

AUDIT SCOTLAND NATIONAL REPORTS – PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Key Point/Checklist/Recommendation	Council Position Yes/No	Action/Response:	Date for Implementation	Lead Officer
Does the Council work with the FSA in Scotland and, in future, the new Scottish food safety organisation to develop a workforce strategy, which identifies the staffing levels and skills required to sustain an effective food safety service over the next 5–10 years, and take action to address any shortfalls identified	Yes	<p>We have good relationships with the FSA and the Food Framework provides a standard for local authority food safety services. Our statutory food safety service plan is approved by Committee, and we are subject to audits by the FSA. We have on-going staff training and support to retain and improve competency.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review staffing levels and workforce planning within environmental health and prepare report for further consideration 2. Identify clear priorities for service based on outcome of point 1 above into 14/15 service plan 	<p>31/10/13</p> <p>30/03/14</p>	Alan Morrison
Does the Council ensure they have access to, and make use of, intelligence to help determine their local priorities, and contribute intelligence to information systems that support the work of other Scottish and UK councils, and the national teams		<p>These are available through existing liaison arrangements direct with agencies (FSA, OFT etc.); liaison groups with other LA's, lack information and use of IT system to share information and intelligence, including MEMEX which we implemented in December 2012. We also attend meetings hosted by national Scottish Scambusters with input from IMLU & IT teams.</p> <p>Actions None</p>		
Has the Council developed a new risk assessment scheme for trading standards that is sensitive to local intelligence about businesses		<p>We have a scheme of risk assessment although the report indicates that there is a high percentage of high risk premises in Argyll and Bute (5.9%) compared to other local authorities (Fife 0.5%, Highland 2%)</p> <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are in the process of preparing to implement a new national risk assessment scheme 	30 th October 2013	Alan Morrison

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		<p>which will update all risk assessments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of this implementation, it is intended to review whether all premises are coded correctly with respect to both the national score and the local score. Guidance will be provided to enforcement staff to ensure that local scores are applied consistently. 		
<p>Has the Council developed a clear direction for the future of their consumer protection services and satisfy themselves that they are allocating resources where they are most effective and in a way that appropriately reflects the risks, national and local priorities and the needs of local communities</p>		<p>Through the service review, we redesigned service delivery including that of consumer protection. Civil advice is issued by national agencies and not the Council and we have measures to ensure the public have access to these. This includes agreements with Citizens Advice Consumers Scotland and financial support to Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau,</p> <p>There is also improved information and links on our website and the Customer Management Centre are able to direct any consumer to appropriate advice services. Our trading standards service plan defines the consumer protection priorities for the year focussing on national and local priorities.</p> <p>Argyll and Bute Council are specifically mentioned in the Audit Scotland report as one of only 6 councils that do not take referrals from Citizens Advice Consumer Scotland, although second stage advice offered by the other local authorities is a non-statutory function and one which we ceased some time ago.</p> <p>Actions We are to undertake a review of the local and national civil advice arrangements in Argyll and Bute to determine whether they meet the needs</p>	31/12/13	Alan Morrison

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		of the consumer and are effective		
Does the Council ensure their work on lower risk areas is sufficient to prevent them becoming more serious risks		<p>We have initiated an alternative enforcement strategy which seeks to achieve this.</p> <p>Actions To further develop alternative enforcement To review the resource implications and success of the low risk intervention activities</p>		
Does the Council ensure they monitor and manage the performance of all their consumer protection services using appropriate measures of performance that enable benchmarking, and report performance regularly to councillors, senior management and the public.		<p>Performance measures are in place and we are working with APSE to develop a suite of performance measures in Scotland for trading standards and environmental health.</p> <p>Currently, performance is reported via the Councils Pyramid system and service plans detail future priorities and also report on performance. Our Balanced Scorecard also reports on performance and is available through our website</p> <p>Action To participate in the pilot with APSE and other local authorities to develop better performance measures and benchmarking arrangements</p>	31/12/13	Alan Morrison
<p>Does the Council work with COSLA to ensure strong national coordination for trading standards in Scotland that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining effective links with UK-wide arrangements • analysing intelligence to identify national risks • agreeing national priorities • developing national service standards and keeping these under review • establishing a system for scrutinising and publicly reporting councils' • performance against these standards 		<p>This occurs at various level</p> <p>Elected Members via Consumer and Wellbeing Group/COSLA Leaders etc</p> <p>Officer level via</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. work of SCOTTS and direct liaison with LA's and COSLA 2. Working Groups 3. Liaison with Scambusters, SIMLU and the IT fraud team 4. Use of Memex & TS Interlink to provide information 5. Work with UK agencies (like NMO, OFT etc) on 		

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		national projects		
<p>Does the Council work with COSLA in developing arrangements for national coordination, explore a full range of options for redesigning trading standards services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater use of more formal joint working • creating fully shared services • establishing a national service 		<p>Yes through work of SCOTSS. A recent example are the new arrangement for the delivery of consumer protection in Scotland and the provision of specialist units for money lending, Scambusters and IT fraud</p> <p>Actions Continue to support current liaison arrangements</p>	31/3/13	Alan Morrison
Do the Council and COSLA liaise with the Scottish Government on the future of trading standards services where this involves organisational or service issues for which it has responsibility		Via COSLA Working Groups, SCOTSS and specific consultations		
Does the Council work with COSLA to develop a workforce strategy, which identifies the staffing levels and skills required to sustain an effective trading standards service over the next 5–10 years, and take action to address any shortfalls identified		<p>Work has been through SCOTSS to date and has included funding arrangements of single-issue initiatives (e.g. tobacco enforcement) or the new consumer landscape.</p> <p>Actions Need to take forward recommendations of Protecting Consumers report with COSLA and others</p>	30/06/13	Alan Morrison
Does the Council work with COSLA to ensure that councillors are fully informed and supported to make decisions about the future of services to protect consumers		<p>Elected representatives attend various COSLA Working Groups</p> <p>Briefings provided by Trading Standards Manager/ Regulatory Services Manager on any relevant matters</p>		
Does the Council ensure they monitor and manage the performance of all their consumer protection services using appropriate measures of performance that enable benchmarking, and report		These are in place and there is quarterly performance reporting. There is a trading standards plan although at present this does not go to Committee. Regular briefings are taking place with Lead	31/03/14	Alan Morrison

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performance regularly to councillors, senior management and the public		Councillor on emerging issues and the national agendas. Actions Need to increase level of awareness of trading standards in Council. Service plan to PPSL Committee etc. (outcome of projects etc.)		
Do the Council and COSLA work with the Citizens Advice Service and others to increase awareness and understanding among consumers of where they can get advice and help when buying goods or services, particularly when things go wrong.		We have a written agreement with Citizens Advice Scotland and we refer consumer enquiries to their national advice line. We also support the local Argyll and Bute CAB Actions Agree new contract with ABCAB Reinstate reporting and liaison arrangements Consider funding options for 14-15.	30/06/13	Alan Morrison
Does the Council work with COSLA to establish an effective system for analysing intelligence and agreeing national priorities for their work to protect consumers		COSLA role is minimal at present although with the demise of DTI, COSLA will need to be more involved		
Does the Council work with COSLA to review 'trusted trader' schemes and consider the need for a shared national approach or standards.		We are presently considering options for the provision of a trusted trader type scheme. However, I am not aware of any plans from COSLA to operate a national scheme of this type. Actions identify options for trusted trader scheme in Argyll and Bute Council	31/09/13	Alan Morrison