

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES**

17 March 2016

**Report of the Assistant Director Health and Communities- Head of
Trading Standards.**

Review of the Trusted Trader Scheme – Update Report

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of progress towards implementing the Trusted Trader Action Plan following the Recommendations of the September 2015 Review.

2. Information

2.1 Following a Review of the Derbyshire Trusted Trader Scheme operated by the Trading Standards Division, the Chair of the Trusted Trader Scheme Review Working Group made a number of recommendations and drew up an Action Plan to further develop what is generally considered to be an excellent scheme. This report provides an update on the Scheme and progress against the Action Plan.

2.2 From 1 September 2015 membership fees were increased as follows;

- Sole traders and social enterprises – increase from £50 to £70
- Limited companies / partnerships – increase from £75 to £100

This was part of a two stage increase in Membership fee; the first stage raised membership fees from £38 to £50 and £54 to £75. Despite the understandable grumbles from a proportion of existing scheme members, the total membership has remained surprisingly buoyant with a total membership of 1,235 which is approximately 40 less than May 2015 and compares well with peak membership of c1,300.

2.3 The Scheme continues to be well used and popular with local residents. The Trusted Trader pages of the County Council website receive on average 8,200 searches per month which is a little short of 100,000 searches per year. The top 5 searches are for:

1. Plumbers
2. Builders
3. Electricians
4. Painters/Decorators
5. Roofers and Roofing

- 2.4 On average we receive feedback from 1,200 customers every month; 82% is via feedback cards and 18% is submitted on-line. From this feedback we know that 20% of are under 50 years of age, 30% are in the 50 to 64 are range and 44% are aged over 65 or over. This demonstrates that the scheme is directly contributing to one of the key ambitions which is to support older people to live independently in their own homes for longer by putting them in touch with local reliable traders. The feedback from people who have engaged a Derbyshire Trusted Trader is overwhelmingly positive with 98% saying that they are either satisfied (4%) or very satisfied (94%) with the trader.

Communications Plan

- 2.5 Since its inception, the Trusted Trader Scheme has received excellent support from the County Council's Communication Team and the Trusted Trader brand is now well established and widely recognised. Nevertheless, Members of the Scrutiny Working Group recognised that continued promotion of the Scheme was essential to maintain and grow the membership and ensure that it is the starting point for any local resident – and in particular older people – seeking a local reliable trades' person. Trading Standards and Communications colleagues meet regularly to discuss options to promote the scheme and have drawn up an Action Plan which is continuously under review.
- 2.6 Key elements of the plan are as follows (which includes reference to Scrutiny Recommendations where appropriate):
- To increase income and consumer choice by increasing membership numbers to 1,500.
 - To change the emphasis of the promotion to recruit new members rather than just increase awareness of the scheme
 - To target the south of the county where membership is less well represented.
 - To encourage elected members to promote the scheme in their respective wards. This was a specific Scrutiny Recommendation which has been actioned.
 - To use classified sections of local papers to promote the scheme
 - To use business sections/newspaper supplements to promote the scheme to new businesses.
 - To encourage District and Parish Councils to promote the scheme. This was a specific Scrutiny Recommendation that is in the process of being actioned.
 - To promote Financial Advisor members of the Scheme to local people in receipt of a Derbyshire County Council pension as part of the Council's response to new responsibilities under the Care Act. This supports one of the Scrutiny Recommendations.

- To explore new service sectors and opportunities such as the Wedding Fair at County Hall on 24th April

Other Recommendations

- 2.7 Progress towards the other Scrutiny Recommendations continues to be on-going. Meetings and conversations with Derby City Council Trading Standards to explore potential for any collaboration between the County and City schemes have been under-taken. Currently Derby City are content to run their own scheme and are not persuaded to merge their scheme with the County Council Trusted Trader Scheme.
- 2.8 With the impending merger between Health and Communities and Economy, Transport and Environment it is highly likely that there will be opportunities to assist the promotion of Trusted Trader through the Economic Development team's connections with the local business community and to explore how the scheme may support local skills development, for example, via the promotion of sectors specific apprenticeship schemes to Trusted Trader members. These conversations have not as yet been progressed due to wider discussions about the new Directorate.
- 2.9 Conversations have also taken place with Corporate Resources colleagues to consider potential options for additional support for Trusted Trader members, such as the group purchase of public liability insurance, but there is a legal imperative that prevents this particular move.

3. Conclusions

The Derbyshire Trusted Trader Scheme continues to be well used and popular with both scheme members and local people who have made use of the Scheme. Good progress has been made in a number of areas recommended by the Scrutiny Working Group. A Communications Action Plan has been developed and is being implemented which is likely to generate an increase in membership. Further enhancement and development of the scheme to provide support to local businesses and generate additional income is likely as a result of the merger between Health and Communities and Economy, Transport and Environment Directives.

4. Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: financial, human relations, legal and human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

5. Recommendations

5.1 That Scrutiny Committee notes the report

Robert Taylour

Assistant Director Health and Communities – Head of Trading Standards