

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

**28 May 2015**

**Report of the Chair of the Trusted Trader Scheme  
Review Working Group**

**Review of The Trusted Trader Scheme – Progress report**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To inform Members of the progress made by in the review of the Council's Trusted Trader scheme.

**2. Information**

The first meeting of the review working group was held on 9 April when Members met Robert Taylour, Assistant Director – Health and Communities, (Head of Trading Standards) and Graham Morgan (Trading Standards Manager). Prior to the meeting the Members had been supplied with some "Facts and Figures" about the scheme from the Trading Standards team. These gave some background to the scheme and recent work which had

Details of the Derbyshire Trusted Trader scheme were discussed as follows;

- The Trusted Trader scheme was established in 2008 by the Trading Standards Team in partnership with Adult Care and Community Safety, primarily in response to concerns raised about doorstep crime. The aim of the scheme is to signpost customers to local reliable traders who are committed to good customer care and agree to abide by a Code of Practice in the event of a dispute.
- The Trading Standards team has a moderate budget (£12,000 p.a.) to promote the scheme
- Currently the scheme is promoted via the Derbyshire County Council website and publications (for example "Your Derbyshire" which is delivered to every household in the county 3 or 4 times a year)
- In the past, opportunities have been taken to promote the scheme when the Council has issued warnings to the public about rogue trading, for example, following a successful prosecution taken by the Trading Standards Division. A recent prosecution of a used car salesman, in April 2015, was publicised on the Council's website and this article signposted people to the Trusted Trader webpage. It was noted that

Used Car Sales was a sector which the Trading Standards team were keen to develop in the Trusted Trader scheme as there was a high volume of consumer complaints from this sector.

- There has not been a dedicated publicity drive for some time, therefore the Trading Standards team is liaising with the DCC Communications division and a draft plan is being developed.
- Different ways of promoting the scheme are being explored including:
  - a dedicated feature in local newspapers (made up of text provided by the Council's PR division and adverts paid for by individual traders).
  - a printed directory, perhaps sponsored by one of the larger members of the scheme.
  - partnership working with Derby City Council (which operates its own scheme called "Buy with Confidence") to expand membership.
  - printed messages on pension slips
  - highlighting the benefits of using a trusted trader at every opportunity through press releases issued by the County Council.
- Feedback suggests that traders would like the scheme to be promoted more.
- The traders themselves are in a position to do more. Advice to traders about how to promote their membership and publicise the benefits of the scheme is included in the members' newsletter which is distributed two or three times a year.
- Under the recent Care Act, local authorities have a duty to signpost their clients to independent financial advice. Adult Care has asked whether this can be achieved through the Trusted Trader scheme. At present the membership of the scheme includes nine Financial Advisers, however in light of Adult Care's request the Trusted Trader team is currently investigating whether additional checks might be required for independent financial advisors. This is thought pertinent as there are two classes of advisor, some are in a position to provide advice about any product (Independent Advisors) and some (Restricted Advisors) can only advise on a specific range of products. The Trading Standards Team are keen that Adult Care seek advice from Legal Services given the potential liability for giving financial advice.
- It was noted that when the scheme was set up in 2008, the Legal Services division ensured that disclaimers were in place to protect the County Council from liability. The limitations of the Trusted Trader scheme are clearly expressed on the Trusted Trader website.

- There is a rigorous vetting process for traders seeking to join the scheme (details of the membership checking process were included in the advance “Facts and Figures” information via a web link)
- A survey was recently completed and some of the outcomes are highlighted in the “facts and figures” sheet.
- It was noted that there is no formal “exit survey” to ascertain why traders leave the scheme. Anecdotally, however, it has been reported that:
  - some traders struggle to find the time to submit the paper work required for the annual renewal,
  - some traders feel they have sufficient business through word of mouth,
  - some traders feel that the scheme does not generate sufficient business to warrant the membership fee.
- It was noted that there is opportunity to work with Economic Regeneration to improve business support for traders.
- Previously, consideration had been given to developing a separate Trusted Retailer scheme. However this is not being pursued due to the wide diversity of retailers in the county and the complexity of the administration of such a scheme. It was noted that food outlets (restaurants, takeaways, coffee shops, cafes or caterers) have the option of joining the Heart of Derbyshire Scheme if they pledge to offer healthier food or use healthier ingredients.
- Officers were asked if the Trading Standards division could cope with the administration of a larger number of scheme members (currently at 1290). It was noted that current staffing levels could deal with a scheme with a maximum of 1500 members. It could be possible to extend the scheme further if sufficient membership was achieved to provide the additional funding for more staff to take on the additional workload.

The review working group has scheduled four more meetings throughout May/June, the first one being with the Assistant Chief Executive and Communication Manager from the PR division. This report was published before this meeting took place but Members of the working group will give oral feedback at the Committee meeting.

A further meeting is scheduled in June with Derby City Council where Members will meet with the Manager of the Derby City “Buy with Confidence” Scheme and the Cabinet Member, Cllr Martin Rawson.

The opinions of Trusted Trader members and their customers will also be gathered to assess areas of potential improvement to the scheme and ascertain how the Council could encourage new scheme members and a greater use of the scheme by consumers.

### **3. 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.

### **4. Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to note the work undertaken by the review working group and the proposed additional research which will inform the final report.

**Councillor Michelle Booth**

**Chair of the Trusted Trader Scheme Review Working Group**