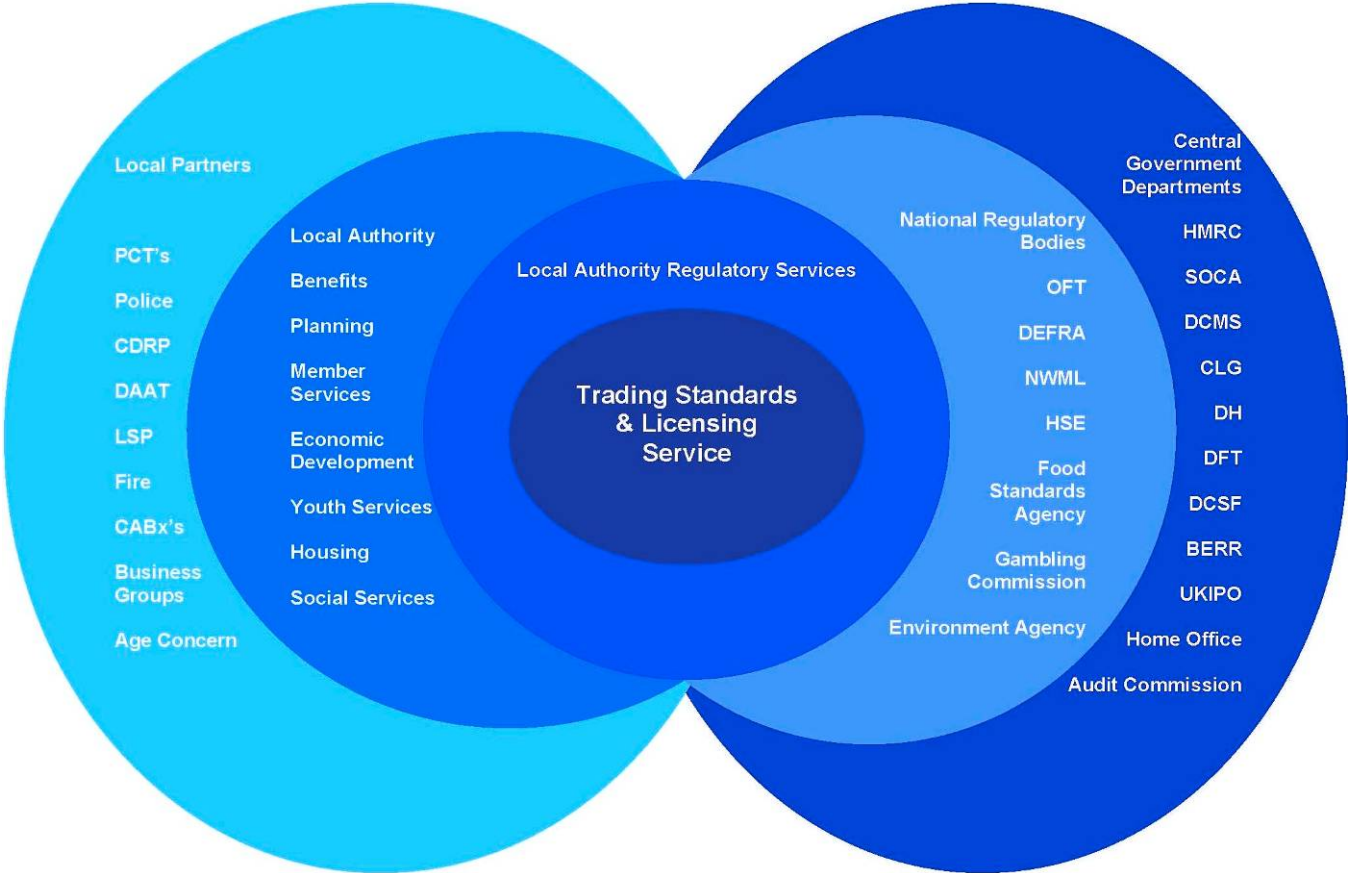
#### Local Objectives

Local objectives are designed to target issues which generate high levels of local concern or have the potential to cause significant harm within the Borough:

Local Objective	Areas of Trading Standards and Licensing Work that Link to this Objective
Respond to resident's concerns and fears of crime and anti-social behaviour	Control on the supply of products that may influence the incidence of anti-social behaviour, especially the sale of alcohol and fireworks to children Links to Safer Stockton Partnership Complaints investigation Intelligence led enforcement Work to prevent people from becoming victims of commercial crime in their own home No Cold Calling Zones Stockton Doorstoppers initiative
Improve the public health of the Borough	Controls on the advertising and labelling of tobacco products Work to prevent the sale of tobacco, solvents and butane gas to children Links to Smoke Free North East & Stockton Smoke Free Alliance Think B4 U Drink campaign as part of the Alcohol Reduction Strategy Enforcement of smoke free legislation Development of 'Healthy Catering Partnership' to encourage healthier meal choices at local catering outlets
Promote a fair, safe and equitable market place, providing protection for consumers	All areas of Trading Standards and Licensing work contribute to this key local objective

**4 Government Objectives**

The Service shares similar objectives and targets with other council services, local partners and central government agencies. The inter-relationships are many and varied and are demonstrated in the diagram below:



## 4 Government Objectives

Most central government agencies have established long term strategies and have set associated national objectives and targets. The Service will consider these government objectives when setting priorities and work plans for the forthcoming year. The key government strategies which have an impact on Trading Standards and Licensing work are outlined below:

<p><b>Dept Of Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing preventable premature death from smoking</li> <li>• Reducing alcohol dependency</li> <li>• Improving overall health and well being</li> </ul>	<p><b>BERR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident, informed consumers</li> <li>• Informed, successful business</li> <li>• Fair and Safe Trading Environment</li> <li>• Efficient, effective and improving Trading Standards Service</li> </ul>	<p><b>Office Of Fair Trading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making markets work well for consumers, explaining and improving awareness and understanding of how markets work</li> </ul>	<p><b>PM Strategy Unit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling alcohol related disorder in towns and cities</li> <li>• Clamping down on irresponsible promotions</li> <li>• Providing better information about the dangers of alcohol misuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>HM Treasury</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing traders entering the informal economy</li> <li>• Improving detection and punishment of traders operating in the informal economy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Trading Standards Priorities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information</li> <li>2. To prevent people being the victims of commercial crime in their own home</li> <li>3. To ensure fair competition through goods and services being safe, correctly described, priced and measured</li> <li>4. To ensure quality food and feed standards for healthier communities</li> <li>5. To promote good business practice and help reputable businesses to flourish</li> <li>6. To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy</li> <li>7. To prevent harm to residents from the effects of tobacco and alcohol</li> <li>8. To ensure the implementation of a fair, transparent and effective gambling regime</li> <li>9. To reduce crime and disorder in licensed premises and vehicles to help promote a safe and diverse night time economy</li> <li>10. To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision</li> </ol>		<p><b>Dept For Culture, Media And Sport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing crime and disorder in licensed premises</li> <li>• Preventing public nuisance from licensed premises</li> <li>• Protecting children from harm</li> </ul>
<p><b>Home Office</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel more secure in their homes and daily lives</li> <li>• More offenders are caught and victims better supported</li> <li>• Fewer people's lives ruined by alcohol and drugs</li> <li>• Communities engaged in tackling social problems</li> </ul>			<p><b>Rogers Review – National Enforcement Priorities For Local Authority Regulatory Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Quality</li> <li>• Alcohol Licensing</li> <li>• Hygiene of Food Business</li> <li>• Improve Health in Work Premises</li> <li>• Fair Trading</li> <li>• Animal &amp; Public Health (Time limited)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Standards Agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing food borne illness and reducing risks from contamination of food</li> <li>• Make it easier for consumers to choose a healthy diet</li> <li>• Enable consumers to make informed choices</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFRA</b></p> <p>Sustainable farming and food, including animal health and welfare</p> <p>Sustainable rural communities</p>	<p><b>Dept For Communities And Local Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering economic prosperity</li> <li>• Safe communities</li> <li>• Better health to the most disadvantaged</li> <li>• Sustainable communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>National Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NI 183 Impact of Local Authority Trading Standards Services on the Fair Trading Environment</li> <li>• NI 182 Satisfaction of Businesses with LA Regulatory Services</li> </ul>

### Rogers Review

The recommendations of the Rogers Review, to set the national enforcement priorities for local regulatory services, have been accepted in full by the government. The Review used an evidence-based approach to prioritise over 60 consumer protection and environmental health policy areas. Further evaluation and analysis reduced this to 5 national enforcement priorities, namely:

- Fair trading – including false and misleading descriptions, product counterfeiting and doorstep selling
- Alcohol licensing – alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment licensing and its enforcement
- Air quality – including regulation of pollution from factories and homes
- Food hygiene – hygiene of food businesses selling, distributing and manufacturing food and the safety and fitness of food on the premise
- Health and safety - improving health in the workplace

These national priorities clarify what matters most to central government, providing focus to the wide range of activities carried out by local regulators. It is anticipated that in order to make the priorities meaningful and to help authorities determine adequate levels of activity the government will work with the Local Better Regulation Office to disseminate best practice and draw up advice on minimum levels of enforcement.

The Review also recognised that local priorities formulated in response to local needs would continue to be important and relevant. Underage sales in particular were identified as an area that generated high levels of local concern.

The recommendations of the Rogers Review have been incorporated in this Plan as part of the priorities, key actions and activities outlined in section 11. This can be seen, for example, by the Service's desire to prevent people being the victims of commercial crime in their own home, to disrupt traders operating in the informal economy and to reduce crime and disorder in licensed premises.

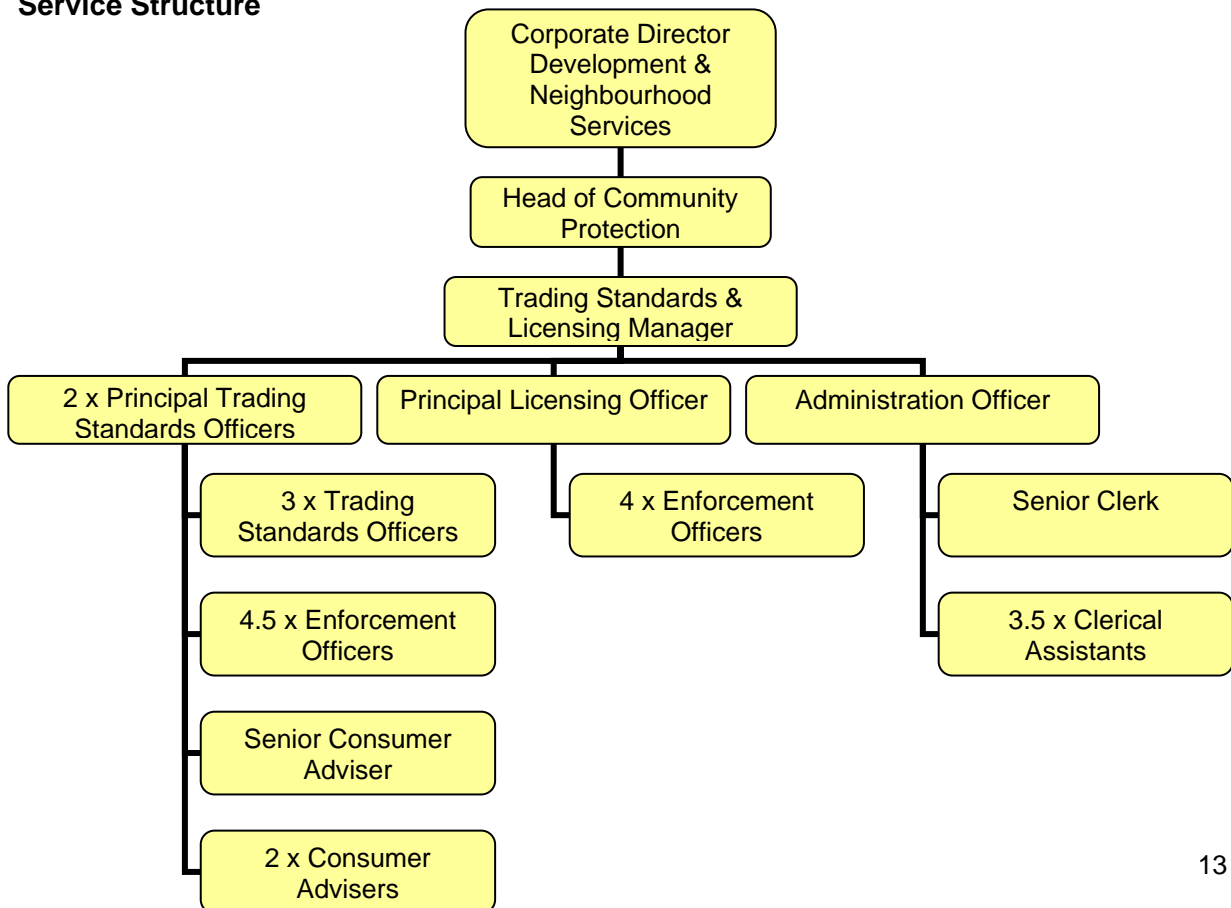


**Council Structure**

The Council's services are delivered by four Directorates. Trading Standards and Licensing forms part of the Development and Neighbourhood Services Directorate:



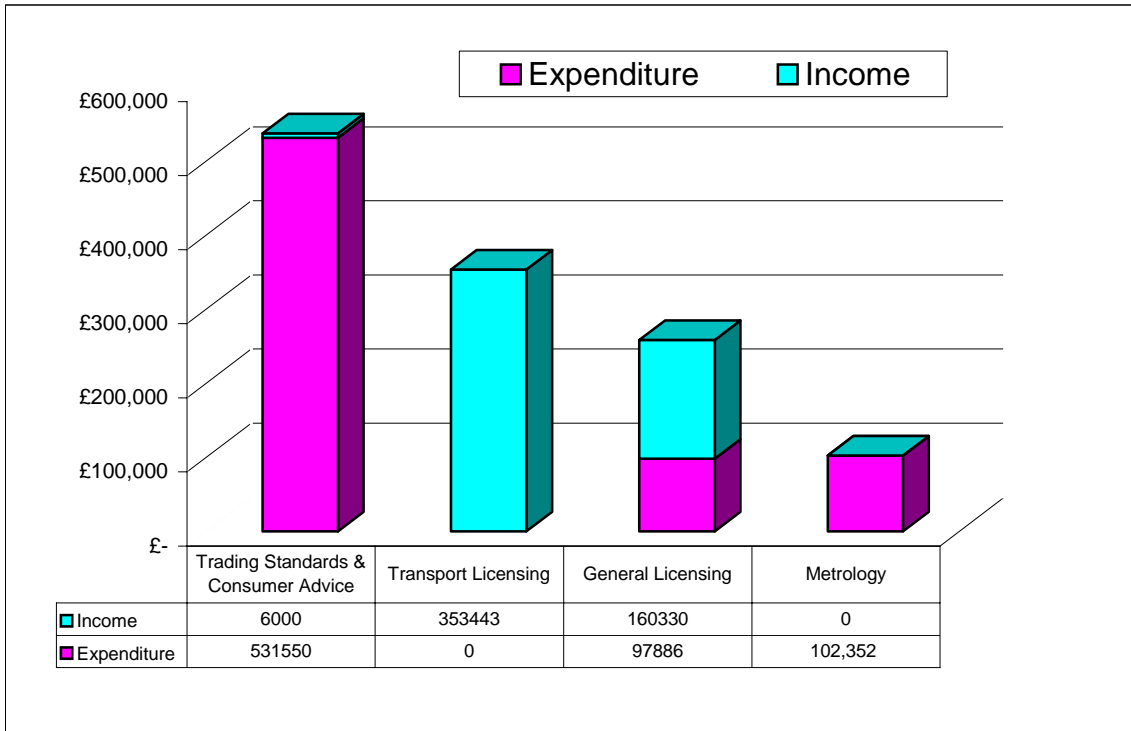
**Service Structure**



**5 Service Profile**

**Service Budget**

The income and revenue for the main service areas are as follows:



## 6 Partnership Work

The Service does not operate in isolation and takes part in a number of joint working initiatives and information forums with numerous partners across a range of activities. The Service will embrace partnership working where it can be used to improve service delivery:

Area of Service	Partners
<p><b>Tees Valley Measurement (TVM)</b></p> <p>TVM fulfils the Service's statutory responsibility to provide and maintain standards of weight and measure. It also carries out specialist metrology inspections such as checking the accuracy of petrol pumps and weighbridges and generates income via a verification and calibration service. There is also an accurate, cost effective and versatile testing laboratory to aid the enforcement of consumer protection legislation. The services offered by TVM are of a specialist nature which if undertaken by individual authorities would require duplication of expensive capital equipment and officer expertise</p>	<p>TVM is jointly funded by Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool councils and is subject to a formal, written partnership agreement</p>
<p><b>North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA)</b></p> <p>Joint project work, sharing knowledge, information and resources to encourage fair, open and consistent enforcement and to protect, maintain and develop the high public profile of the Trading Standards Service throughout the region</p>	<p>NETSA is a partnership of the 12 north east local authority Trading Standards Services: Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, South Tyneside, Stockton-on-Tees and Sunderland</p>
<p><b>Scambusters</b></p> <p>The government funded Scambusters team operates on a regional basis. They work across local authority boundaries focusing on the hardest to tackle scams and rogue traders that set out to rip people off. The team use targeted, proactive, intelligence led enforcement, working in close partnership with Trading Standards, the Police and other enforcement agencies. Some of the issues they have tackled include counterfeiting operations, cowboy builders, dodgy car dealers, the supply of dangerous furniture and doorstep crime</p>	<p>Scambusters operates over the 12 north east local authorities working closely with Trading Standards, the respective Police forces and the Regional Intelligence Unit</p>
<p><b>Stockton Home Safety Association</b></p> <p>Aims to promote safety within the home and increase the public's awareness of local safety issues</p>	<p>Fire Service Police Councillors Community representatives</p>

<p><b>Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT)</b></p> <p>The region's recently established IMLT is a government funded team operating across the north east. It aims to initiate, develop and establish a regional approach to combat the illegal money lending activities of loan sharks. As well as having an enforcement role the team will also look at financial inclusion, to help people gain access to affordable credit. To this end, the team will focus on providing support to victims as well as on securing convictions against illegal lenders.</p>	<p>The IMLT operates over the 12 north east local authorities working closely with Trading Standards, the respective Police forces and the Regional Intelligence Unit</p>
<p><b>Smoke Free Stockton Alliance</b></p> <p>Aims to reduce smoking prevalence, increase quit levels, reduce second-hand smoke and reduce illegal sales of cigarettes through initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on relevant legislation regarding smoking restrictions in public places</li> <li>• Questionnaires to establish customer views on smoking and produce recommendations for further action based on the findings</li> <li>• Guidance on policy development, implementation and enforcement</li> <li>• Signage for traders to communicate smoking policy to customers</li> </ul>	<p>Stockton Renaissance Environmental Health North Tees Primary Care Trust Tees Start Stopping Service Local councillors and residents Cleveland Fire Service</p>
<p><b>Consumer Direct</b></p> <p>This is a government led initiative to improve the provision of consumer advice throughout the country. The north east regional call centre based in Redcar, deals with all first tier telephone advice allowing the local Consumer Advice Centres to deal with the more complex issues that emerge. Protocol agreements exist for the referral of information from Consumer Direct to each of the north east local authorities</p>	<p>Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) Office of Fair Trading (OFT) All NETSA members</p>
<p><b>Operations Strongbow and Bombay</b></p> <p>Aims to deal with the problem of doorstep crime and includes information sharing and joint responses (mainly Police and Trading Standards) when vulnerable consumers are targeted. Now extended to the three Police force areas across the north east</p>	<p>Police Neighbouring Trading Standards Social Services Victim Support</p>

## 6 Partnership Working

<p><b>Stockton Doorstoppers Initiative</b></p> <p>Aims to raise awareness of distraction burglary without increasing the fear of crime and offer advice to individuals and groups about how to avoid becoming a victim of this type of crime. Also to encourage the reporting to the Police of such crimes</p>	<p>Crime Reduction, Adult Protection Victim Support, Stockton Home Safety Association, Community Service Volunteers, Cleveland Police Strongbow Team and Neighbourhood Watch.</p>
<p><b>Good Garage Scheme</b></p> <p>Aims to improve standards in the used car market by ensuring garages trade fairly and honestly. Only those garages complying with specific trading conditions will be permitted to join the scheme giving consumers confidence and reassurance when buying a car</p>	<p>Local businesses</p>
<p><b>Safer Stockton Partnership</b></p> <p>The Partnership aims to improve the safety of the community by reducing the levels and fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Key initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think B4 U Drink campaign – award winning campaign aimed at raising awareness of issues regarding excessive alcohol consumption</li> <li>• Pubwatch scheme – quarterly meetings with licensees and other agencies to identify local issues and problem areas</li> </ul>	<p>Police North Tees PCT (Public Health) North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust Community Safety Road Safety Unit The Albert Centre (Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre) Local licensees</p>
<p><b>Regional Tobacco Control Teams</b></p> <p>These teams have been formed to tackle the underage sale of cigarettes to children, to enforce the labelling and advertising rules and to tackle counterfeit and illicit tobacco sales</p>	<p>Trading Standards HMRC Fresh</p>

## Enforcement and Information Forums

Forum	Purpose
<p><b>Consumer Regulation Website (CRW)</b></p> <p>Operated by the Office of Fair Trading, the CRW provides a means for sharing and exchanging information on specific investigations and provides on-line access to the Central Register of Convictions database</p>	<p>A means of sharing knowledge and information to encourage fair, open and consistent enforcement</p>
<p><b>Consumer Direct Database</b></p> <p>Operated by the Office of Fair Trading, containing details of all complaints made to Consumer Direct across the country. Provides vital intelligence on the trading practices of problem traders locally, regionally and nationally</p>	<p>Provides a valuable intelligence source helping in the identification of problem traders and complaint trends</p>
<p><b>Food Surveillance Database</b></p> <p>Operated by Health Protection Scotland and sponsored by the Food Standards Agency, the database details information on local authority food sampling activities</p>	<p>Provides information on food samples and analysis results to help prevent duplication of work and allow better targeting of scarce resources</p>
<p><b>Regional Intelligence Officer (RIO)</b></p> <p>The RIO's role is to encourage a more intelligence led approach to enforcement, using data from a number of sources, including Trading Standards and Consumer Direct, the Police and other enforcement agencies, to provide greater consistency and closer working arrangements. All intelligence is dealt with in accordance with the National Intelligence Model.</p>	<p>Provides a means of sharing knowledge and intelligence to help target rogue traders and coordinate enforcement activity</p>
<p><b>Tees Valley Licensing Liaison Group</b></p> <p>This group is a partnership of the local authority Licensing Services within Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool and Darlington</p>	<p>Provides a forum to share knowledge, information and resources to encourage fair, open and consistent enforcement of licensing provisions</p>

### National Performance Framework

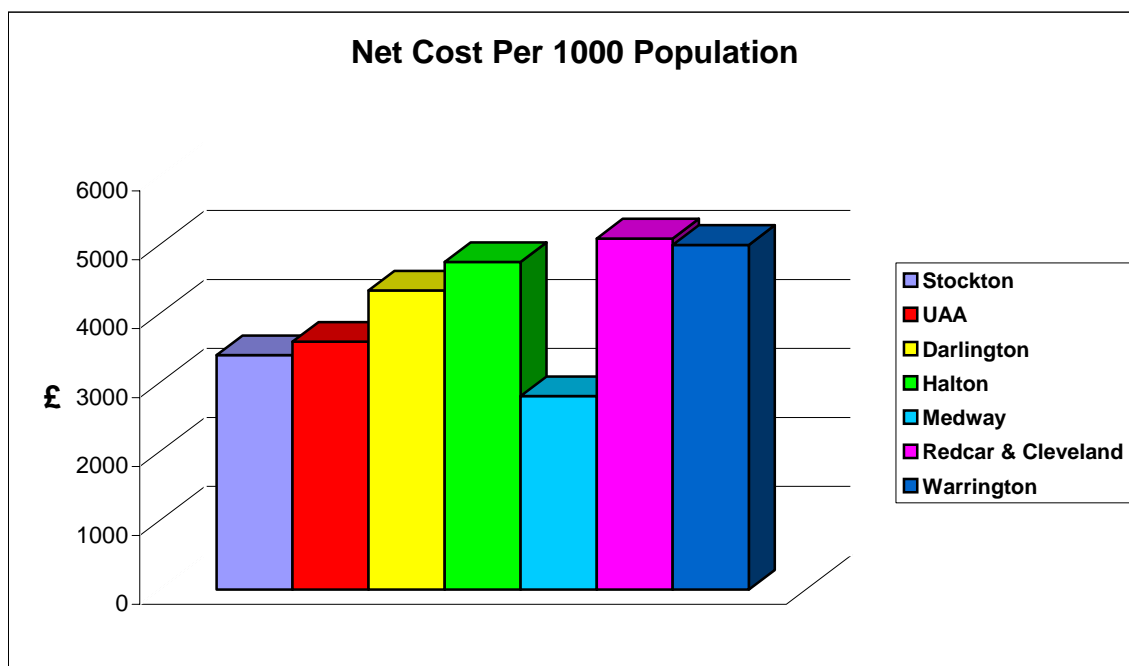
Several years ago the government introduced a national performance framework for Trading Standards requiring the submission of an annual performance return. The figures measure performance across a number of key areas including consumer and business satisfaction, inspection and compliance levels and staff training. In 2008/09 the Service's performance indicators were above the upper threshold level in all areas, whilst the consumer satisfaction index of 97.6% was amongst the highest in the country.

### CIPFA Benchmarking

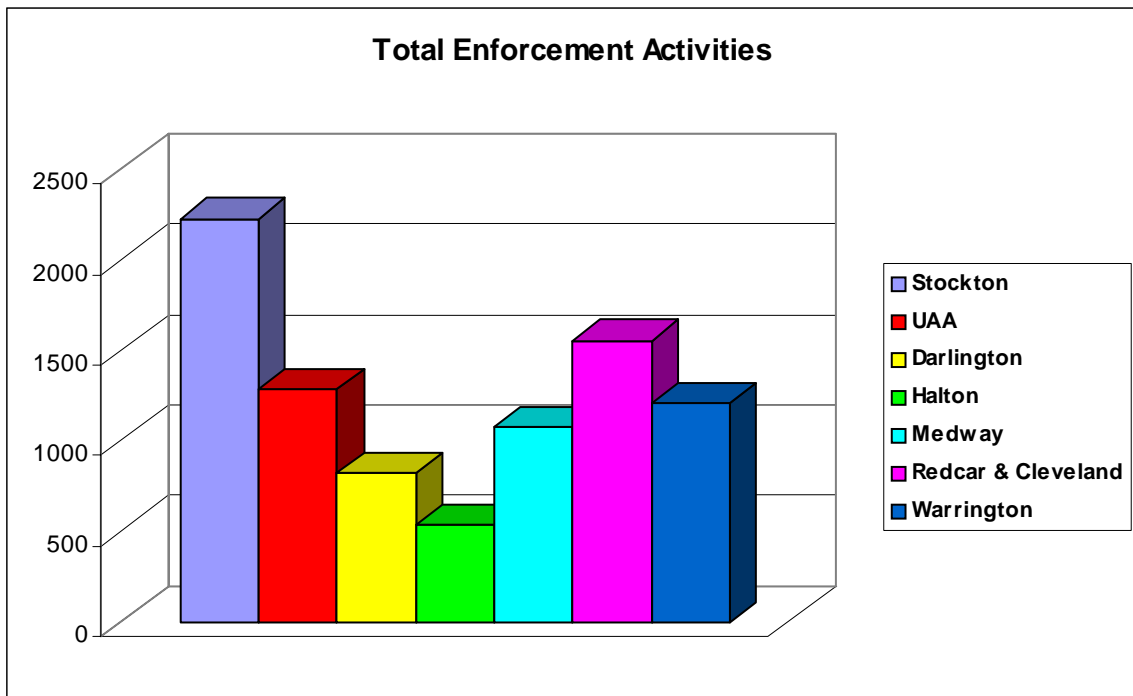
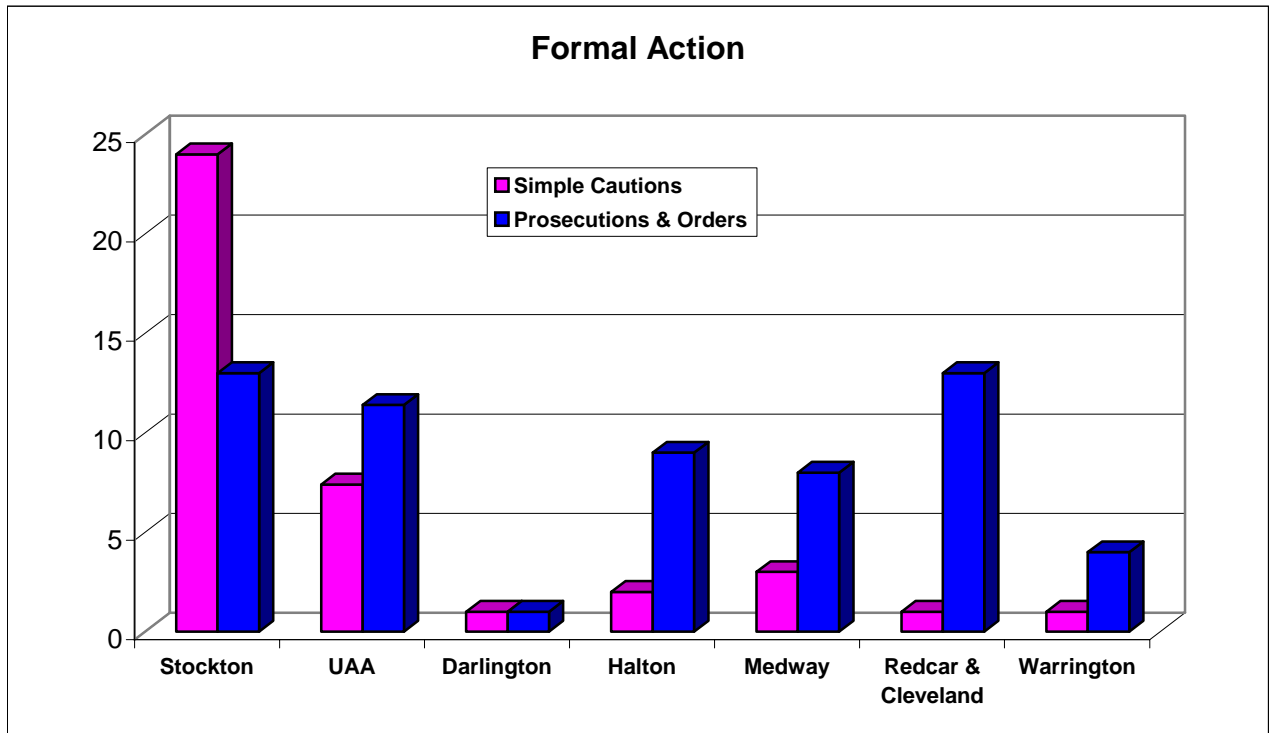
Carrying out comparisons with similar services can be an important tool for identifying areas in need of improvement. The Service has therefore carried out a desk top benchmarking exercise of the data submitted as part of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) return. This return includes Trading Standards data on expenditure, staffing, levels of enforcement work, prosecutions and formal cautions. The 2007/08 return has been analysed.

The Nearest Neighbour Model on the Institute of Public Finance's website was used to identify similar unitary authorities in respect of population density and profile, staffing levels and net cost. From our fifteen nearest neighbours, three out of our four nearest neighbours, plus Redcar and Cleveland and Darlington, were chosen for comparison. For analysis purposes the unitary authority average (UAA) has also been given.

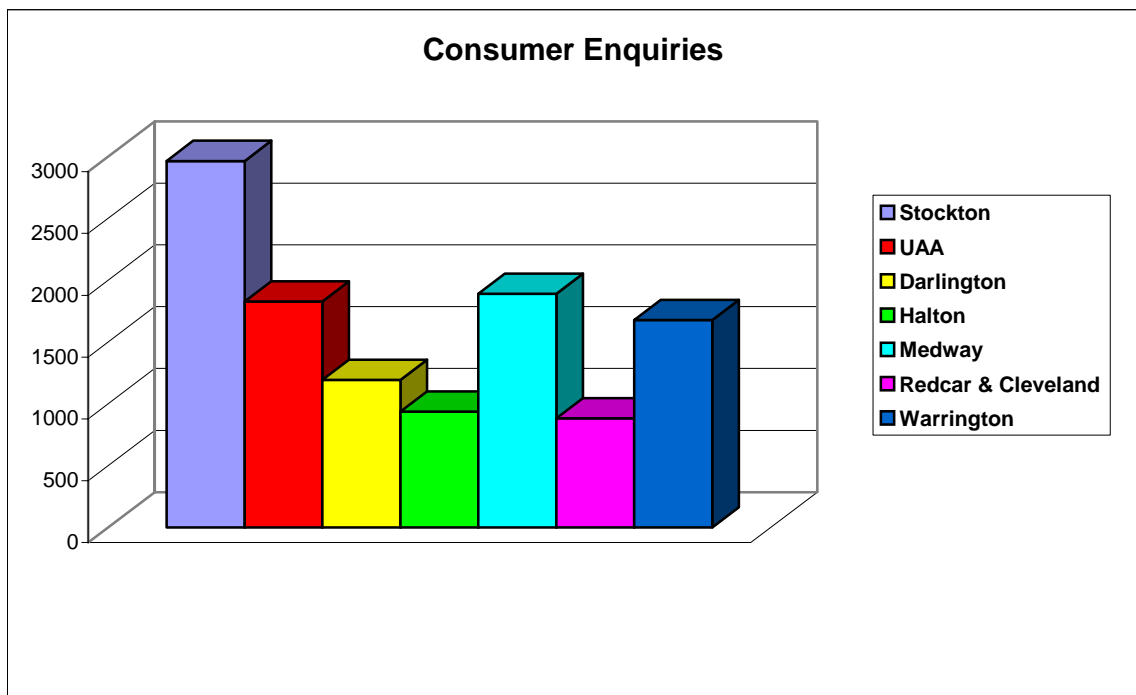
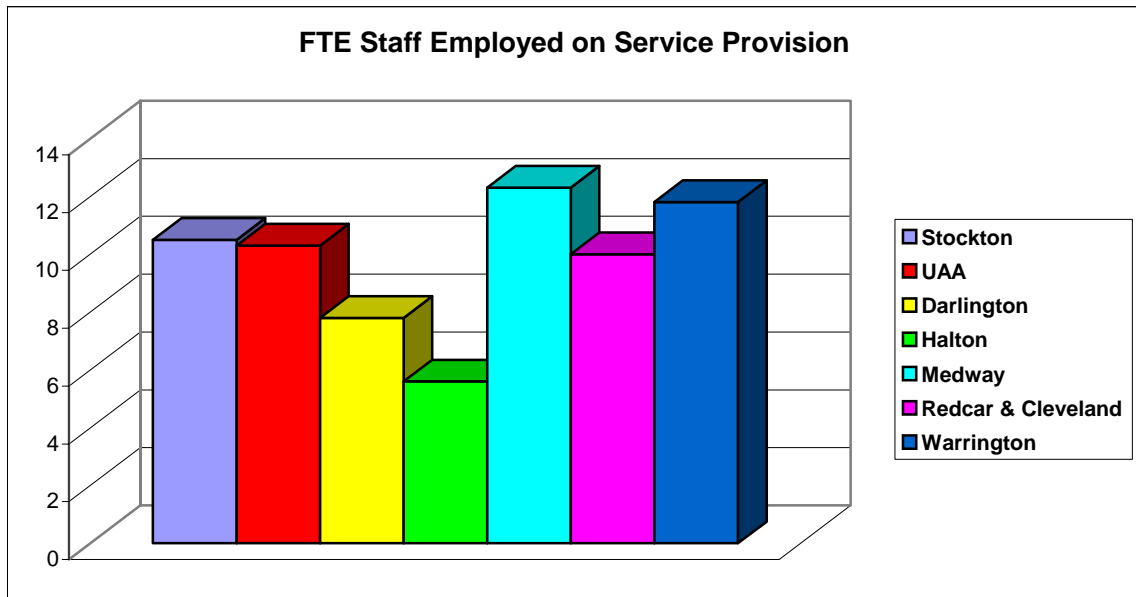
The results are as follows:



7 How Do We Compare?



## 7 How Do We Compare?



### Conclusion

The Service compared very favourably with other similar authorities. In terms of net cost per 1000 population, the Service was cheaper than the unitary authority average and all but one of the selected nearest neighbours. Whilst staffing levels were similar to the unitary authority average, the total number of enforcement visits was considerably higher, well above the unitary authority average and the selected nearest neighbours.

In addition the number of formal actions undertaken, including prosecutions and cautions, was well above the unitary authority average and the Service dealt with more complaints and enquiries than any other authority selected, at a level well above the unitary authority average.



## 8 Consumer Needs and Expectations

### Demand for the Service

Each year the Service receives around 8,000 complaints and enquiries from local residents. The Consumer Advice Centre located in the central library in Stockton provides the focal point for local contacts.

Nature of Contact	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
<b>Civil Complaints</b> (Relates to specific complaints dealt with by the Consumer Advice Centre)	3952	2069	1997	1748
<b>Stockton's Consumer Direct Contacts</b> (Relates to first tier consumer advice)	-	3247	3249	3657
<b>Enquiries</b> (General enquiries dealt with by the Consumer Advice Centre)	1133	370	359	373
<b>Return Visits</b> (Where a consumer calls for further advice on an outstanding civil complaint)	1656	1905	1840	1850
<b>Criminal Complaints</b> (Relates to complaints dealt with by the Trading Standards enforcement team)	520	601	605	537
<b>Licensing Complaints</b> (Relates to issues handled by the Licensing enforcement team)	347	417	354	325
<b>Total Contacts</b>	<b>7608</b>	<b>8609</b>	<b>8404</b>	<b>8490</b>

Consumer Direct gives first tier telephone advice on consumer issues. The more complex problems and follow up casework and are referred onto local authority advice centres for action.

Although regionally the number of calls to Consumer Direct (CD) has fallen, the level of calls from Stockton residents has increased.

## 8 Consumer Needs and Expectations

### Analysis of Complaints

The analysis of incoming complaints enables the Service to identify problem traders and emerging trends in trade practices and to target enforcement action against the identified problem areas.

Subject of Licensing Complaints	2005/06 %	2006/07 %	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
Taxi drivers - includes sub-standard driving, poor attitude, abusive behavior and fitness to hold a licence	36	41	27	29
Taxi operators – includes failure to turn up for booked fares and failure to respond to complaints promptly	11	12	8	10
House to house and street collections	5	11	5	1
Breach of conditions relating to alcohol licences or sale of late night food	-	11	20	11
Vehicles – includes failure to provide documentation, failure to attend for test and substandard vehicle condition	21	5	15	6

The majority of licensing complaints concern the conduct of taxi drivers. There have also been a high number of complaints about breaches of licence conditions for the sale of alcohol and late night food. These include opening after hours, inoperative CCTV systems and public nuisance caused by noise and litter.

The top ten areas of Trading Standards complaints were as follows:

Subject of Trading Standards Complaints	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
	%	Position	%	Position	%	Position	%	Position
Home maintenance, repairs and improvements	11.1	1	11.0	1	11.4	1	9.5	1
Second-hand motor vehicles	7.0	3	5.9	4	7.0	2	6.7	2
Furniture	7.2	2	6.7	3	6.0	5	5.0	3
Telecommunications including mobile phones	6.3	4	7.6	2	6.9	3	4.1	4
Clothing	-	-	-	-	3.2	7	3.8	5
Food and drink	4.2	6	5.7	5	6.1	4	3.4	6
Radio, TV and audiovisual equipment	4.7	5	3.9	7	4.5	6	3.2	7
Insurance	-	-	-	-	2.7	9	2.1	8
Double glazing products and installation	3.1	9	4.2	6	3.0	8	2.0	9
Competitions and prize draws	3.2	8	2.8	8	2.7	9	2.0	9

## 8 Consumer Needs and Expectations

For the fourth year running the most complained about area was home maintenance, repairs and improvements. Complaints about second hand motor vehicles and telecommunications also remained high.

### Consumer Advice Centre Satisfaction Surveys

Where casework is undertaken as opposed to one-off advice or conciliation, consumers are sent a satisfaction questionnaire at the conclusion of the case. In 2008/09 a total of 131 questionnaires were sent out, 72 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 55%. The results were as follows:

Question Posed	2005/06 %	2006/07 %	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
Users who were very or fairly satisfied with the service provided	98	99	100	100
Users who found the information given very or fairly easy to understand	93	100	100	100
Users who felt that they were very or fairly well kept up to date with the progress of their complaint	87	100	100	99
User who felt that they were treated fairly at all times	100	100	100	100
Users who felt that it was very or fairly easy to access our service	89	99	100	100

Satisfaction levels remain very high with all users surveyed being very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by the Consumer Advice Centre.

### Viewpoint Survey 2006

The Viewpoint Panel currently consists of 1330 people who represent a balanced sample, based on gender, age and geographical location, of the Borough's residents. 810 members completed and returned the questionnaire, a response rate of 61%.

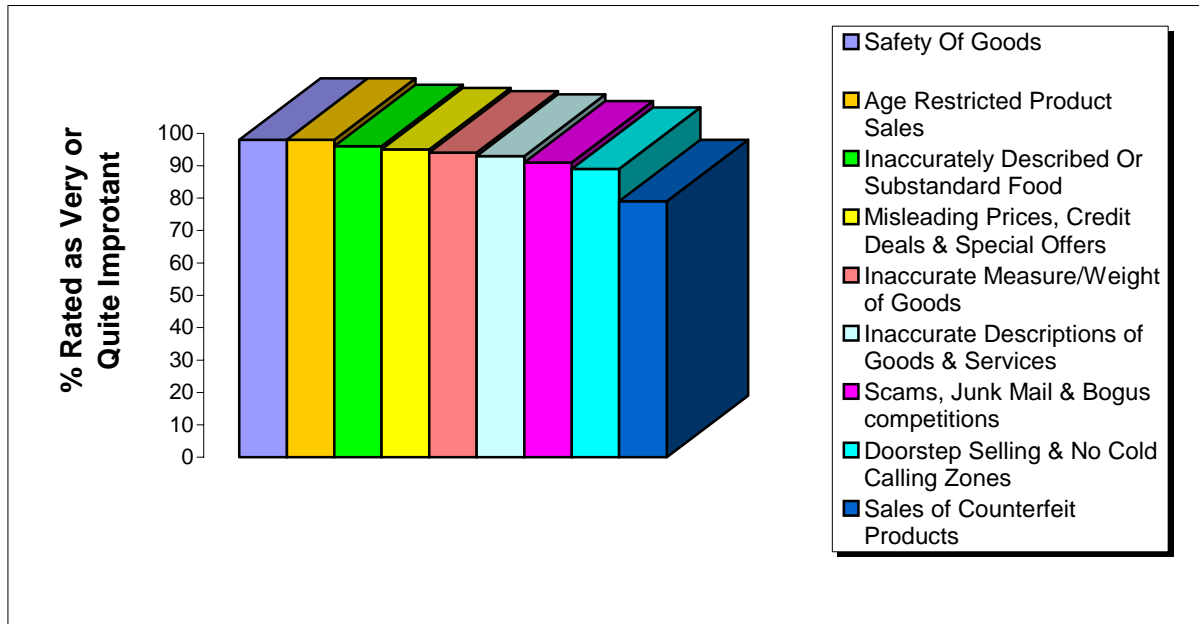
An encouraging 82% of the Panel were aware of the Service and 53% said they would use the Service if they had a problem with faulty goods or services.

Disappointingly only 7% were aware of the then newly launched Consumer Direct North East.

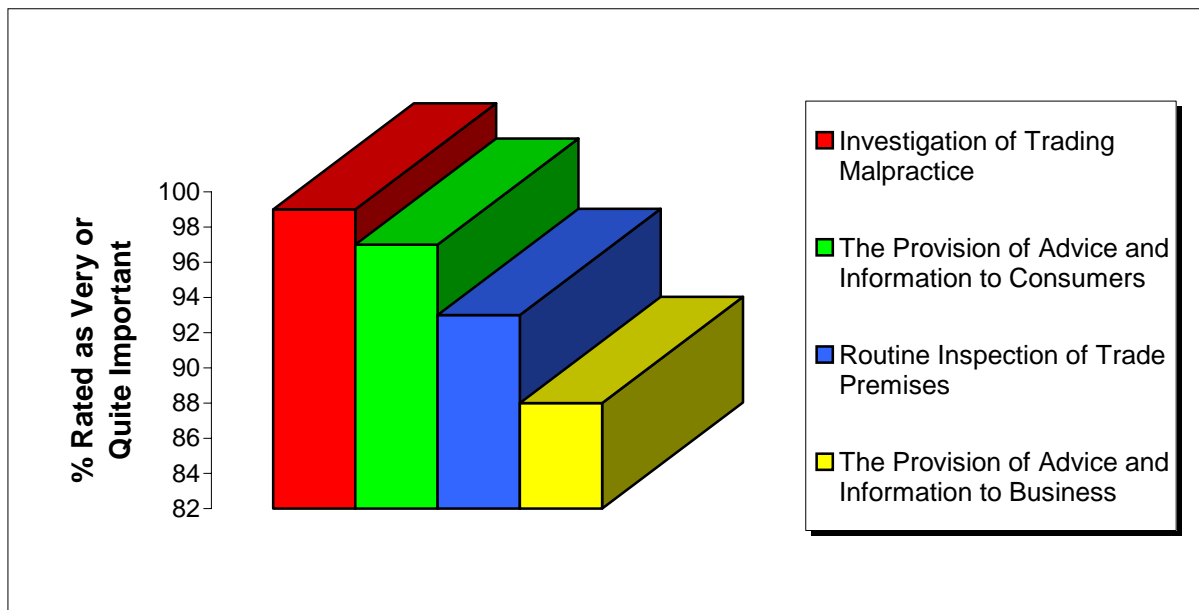
The Panel was also asked about both the importance of consumer protection issues and related areas of Trading Standards work. The results are shown overleaf:

## 8 Consumer Needs and Expectations

The Panel was asked to indicate the level of importance of consumer protection issues



The Panel was asked to indicate the level of importance of various areas of Trading Standards work



### Dedicated Website

A dedicated website [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton) was launched in July 2003. In the last year alone there have been almost 13,000 hits on the homepage. The Service will continue to develop the website to ensure that the information it contains is relevant, up to date and accurate.

## 9 Business Needs and Expectations

### Analysis of Requests for Advice, including Home Authority Work

Last year the Service received 229 requests for advice from local businesses or referrals from other enforcement agencies about Stockton traders, compared with 192 the previous year. Requests for advice relating to trade descriptions and other fair trading issues were the most common with advice on civil law issues still very high.

Area of Legislation	2005/06 %	2006/07 %	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
<b>Civil Law</b> Problems relating to the supply of consumer goods and services	45	50	62	31
<b>Unfair Trading</b> Fraud, false claims & descriptions, prize draws, doorstep selling	32	21	18	44
<b>Food Standards</b> Labelling, quality and composition	8	7	3	5
<b>Consumer Credit</b> Licensing, advertising and documentation	8	7	2	3
<b>Safety</b> Product safety including toys and electrical items, as well as the sale of age restricted products	3	7	13	7

### Analysis of Inspection Findings

From a total of 855 comprehensive inspections, planned inspections to a trade premise where compliance with all relevant areas of legislation is checked, a major non-compliance requiring follow-up action was found in 83 or 9.7% of inspections. The most common problems found were the sale of out of date foods along with falsely described and incorrectly priced goods and services.

Area of Legislation	Identified Non-compliances			
	2005/06 %	2006/07 %	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
<b>Pricing</b> Misleading prices, price marking and special offers	18	33	16	14
<b>Fair Trading</b> Copyright/trademarks, misleading adverts and restrictive statements	9	33	9	10
<b>Food Standards</b> Labelling, quality and composition	43	25	34	29
<b>Safety</b> Product safety including toys and electrical items, as well as the sale of age restricted products	5	12	8	10
<b>Equipment</b> Accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment e.g. petrol pumps, weighbridges, beer meters and shop scales	4	14	12	8
<b>Unfair Trading</b> False descriptions applied to goods or services	5	7	14	18

**Analysis of Complaints Received about Local Businesses**

Safety concerns, including the sale of age restricted products to children, and fair trading issues, including copied trademarks, false descriptions, misleading adverts and restrictive statements, continue to be the most common subjects of complaint.

Area of Complaint	2005/06 %	2006/07 %	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
<b>Fair Trading</b> Copyright/trademarks, misleading adverts, restrictive statements	29	31	27	23
<b>Safety</b> Product safety including toys and electrical items, as well as the sale of age restricted products	23	26	30	21
<b>Unfair Trading</b> False descriptions applied to goods or services, duty to trade fairly, competitions & prize draws	17	20	13	28
<b>Pricing</b> Misleading prices, price marking, special offers etc	18	13	19	15
<b>Food Standards</b> Labelling, quality, composition etc	8	6	6	3

**Business Satisfaction**

In April 2008, the government introduced a new set of 198 performance indicators for local authorities. National indicator 182 relates to the satisfaction of business with local authority regulatory services, including trading standards, licensing, environmental health and private sector housing functions.

A satisfaction questionnaire was sent to a random selection of those businesses contacted by one of the regulatory services. For the purposes of the survey the businesses were classified as either compliant or non-compliant. The responses were weighted and combined to give a standardised score in relation to the following two questions:

- Were you treated fairly?
- Was the contact helpful?

Across all 4 services, 386 businesses were contacted and 142 responded.

The results for Trading Standards and Licensing are given below:

Question Posed	Trading Standards		Licensing	
	% who agreed	Standardised score	% who agreed	Standardised score
I felt my business was treated fairly	82	63	88	72
I felt the contact was helpful	79		74	

## 9 Business Needs and Expectations

Other questions were asked in the survey and the overall satisfaction levels for Trading Standards & Licensing were good. A summary of the responses is given below:

Question Posed	Trading Standards (%)	Licensing (%)
Users who found the information/advice given useful	74	82
Users who found our staff informative	77	86
Users who found our officers courteous and polite at all times	89	77
Users who were aware of the Service before they had contact with us	79	90



New responsibilities and specific local and government initiatives have an impact on the way the Trading Standards and Licensing Service is delivered. The main challenges this year are summarised below:

### **Primary Authority Scheme**

The new Primary Authority scheme was launched by the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) on 6 April 2009. The scheme covers trading standards, environmental health and licensing functions and for the first time businesses will be able to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority, which will provide robust and reliable advice that other councils must take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance.

The scheme builds on the foundation created by voluntary home and lead authority initiatives and looks to further develop consistent and proportionate enforcement across the country. It will affect how the Service carries out inspections and takes enforcement action at those businesses subject to a primary authority agreement.

### **Customer Service Excellence**

Trading Standards and Licensing obtained Customer First Stage 2 accreditation in October 2008. As a means of building on the Customer First programme, Stockton is committed to achieving Council-wide external accreditation against the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence model by the target date of August 2010.

The Service is committed to achieving excellence in customer service and will now strive to meet the Customer Service Excellence standard within the specified timescale.

### **Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT)**

EIT is a three year Council-wide programme looking at how and why all services are delivered. It focuses on innovation, efficiency and performance in order to enable the council to meet resident needs and expectations and to manage within a tighter financial allocation. Some reviews will be thematic whilst others will focus on specific service delivery. Self assessment will be carried out via scoping documentation, with officer review teams and Member involvement via the Scrutiny process.

It is anticipated that Trading Standards and Licensing will be amongst the first wave of EIT reviews.

### **EU Services Directive**

The Services Directive aims to open up the European internal market to cross-border trade in services by making it easier for service providers to set up business or offer their services in other EU countries. Regulations implementing the Directive are expected to come into force in the UK by the end of December 2009.

Of particular relevance for Trading Standards and Licensing is the need to review local bye laws, licence applications, fees and authorisation schemes to ensure they are necessary and proportionate, establish an interface with the 'Point of Single Contact' website and ensure that licence applications and payments can be completed on line.

**Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS)**

The Food Standards Agency has introduced LAEMS as a new means of reporting on enforcement activities. Work has already started on ensuring that the Service's Flare management system is able to record and transfer the relevant information and the first food return using the LAEMS system is required by the end of June 2009.

Following on from this, animal feed and primary production activity for 2009/10 will be reported using the new system and this will mean additional configuration of the Flare system will be needed as well as up to date information on farms throughout the Borough.

**Health & Nutrition**

What we eat can make a big difference to our health. Diet is thought to play a major role in about one third of all deaths from cancer, and about a third of all deaths from coronary heart disease. Too much salt is associated with high blood pressure, and this in turn is associated with an increased likelihood of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. If current trends continue 60% of men, 50% of women and about 25% of children could be obese by the year 2050.

Local authorities have a key role to play in delivering and supporting activities on health and nutrition which can help to tackle the social, economic and environmental consequences of poor diets. In 2009/10 the Service will design and deliver consumer awareness campaigns to promote greater understanding and awareness of food labels, particularly in relation to sugar, fats and salt levels and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) traffic light scheme. The Service will work with local businesses to ensure that FSA targets for salt are met and to help reformulate products to reduce salt, fats and sugars. The Service also plans to pilot a Healthy Catering Partnership to encourage healthier menu options at local catering outlets.

**Regional Tobacco Control**

Two regional tobacco projects have been introduced with funding from the Department of Health and Fresh North East. The NETSA Tobacco Control Project aims to reduce the number of illegal sales to under age children, disrupt the sale of illegal and counterfeit tobacco products and ensure compliance with the rules on tobacco advertising. A series of region-wide projects are planned including underage test purchase exercises from vending machines and other retail premises, an internet sweep of on-line tobacco sellers and proactive checks at retail premises for compliance with advertising rules and the presence of counterfeit tobacco products.

The second project is the North of England Tackling Illicit Tobacco Programme, involving HM Revenue and Customs, Police, UK Border Agency and Trading Standards, which aims to reduce the supply of 3 main types of illicit tobacco:

- Smuggled – legitimately manufactured products which have evaded tax by being illegally transported, distributed and sold
- Bootlegged – products which originate from a country with a low level of tax having been illegally brought into the UK without payment of domestic tax
- Counterfeit – illegally manufactured copies of existing brands, often made abroad and sold cheaply in the UK

**Older Peoples Strategy**

Stockton's population is ageing and by 2025 it is estimated there will be 65% more over 65 year olds. It is vital to plan for this ageing population and "Older Adults" is one of the supporting themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council Plan. The vision is that people in Stockton will grow older with dignity and maintain a high quality and independent lifestyle.

A scrutiny review was carried out in December 2008 which made 31 recommendations regarding older adults in terms of increasing involvement in service planning and consultation, removing barriers to access and choice and improving personal well-being.

It is recognised that older adults can be particularly vulnerable to doorstep crime and so the Stockton Doorstoppers Initiative and the expansion of No Cold Calling Zones were identified as key priorities. Both will form important work streams for the forthcoming year.

**Consumer Credit Licensing**

Working in conjunction with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) in its administration of the licensing provisions of the Consumer Credit Act to ensure the fitness of licence holders, Trading Standards has been given additional powers to require access to premises and to inspect or seize documents.

At the request of the OFT, the Service will undertake on-site audits at certain high risk credit businesses to ascertain whether the business is 'credit competent'. To be competent, a business needs to have the necessary skills and knowledge of the credit activities it wishes to undertake and to have, or intend to implement, appropriate safeguards in its practices and procedures.

In line with the OFT's more targeted risk based approach to consumer credit licensing, these local on-site audits will be mainly in connection with new applicants in high risk areas such as debt adjusting, debt counseling, debt collecting and credit information services, including credit repair.

**Balance - North East Alcohol Office**

Balance was created in line with a commitment in 'Better Health, Fairer Health', the regional public health strategy for the north east. It is the first regional initiative of its kind to be set up to tackle alcohol-related issues in a cross-cutting way. Balance brings together a spectrum of organisations involved in people's alcohol use, from the health services to police forces, from voluntary agencies to local authorities. It's aims to:

- Work in partnership with regional bodies and lead agencies across the north east to raise the profile of alcohol issues and influence national, regional and local policies and decision making
- Develop and co-ordinate region-wide programmes on alcohol misuse in relation to prevention, treatment and control
- Share best practice and champion north east innovation on a national stage
- Deliver a comprehensive media and public focussed campaign on alcohol related issues
- Coordinate regular and ongoing alcohol related research and disseminate results at a regional and local level, including regular polling of public opinion
- Monitor alcohol industry activity and the enforcement of legislation in relation to alcohol

### **Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy**

A new consolidated policy relating to the licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators was introduced in March 2009 after extensive consultation with both the trade, user groups and interested stakeholders.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To protect consumer's interests by ensuring that safe, clean, reliable and accessible hackney carriages and private hire vehicles are available for all who require them and by ensuring that drivers and private hire operators are fit and proper persons
- To provide clarity for licensees with respect to the Council's expectations and the decision making process
- To encourage environmental sustainability
- To encourage high standards of service and competence in the hackney carriage and private hire trade

Updated internal procedures will need to be introduced and the requirements of the new policy will need to be disseminated to all relevant licensees.

## 11 Service Priorities, Key Actions and Activities for 2009/10

The overarching goals of Stockton's Trading Standards and Licensing Service can be described as follows:

- To create informed confident consumers
- To create informed successful businesses
- To ensure a safe and fair trading environment

As a means of working towards these goals and in turn helping to meet local and government objectives, ten service priorities have been identified for the forthcoming year:

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 measured
4. To ensure quality food and feed standards for healthier communities
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**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
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	March 2010	J Jones
To ensure that consumers have easy access to consumer advice provision at a level appropriate to their needs	Continue working closely with Consumer Direct North East	Respond to 95% of Consumer Direct referrals within 1 working day of receipt	Within 1 working day	P Chilver/B Dix
		To raise matters of concern with Consumer Direct	Where appropriate	P Chilver/B Dix
		Provide training to Consumer Direct Advisors in line with identified needs and agreed regional training programme	June 2009	B Dix
To ensure that the Consumer Advice Centre continues to meet the needs of local residents	Review the work of the Consumer Advice Centre	Carry out the reviews	6 monthly	J Jones
	Carry out a satisfaction survey of all those consumers for which the Consumer Advice Centre has undertaken casework	A minimum satisfaction level of 90%	March 2010	J Jones
To ensure that the Enforcement Section continues to meet the needs of local residents	Carry out feedback survey with regard to the handling of both trading standards and licensing enforcement complaints	A minimum satisfaction level of 85%	Dec 2009	J Jones

<b>Priority 1</b>	<b>To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information</b>
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<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To improve the knowledge of local residents in respect of their consumer rights and to increase awareness of service provision	Develop and deliver consumer education initiatives taking into account the needs of identified groups	Provide 12 talks and/or displays for local community groups based on their identified needs	March 2010	B Dix/ F Russell
		Develop and distribute a basic consumer rights leaflet aimed at students aged 16-18	Sept 2009	B Dix
		Increase consumer awareness of service provision to 90% of those surveyed	March 2009	J Jones

**Priority 2**

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

Objective	Actions	Targets	Timescale	Responsibility
To deter doorstep criminals and protect vulnerable consumers	Offer immediate response in conjunction with Operations Strongbow and Bombay to reports of doorstep crime	To respond to 100% of requests for attendance at incidents of doorstep crime where appropriate	When needed	P Chilver
To raise awareness of doorstep crime amongst residents without increasing the fear of crime	<p>Introduce further No Cold Calling Zones in suitable locations</p> <p>Continue participation with the Stockton Doorstoppers Initiative</p>	<p>Consider all requests for further No Cold Calling Zones</p> <p>Distribute information to residents in all newly formed No Cold Calling Zones</p> <p>Develop a dedicated webpage on our website</p>	<p>March 2010</p> <p>March 2010</p> <p>March 2010</p>	<p>F Russell</p> <p>F Russell</p> <p>L Wilford</p>
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	May 2009	A Gledhill/ D Hull
To improve intelligence information and develop partnership working in the 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	When appropriate	P Chilver

**Priority 3**

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

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To prevent illegal trading and ensure that reputable businesses flourish	Carry out a risk based programme of business inspections and enforcement actions	Inspect the following premises: 100% of all high risk 100% of all due medium risk 20% of all low risk	March 2010	L Wilford
	Carry out intelligence led visits in response to complaints and other information received.	2100 total enforcement visits	March 2010	L Wilford
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 into compliance by the end of the year	March 2010	J Jones
To ensure that goods and services available within the Borough are safe and accurately described, measured and priced	Targeted project based sampling to include: Garage servicing exercise Toys from China Mobile phone chargers Flammability of toys Stability of fire pits Lifetime claims on batteries Safety of children's bicycles Accuracy of liquid petroleum gas meters	Test 5000 items	March 2010	L Wilford

**Priority 4**

**To ensure quality food and feed standards for healthier communities**

Objective	Actions	Targets	Timescale	Responsibility
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	June 2009	L Wilford
To ensure that reputable food businesses flourish and to prevent illegal trading	Carry out a risk based programme of food business inspections and enforcement actions	Inspect the following food businesses: 100% of all high risk 100% of all due medium risk 20% of all low risk	March 2010	L Wilford
To ensure that food available in the Borough is accurately described and meets any relevant compositional requirements	Targeted project based sampling to include: Value products Fruit juice drinks Imported foods – heavy metals in fish, adulteration of basmati rice and salmonella in green leaf vegetables Salt levels in locally produced meat products Vitamin claims Calcium claims Chocolate products Sandwich bar products	Test 300 food samples	March 2010	L Wilford

**Priority 4**

**To ensure quality food and feed standards for healthier communities**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To ensure that consumers understand food labels and are aware of health issues particularly in relation to salt, fat and sugar intake	Two proactive education campaigns regarding saturated fat and salt	Develop and deliver campaigns	March 2010	L Wilford
To ensure that healthier meal choices are available to consumers in local catering outlets	Design and pilot a Healthy Catering Partnership	Identify suitable premises Develop partnership terms Complete the pilot	June 2009 Oct 2009 March 2010	L Wilford L Wilford L Wilford
To ensure effective and efficient animal feed and primary production enforcement	Identify those farms not described as arable or livestock and collate up to date information on their activities	Contact farms and collate up to date information	March 2010	J Morley
To ensure that enforcement visits are properly recorded on the Flare database and accurately reported to the FSA in line with the new LAEMS arrangements	Review Flare codes and recording systems for food enforcement work Review Flare codes and recording systems for animal feed and primary production work Provide a full and accurate return to the FSA of all 2009/10 activities	Submit final food return for 2008/09 enforcement activities Carry out the review Submit final return for all 2009/10 enforcement activities	June 2009 Dec 2009 April 2010	J Jones J Jones J Jones

**Priority 5**

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

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To ensure that businesses are aware of their legal obligations especially with respect to new legislation	Develop guidance to local butchers on the FSA's salt targets	Produce and circulate guidance	March 2010	D Hull
	Carry out project in kitchen and bathroom suppliers to assess compliance with pricing requirements and develop guidance if required	Carry out project	Dec 2009	D Coulton
	Develop guidance for roadside car sellers	Produce and circulate guidance	Dec 2009	J Morley
To ensure that the Service continues to meet the needs of local businesses	Carry out a satisfaction survey of those local businesses that have had contact with the Service in accordance with NI 183	A minimum satisfaction level of 85%	March 2010	L Wilford
To ensure businesses receive clear and consistent feedback following an inspection	Extend inspection reports for retail visits	Introduce and issue reports to traders	March 2010	J Morley
To ensure the hackney carriage and private hire trade are aware of their legal obligations and licence requirements	Issue copies of the new policy document to every member of the taxi trade	Produce and issue the document	July 2009	J Kitching

**Priority 5**

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

Objective	Actions	Targets	Timescale	Responsibility
To encourage reputable business activity by ensuring that the provisions of the EU Services Directive are implemented	Establish a contact point for central government to liaise with  Review local bye laws, authorisation schemes and licence applications, fees and timescales  Establish an interface with the 'Point of Single Contact' website  Ensure that licence applications and payments can be completed on line	Identify named individual and inform government  Carry out review  Establish interface  Introduce on line system	June 2009  Oct 2009  Dec 2009  Dec 2009	D Kitching  D Kitching  D Kitching  D Kitching
To ensure that 'high risk' credit businesses meet legal obligations and operate to generally accepted standards of business practice	Carry out local on-site audits at identified businesses and submit reports in line with OFT requirements	Carry out all required work in line with formal agreement with the OFT	As required	J Morley
To ensure that hairdressers in the Borough are aware of their legal obligations and registration requirements	Develop guidance on byelaw requirements and rules of registration	Develop and issue guidance	Dec 2009	P Edwards
To ensure that tattooists and skin piercers in the Borough are aware of their legal obligations and registration requirements and to encourage responsible trading	Develop guidance on byelaw requirements and rules of registration and introduce a responsible trader scheme	Develop and launch scheme and issue guidance	Dec 2009	D Kitching

**Priority 6**

**To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To prevent the supply of counterfeit goods in the Borough	Carry out a programme of proactive enforcement at car boot sales within the Borough	Surveillance of trading activities at local car boot sales	Quarterly	J Wynn
		Take appropriate action based on the surveillance undertaken	When needed	J Wynn
To ensure that internet traders comply with the law and follow good business practice	Carry out an enforcement project looking at the terms & conditions of Stockton based internet traders	To bring 95% of those traders identified into compliance	Dec 2009	A Gledhill
To ensure the effective use of intelligence sources to target rogue traders	Ensure that the intelligence held on the Consumer Direct database is accessed regularly and acted upon  Maintain close links with the Regional Intelligence Officer (RIO)	Take appropriate action against identified traders in accordance with recognised enforcement policies and procedures	When needed	P Chilver
		All relevant information to be passed to the RIO	When needed	P Chilver
To tackle regional scams and deceptive and unfair trading practices	Participate fully with Scambusters and the IMLT	Identify and propose trading practices that are suitable for investigation by Scambusters and the IMLT	When needed	P Chilver
		Respond to all requests for information and assistance	When needed	P Chilver

**Priority 7**

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

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
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	18 test purchase exercises including 3 in relation to the cigarette vending machines and 4 targeting retail premises close to schools	March 2010	J Allwood
To ensure consistent and effective investigation of illegal sales of age restricted products	Review surveillance methods used in relation to test purchasing exercises	Carry out review	Dec 2009	J Allwood
To tackle the illicit and illegal supply of tobacco products	To assist the regional Tobacco Control Teams	Provide assistance and participate in regional projects	When needed	J Allwood
	To tackle the supply of cigarettes to children from 'fag houses'	Establish links with the local HMRC Inland Team	Sept 2009	J Allwood
	To gauge the extent of counterfeit tobacco products in retail outlets	Carry out 2 proactive surveys at retail premises	Dec 2009	J Allwood
To raise the profile of alcohol related issues	To support the north east 'Big Drink Debate'	Provide assistance and participate in regional projects	March 2010	D Kitching
	Use the information gathered to formulate an action plan aimed at reducing alcohol consumption	Develop links to the Council's own Think B4U Drink campaign	When needed	D Kitching

**Priority 8**

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

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To prevent illegal trading and ensure that reputable businesses flourish	Develop a risk based programme of comprehensive business inspections for gambling premises	Introduce an inspection plan	Jan 2010	M Vaines
To ensure that officers and members have the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the new gambling legislation	Design and deliver training and information sessions for all officers and members	Complete officer training	Dec 2009	M Vaines
		Complete new member training	May 2009	M Vaines
To prevent illegal gambling	Carry out proactive enforcement in relation to gambling on unlicensed premises	Incorporate enforcement checks into normal inspection visits	March 2010	M Vaines
To ensure youngsters do not have access to gambling premises	Develop a test purchasing protocol	Develop protocol	Dec 2008	C Barnes
		Carry out a pilot test purchase exercise	March 2010	C Barnes
To ensure the Council's policy in relation to gambling reflects the needs of stakeholders and is in line with government guidelines and best practice	Review the Council's Statement of Principles in relation to gambling	Produce a report to the licensing committee	Aug 2009	M Vaines
		Carry out consultation	Nov 2009	M Vaines
		Seek Council approval	Dec 2009	D Kitching

**Priority 9**

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

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To prevent illegal trading and ensure that reputable businesses flourish	Carry out programmed inspections as well as intelligence led enforcement to target problem traders	Carry out 1500 licensing enforcement visits	March 2010	M Vaines
To ensure that work is targeted effectively at problem times and specific locations in conjunction with other agencies where appropriate	To work closely with the Police to identify and target problem premises	Liaise monthly with the Police	Monthly	M Vaines
	Participate in the Pubwatch scheme	Attend all Pubwatch meetings	Quarterly	M Vaines
To prevent illegal plying for hire and the use of unlicensed vehicles in the taxi trade	Undertake targeted test purchasing exercises	Undertake 4 exercises	1 exercise per quarter	S Mills
	To ensure private hire operators have adequate records of bookings and vehicle and driver details	Visits all operators	March 2010	M Vaines
	Carry out proactive enforcement in relation to taxi vehicles	Carry out 12 enforcement exercises	March 2010	C Barnes
To ensure that elected Members are given appropriate training to provide them with the necessary skills to impose sanctions on traders who do not comply with the law and/or licence conditions	To provide training to new Members	Provide training	May 2009	M Vaines
	To provide refresher training to existing Members	Provide training	June 2009	M Vaines

**Priority 10**

**To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision**

Objective	Actions	Targets	Timescale	Responsibility
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  Average of 45 hours of training per officer per year, to include:  Unfair commercial practices Gambling legislation Food factory auditing Consumer credit Basic motor vehicle training for civil advisors 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	April 2009  March 2010	Line manager  L Wilford
To ensure effective and secure recording, storage and disposal of evidence	Review existing procedures and amend as appropriate	Complete review and implement new system	Sept 2009	D Hull
To ensure excellence in customer service	Review and implement customer service procedures in line with the Customer Excellence Standard	Achieve accreditation in line with specified timescale	Nov 2009	J Allwood

**Priority 10**

**To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To ensure that key Trading Standards enforcement policies and procedures are up to date and in line with recognised best practice	Review, develop and document policies and procedures in key areas of Trading Standards activity	Review existing policies and procedures in light of the introduction of the new Primary Authority Scheme, Unfair Trading Regulations, Regulators Compliance Code and the new statutory performance indicators	Sept 2009	J Jones
		New procedures to be drafted and implemented	March 2010	J Jones
To ensure efficient and effective Records Management	Review storage and disposal of business records in line with corporate policy and implement new procedures if appropriate	Complete review and implement new procedures as necessary	Oct 2009	J Kitching
To ensure efficient and effective service delivery in line with customers needs and expectations and budget allocation	Undertake EIT review in accordance with Council procedures	Complete scoping documentation	June 2009	D Kitching
		Scrutiny review of regulatory services	Oct 2009	D Kitching
To ensure that the dedicated website facility provides up to date and relevant information	Introduce website facility for producing tailored business advice packs	Amend and update website to allow for new facility	Dec 2009	D Kitching
To deal effectively with businesses that engage in conduct which harms consumers	Develop procedure for the effective use of civil sanctions under the Enterprise Act 2002	Develop and introduce procedure	Dec 2009	L Wilford

**Priority 10**

**To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
To ensure that the Licensing Section continues to provide an improving, high quality service	Implement outstanding provisions of the Licensing Improvement Plan	Devise new set of performance indicators which better reflect the range of service provided	March 2010	M Vaines/ J Jones
		Review guidance material in each licensed area and produce list of required items for action by designated officers	March 2010	J Kitching
To raise the profile of the Service	Circulate information on service provision to stakeholders, including Members	Produce and circulate executive summary of Service Plan	June 2009	J Jones
	Produce and circulate a report summarising the previous year's performance	Produce and circulate report	June 2009	L Wilford
To reduce the adverse impact over time that the Service may have on the environment	Monitor the amount of paper used and recycled, the amount of printer cartridges used and recycled, business mileage and the recycling of counterfeit goods	Aim to reduce usage levels by 5% on previous year	March 2010	J Kitching
	Remind staff about environmental issues especially car mileages, printing only when necessary etc	Issue reminder to staff	Dec 2009	J Kitching

## 12 How to Contact Us

**Consumer Advice Centre based within the Central Library, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TU**

Access	Availability	
Consumer Direct (this is the first point of contact for consumer advice by telephone) Telephone Number 08454 04 05 06	Monday - Friday	8am – 6.00pm
	Saturday	8am – 1.00pm
Personal callers to Centre	Monday - Thursday	9.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	9.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone callers to Centre (01642 527938)	Monday – Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail	<a href="mailto:trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk">trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk</a>	
Website	<a href="http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton">www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton</a>	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor and a public lift	

**Trading Standards Enforcement Team based at 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX**

Access	Availability	
Opening Hours	Monday - Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone Number	01642 526560	
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail	<a href="mailto:trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk">trading.standards@stockton.gov.uk</a>	
Website	<a href="http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton">www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton</a>	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor	

**12 How to Contact Us****Licensing Administration based at 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX**

Type of Access	Availability	
Opening Hours	Monday -Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone number	01642 526558	
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail	<a href="mailto:licensing.administration@stockton.gov.uk">licensing.administration@stockton.gov.uk</a>	
Website	<a href="http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton">www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton</a>	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor	

**Licensing Enforcement based at 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX**

Type of Access	Availability	
Opening Hours	Monday -Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone numbers	01642 526558	
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail	<a href="mailto:licensing.services@stockton.gov.uk">licensing.services@stockton.gov.uk</a>	
Website	<a href="http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton">www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton</a>	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor	