

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **19 October 2004**

By: **Director of Law and Performance Management**

Title of report: **Response to Scrutiny Review of Trading Standards**

Purpose of report: **To provide an opportunity for the Cabinet to comment on the report of the Audit & Best Value Scrutiny Review.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **note and welcome the report of the Scrutiny Committee; and**
 2. **in considering the report the County Council be recommended to welcome the main recommendations set out in the report and to approve the response of the Director of Law and Performance Management to the recommendations and their implementation.**
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1. **Financial Appraisal**

- 1.1 The improvements recommended for implementation in the Scrutiny report are to be made, as far as possible, within the existing Trading Standards budget, or by seeking alternative sources of funding.

2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 The Trading Standards Service is grateful to the Scrutiny Committee for conducting a thorough review of its relations and interactions with local businesses and for its comprehensive recommendations for their improvement.
- 2.2 As requested, an Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations has been prepared and is attached as Appendix 1

3 **Comments**

- 3.1 At paragraph 25 the Committee reports on the welcome additional funding allocated to the base budget of the service in 2004/05 and how this has been used to promote new initiatives in support both of the County Council's Key Priorities and the Trading Standards National Priorities.
- 3.2 These initiatives are proving successful, recent highlights being:
 - **The 'Buy With Confidence'** scheme launched on 30 September 2004 with 29 approved traders (out of 50 applicants, the remainder are still being processed). This is from the Eastbourne and Wealden areas alone. The extension of the scheme to Lewes, Rother and Hastings started on 1/10/04;
 - **A reduction** in those prepared to sell alcohol to persons under the age of 18 in Eastbourne from 60% in 2003/04 to 0% in the current year as a result of test-purchasing activities and the education of traders;
 - Working with the police when necessary, the newly established **Rapid Action Team** has saved four elderly East Sussex residents a total of £9,400 since June by responding to calls for assistance when they were the subject of cold callers in the construction and property repair trades; and
 - the Head of Service has recently been 'Highly Commended' in the 'sustained improvement' category in the County Council's Best Value Performance Indicator awards.
- 3.3 The importance of the work described above should not be underestimated. The revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment places great emphasis on 'shared priorities',

requiring the County Council to present robust evidence of effective partnership working with others and across departmental boundaries.

- 3.4 Our Trading Standards service contributes to a significant number of those shared priorities and could, subject to resources, contribute to others by way of further new initiatives. These issues are, of course, being considered as part of the Reconciling Policy and Resources work to establish next year's budget.

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Background Documents:

Eastbourne Crime Reduction Partnership press release 28/09/04