



All Wards

Leicester
City Council

CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 2003

Leicester City Council's
Service Plan for Consumer Protection 2003/2004

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

This report presents the Council's second annual plan for consumer protection and trading standards. The full plan is enclosed.

The City Council is required by the Government's National Performance Framework for Trading Standards to have a member endorsed service plan setting out its local activity in business regulation and consumer protection.

The National Performance Framework for Trading Standards is designed to ensure that national consumer protection objectives are addressed and delivered locally. The four national objectives are:

- To promote informed and confident consumers
- To promote informed successful business
- To ensure a fair and safe trading environment
- To improve the trading standards service

The Service Plan sets out the planned activities of the Consumer Protection Service for 2003/4.

2. Work of the Consumer Protection Service

Local authority trading standards services have developed through the accrual of responsibilities relating to the protection of the public and responsible business. Today the service has a diverse range of responsibilities ranging from the regulation of weighing and measuring equipment, product safety, consumer credit, consumer advice, food labelling, age restricted products, counterfeiting and animal health.

The following activities are planned for 2003/4:

- **To Promote And Maintain A Fair, Equitable And Safe Trading Environment**

(i) To undertake reviews of the following trade sectors (c.2200 businesses): Clothes Retailers, Cleaners, Auctions, Medical Services, Restaurants, Furniture retailers (small and large), Furniture manufacturers, Mobile Hot Food Retailers, Estate Agents, Motor Vehicle Accessory Retailers, Motor Vehicle Instructors, Confectionary Retailers and Manufacturers, Health Food Retailers, Banks, Energy Suppliers, Public Administration, Newsagents (small and large), Consumer Goods Hire, Clothing wholesalers and importers, Butchers (retailing, including mobile, and manufacturing), Carpenters/Joiners, Roofers, Job Agencies, Motor Vehicle Dealers, Rented Properties, Children Homes, Large Domestic Goods Retailers, Public Houses, Toys Retailers, Places of Worship, Jewellers, Taxis, Travel Agents, Farms, Insurance Brokers, Cobblers, Footwear manufacturers, Grocers (small and large), Mobile/Market Domestic Goods Retailers, Amusement Arcades, Betting Shops, Bingo Halls, Leisure Goods Retailers (large), Leisure facilities, Importers, Storage and Distribution, Large Doubleglazing.

(ii) To undertake an audit of 12 local large scale food manufacturers.

(iii) To sample 160 food products for composition, contamination and compliance with labelling.

(iv) To undertake a programme of market surveillance involving premises inspections, test purchasing and product sampling. Target 1000 monitoring events, forecast of re-inspection to ensure compliance 150.

(v) To investigate complaints relating to products and practices from consumers, businesses and other enforcement agencies. Forecast 175 (175 in 2002/3) enquiries and complaints from other local authorities. Forecast 400 (435 in 2002/3) complaint visits.

(vi) To initiate a review of LCC's home visiting guidelines and establish a quick response to incidents of rogue doorstep business conduct.

• **To Encourage Confident And Knowledgeable Consumers Through The Provision Of Advice, Information And Education**

(i) To provide information and advice to 13,500 consumers on their consumer rights and responsibilities; and review all enquiries for potential regulatory breaches.

(ii) To assist 600 consumers/businesses to resolve disputes relating to the supply of goods, services and other facilities.

(iii) To increase the accessibility of assistance for 'hard to hear' groups through the development of the (inter-agency) Leicester Consumer Support Network and its volunteers.

(iv) To undertake 20 educational events in local schools, colleges and community groups.

- **To Promote And Maintain The Quality And Competitiveness Of Goods And Services Produced By Local Business**

(i) To provide information and advice to local businesses. Target: 250 requests for advice, 200 'on-site' consultations.

(ii) To provide a 'verification' service for local businesses using weighing and measuring equipment.

(iii) To work with the DTI, LCC departments and other bodies to facilitate the roll out of the Builders Quality Mark in Leicester.

- **To improve the trading standards service**

(i) To complete the relocation of the front of house advice services.

(ii) To implement an upgrade to the Service's software.

3. Views of the Arts, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Director of Environment, Regeneration and Development presented the 2003/04 Service Plan for Consumer Protection to the Arts, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1 October 2003. It was explained that the Governments National Performance Framework for Trading Standards required the Council to produce a member endorsed service plan for business regulation and consumer protection. The key areas that the plan covered were counterfeiting, builders taking advantage of vulnerable members of the public, advice to businesses, monitoring the sale of age restricted products and equality issues in service delivery. The various strategies and plans in place to tackle these issues were briefly outlined.

Members expressed support for the plans and its aims.

Members asked for details of how the authority had been tackling Leicester's reputation as a centre for the counterfeiting of branded clothing and also about any plans to tackle the import and sale of illegal tobacco.

Officers explained that the number of complaints from brand owners about counterfeiting of their products had fallen significantly and that Leicester was no longer being talked about within the trade as a centre for counterfeiting of branded clothes. This had been as a result of the enforcement work that Leicester and other authorities had undertaken and the relocation of counterfeiting activities to cheaper locations elsewhere. There was now a concentration on targeting the counterfeiting of media, such as DVD's featuring Bollywood and other films.

It was reported that the enforcement work for tackling illegal imports of tobacco was the responsibility of Customs and Excise and that there was the sharing of intelligence between the Council, Customs and Excise and other regulators.

The Scrutiny Committee resolved that the report be noted and that the views of the committee be passed to Cabinet.

4. Financial Implications

The cost of the work programmes and activities set out in the Service Plan will be met from the cost centre budgets. There are no additional financial implications. There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

5. Legal Implications

The cost of the work programmes and activities set out in the Service Plan for Consumer Protection will be met from existing budgets. There are no additional financial implications.

(Kate McGee, Head of Finance, ER&D)

There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. The enforcement work outlined in the report is founded on the statutory duties and powers of the authority. Legal Services institute prosecutions to seek legal sanctions underpinning the enforcement responsibilities of the City Council.

(Anthony Cross, Assistant Head of Legal Services)

6. Other implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	PARAGRAPH REFERENCES WITHIN SUPPORTING PAPERS
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	

7. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

None

8. Consultations

None

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