

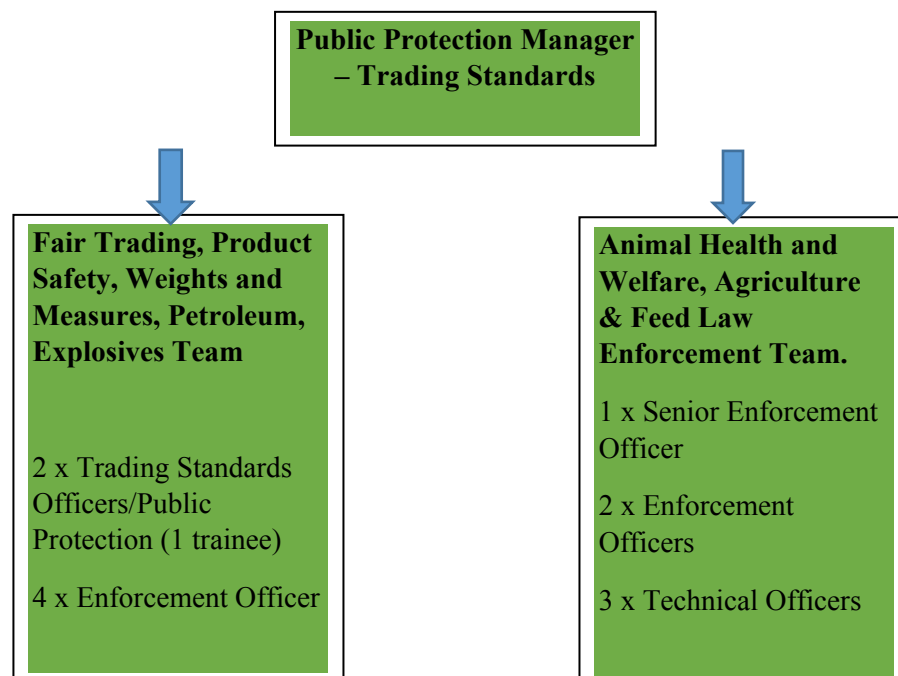
NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Communities Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	4th April 2019
TEITL	The Service provided by the Trading Standards Unit (Public Protection)
AUTHOR	Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Environment Department
CABINET MEMBEFR	Councillor Dafydd Meurig
PURPOSE	To raise awareness of the duties and responsibilities of the Trading Standards Unit and the outputs and challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A report was presented at the last scrutiny committee outlining the activities undertaken by the Trading Standards Unit, which is part of the Public Protection Service within the Environment Department. A copy of the report is attached with the report.

This report will summarise the main areas covered by the Unit and provide further detail in respect of the Unit's performance data during the last reported period (April 2018-October 2018) as requested by the Committee at the meeting in October 2018.

- 1.2 The Trading Standards Unit consists of twelve officers split into two sub-teams with one team responsible for general Trading Standards matters and the other team responsible for activities relating to Animal Health and Welfare and Agriculture/Feed Law Enforcement. Officers also contribute towards the work of the Wellbeing, Health & Safety Unit and Pollution Control & Licensing Unit.



- 1.3 The Unit has to decide on the best method to achieve its regulatory and statutory responsibilities and consider a balance between preventive activities and reactive activities in order to protect consumers and support businesses. The Unit provides core activities based on 'intelligence' and risk.

2. CORE FUNCTIONS

- 2.1 The Unit's main purpose is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public from harmful business practices by ensuring that businesses adopt and maintain procedures and comply with the legal requirements which apply to their businesses. It aims to protect individuals, communities and businesses from harm and financial loss by maintaining a fair trading environment.
- 2.2 The Unit concentrates on providing resource towards tackling high risk activities and non-compliant businesses. The Unit's priorities correspond with regional and National priorities:-
- Tackling fraudulent business practices
 - Supporting compliant businesses
 - Protecting vulnerable consumers
 - Health improvement
- 2.3 Core functions include the following:-
- Fair Trading
 - Scams
 - Doorstep Crime, Cold Calling and Illegal Money Lending
 - Educating and Advising Consumers
 - Controlling Illicit Tobacco
 - Product Safety
 - Age Restricted Sales
 - Intellectual Property and counterfeiting
 - Weights and Measures
 - Petroleum and Explosives
 - Animal Health & Welfare
 - Agriculture / Feed Law Enforcement and contributing towards a regional feed service.
- 2.4 The Unit uses a variety of methods to carry out their objectives:
- inspecting businesses to check for compliance,
 - responding to service requests from members of the public,
 - inspecting businesses to check for compliance,
 - taking appropriate action when any non-compliances are detected,
 - managing activities which have the potential to be problematic by Licensing,
 - providing initial advice to new businesses in addition to updates on new legislation,
 - sampling and testing products to ascertain the standard and safety, including the testing of weighing machines and petrol pumps to ensure accuracy and ensuring that age restricted goods are not sold illegally and
 - raising awareness of consumer rights, particularly in respect of the vulnerable.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

- 3.1 The Public Protection Service produces regular Performance Reports which detail how the teams have performed in achieving their objectives. The last reporting period was April 2018-October 2018 (see Appendix A for the relevant performance indicators which include Trading Standards activities).
- 3.2 Appendix A – G1: Customers and businesses who have previously had contact with the service are asked to provide feedback on the service provided. Any negative comments received are then scrutinised and relevant action taken where possible to improve future service.

- 3.3 Appendix A – G2: The percentage of high risk inspections undertaken. This indicator shows the extent to which the Service's programme of trading premises inspections was completed on time. The inspections check compliance with the relevant Trading Standards legislation. If any non-compliances are found, advice is provided to assist the business put things right.
- 3.4 Appendix A – G4: Percentage of feed establishments received an inspection in line with the Regional programme.
- 3.5 Appendix A – G5: Percentage of breaches rectified through the Public Protection Service's intervention. These include breaches of criminal legislation and serious breaches of consumer's rights arising under civil law where intervention is required to ensure the breach is rectified.

4. ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES DATA

- 4.1 Scams/Protecting the vulnerable – although not a performance indicator, tackling scams is a priority for the Unit. In partnership with the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST) details of potential scam victims in Gwynedd are referred to us and officers visit or contact victims to provide advice and support. During the period April – October 2018, **16** scam victims were referred to us from NTSST and received intervention.
- 4.2 Call blockers – the Unit works in partnership with social services and arrange for vulnerable residents to receive a call blocking device to prevent nuisance calls where appropriate. During the period April - October 2018, **5** call blocking devices were fitted. Some of the feedback from residents after using the devices include the following:-
- “It has changed my life, I'm no longer afraid to answer the phone”
- “I can't believe all those nuisance calls have stopped, I feel much happier at home now”.
- 4.3 Requests for business advice – the Unit provides advice and guidance to businesses. During the period April 2018 – October 2018 the Unit received **169** requests from businesses in Gwynedd.
- 4.4 Complaints – During the period April 2018 – October 2018 there were **699** complaints reported to the Unit which all required intervention (**263** relating to the work of the Animal Health/Feed team and **436** relating to general Trading Standards matters). In addition to this the Unit received **741** notifications from the Citizens Advice Consumer Services.
- 4.5 Establishing contact with new businesses and inspecting businesses - Making contact with new businesses is an effective method of establishing a positive and open relationship with traders and to ensure that they are aware of their obligations at the outset. During the period April 2018 and October 2018 the Unit carried out **172** inspections in total which included making contact with **24** new businesses.