



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18TH FEBRUARY 2014

SUBJECT: GWENT TRADING STANDARDS

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update Members on the Gwent Trading Standards Project.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee considered a report on 17th September 2013 regarding proposals for a Gwent Trading Standards Project. The Committee endorsed the recommendations within the report, but requested updates on the Project. Cabinet subsequently approved participation in the proposed Project on 2nd October 2013.

2.2 A Project Manager has been appointed and the Project Board is meeting on a monthly basis. This report provides Members with an update on Project progress.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 Trading Standards is a service identified within A Compact for Change between the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government as one that should be considered for collaborative service delivery.

3.2 Enforcing Trading Standards legislation is a statutory duty and this activity also contributes to the Healthier Caerphilly, Greener Caerphilly, Prosperous Caerphilly, and Safer Caerphilly priorities within the Caerphilly Local Service Board single integrated plan, Caerphilly Delivers, and Objective 1 of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2012.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 The Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee considered a report on 17th September 2013 regarding proposals for a Gwent Trading Standards Project. The Committee endorsed the recommendations within the report, but requested updates on the Project. Cabinet subsequently approved participation in the proposed Project on 2nd October 2013.

4.2 The project envisages a single Trading Standards Service in Gwent with Caerphilly as the lead Authority. Welsh Government are providing funding for the Project from the Regional Collaboration Fund. A Project Manager has been appointed and took up post on 4th November 2013. A Project Board has been established consisting of Officers at Head of Public Protection level from each of the 5 Local Authorities in Gwent.

- 4.3 The Heads of Trading Standards from each of the five Local Authorities have been established as an Advisory Board and are refining the ongoing data gathering exercise to identify existing and required resources for the service in Gwent. A series of workshops have also been undertaken with staff representing each Authority to consider business processes for core Trading Standards functions. A Communication Strategy has been agreed and the first Project Newsletter was distributed to staff and other stakeholders, including Trade Union representatives in December 2013. An Internet presence is also being developed to offer an initial portal for Trading Standards Services in Gwent.
- 4.4 Each of the Trading Standards services in Gwent operates a software system to record premises records, inspections, actions and service requests. Coincidentally the Welsh Purchasing Consortium is undertaking a competitive tender exercise in relation to Public Protection (including Trading Standards) software system. Each of the five Local Authorities are participating in this exercise as the timescale is consistent with that of the Gwent Trading Standards Project and it is considered appropriate to move forward as part of the Welsh Purchasing Consortium framework for software procurement.
- 4.5 The Project Board have established the following Business Objectives and Needs:-

Business Objectives:

- Development of a robust and sustainable Regional Trading Standards service with a 3-year Business Plan that incorporates best practice, increased service resilience, improved efficiencies and standardised service delivery.
- To investigate and evaluate knowledge sharing options, improve access to specialist knowledge/expertise and the development of centres of excellence.
- Investigate and evaluate opportunities for innovative technical and agile working practices
- Develop a structured regional consumer enforcement strategy that enables effective information sharing and working practices with partner agencies.
- The creation of a collaborative model that may be used as a benchmark for regional working.

Business Needs:

To develop and implement a sustainable model for Trading Standard Service provision across the region, that both supports the Welsh Government objectives for collaboration and also addresses the resilience and financial issues that affect all Local Authorities.

Specifically identifying opportunities for Trading Standard Service provision that:-

- Delivers the most effective and efficient service possible with the available resources;
- Build critical mass/service resilience/improve flexibility to meet unforeseen demands and changing priorities;
- Develops a structured regional enforcement strategy and policy that addresses regional priorities, local and national guidance and provides clarity and consistency for officers, consumers and for those who are subject to enforcement action;
- Is approachable and accessible in the way it does business and provides guidance, utilising a number of communication channels;
- Enables effective information sharing and working practices with partner agencies;
- Is accountable and subject to annual review and challenge;

- Develops and maintains particular expertise, especially in those areas where in isolation, individual authority trading standards would struggle;
- Encompasses officer training/professional development to ensure the service can address its priorities effectively;

4.6 The service options being developed by the Project Board will be considered against the Business Needs and Objectives set out above and the Critical Success Factors in the following table:-

CSF	Category	Description
		How well the option:-
CSF1	Business Need	Maintains acceptable levels of service delivery and meets organisational needs.
CSF2	Strategic fit	Provides holistic fit and synergy with other key elements of local, regional and national strategies, programmes and projects.
CSF3	Potential Value for Money	Achieves service efficiencies, economies and effectiveness.
CSF4	Potential to match requirements with supply	Satisfies the provision of Trading Standards services required by the stakeholders
CSF5	Attractiveness to Members	Satisfies the requirements for ownership and local accountability
CSF6	Potential Affordability	Can be sustained in terms of both developmental and on-going costs.

4.7 The Project is working towards making a full business case available for consideration by each of the five Local Authorities from April 2014, with a view to commencement of any new service if agreed from October 2014. The full business case will be brought to this Committee for consideration prior to any submission for approval.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken on progressing the joint-project. Bearing in mind the core functions listed in 4.2, the overall Trading Standards function is of particular value to individuals covered by the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. older people, people with physical or learning disabilities etc) as they can be at greater risk of fraudulent and/or criminal behaviour when purchasing goods and services.

5.2 Equally, Trading Standards works with traders from all backgrounds to ensure compliance with current legislation and for example has provided specific and targeted guidance in a range of languages, where required.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this update report, which is provided for information. The approved Welsh Government Regional Collaboration funding is over a 3-year period until 2015/16. The current allocation for 2013/14 is £126,105, reduced from the

original award of £396,584 as this was based on a whole year, with £100,000 and £60,000 for 2014/15 and 2015/16 respectively.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Trading Standards services of the 5 Gwent Local Authorities comprise of approximately 75 staff. Full consultation will take place with all employees and Trade Unions with regard to the single service and all the relevant staffing implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The report has been sent to the consultees listed below and there are no consultation responses that have not been reflected within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this Report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To update Members on progress of the Gwent Trading Standards Project.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The 2009 Local Government Measure.

Author: Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection
Consultees: Cllr. D.T. Davies, Chair, Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee
Cllr. E.M. Aldworth, Vice-Chair, Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Dave Poole, Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure Services
Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive
David Bezzina, Regional Organiser, UNISON
Neil Funnell, GMB Branch Secretary
Mike Eedy, Finance Manager
Sue Ead, Solicitor
Paul Lewis, Information Technology Development Manager
Lynne Donovan, HR Service Manager
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing & Registrars Manager
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
Alison Evans, Gwent Trading Standards Project Manager

Background Papers:

Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Report, 17th September 2013 – “Proposed Gwent Trading Standards Service”

Cabinet Report, 2nd October 2013 - “Proposed Gwent Trading Standards Service”