



## Report to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee

<b>Title:</b>	Creation of a Joint Trading Standards Service with Surrey County Council
<b>Committee date:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2014
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<b>Report signed off by Cabinet Member:</b>	Martin Phillips, Community Engagement
<b>Electoral divisions affected:</b>	All

### Purpose of Agenda Item

This item is being brought to the Select Committee following a request at the Committee's May meeting to see the business case, once developed, for the creation of a Joint Trading Standards Service with Surrey County Council. It is being brought to the Select committee as consultation and to seek the committee's views prior to the business case being formally considered by Cabinet in October 2014.

### Background

Further to the background paper regarding the Trading Standards Service provided to this Committee in May, the Service has been keen to develop a Joint Service with another Trading Standards Service to address the fundamental challenges posed by the impact of reducing resources - particularly around knowledge availability, robustness and resilience.

## Summary

The development of a Joint Service with Surrey will provide an enhanced service for residents and businesses in both counties, whilst also delivering the savings required in the Medium Term Financial Plans for each local authority. The alternative for each service would be to make service delivery reductions which in turn would reduce protection for residents and support for local businesses. The suggested way forward also sits well with being commercially minded being brought to life through the Future Shape programme.

The Project Board recommends Governance arrangements through a Joint Committee with a host Authority, Surrey. This would mean the Joint Service would be virtually hosted by Surrey but would not be co-located in one place and would continue to be locally accessible and to deliver local services to local people. The Joint Service will have its own business plan and priorities, which will be aligned to the partner Local Authority priorities. Where there are specific local needs these will continue to be met. The Joint Service will continue to use its current local brands when dealing with local residents, and will develop a third shared brand for its income generation activities.

There are a range of benefits, both cashable and non-cashable. Among others these include sharing the wide range of knowledge and expertise required; developing income generation and reducing costs through sharing. The cashable savings (removing 10% of Joint Service costs by year 3) allow the services to meet their current Medium Term Financial pressures without a detrimental impact to Service provision to local people. The changes will also better prepare the service to meet future financial pressures which may arise.

Whilst the governance of the Joint Service will occur through a Joint Committee with Members from both Authorities, this will be underpinned by an “Inter-Authority Agreement” setting out the legal arrangements for the partnership. This will include matters such as duration of the agreement (currently the Project Board is recommending 5+10 years); agreement for division of finances – for example income, underspend or overspend to be split in the same proportion as each parties percentage contribution; termination and exit arrangements. It also includes the detailed but necessary legalities which must be agreed such as data sharing / data protection issues; business continuity; health and safety; insurance etc.

## Resource implications

The aim of the Joint Service financially is to respond to current resource reductions outlined in the Medium Term Plan’s for both Buckinghamshire Trading Standards and Surrey Trading Standards. It is also to put the Joint Service in the best possible place to generate further income in the future which may be needed to offset additional financial pressures which are not yet known.

The Medium Term Plan, as currently constructed requires Buckinghamshire’s Trading Standards Service to generate a £79,000 saving in 2015/16 (year 1 of the proposed Joint Service). It requires a further £29,000 in 2016/17 (year 2 of the proposed Joint Service). These savings equate to approximately a 9% cut in the overall service budget compared to

now (current Service budget is £1,122,928). As yet, no savings have been identified as required from the service budget in year 3.

Surrey Trading Standards Medium Term Financial Plan requires savings of £235,000 within the next 3 years (equating to approximately 11% of their current Service budget).

### **Next steps**

Consideration of the Business Plan and key information from the underpinning legal “inter-authority agreement” and a decision whether to go ahead is expected to occur at the 20<sup>th</sup> October Cabinet Meeting.

From now until early October we are seeking views on the draft business case, to ensure that the final version presented to Cabinet takes into account views raised and contains sufficient information so that an informed decision can be made.

The project continues to be overseen by a Board comprising Members and Officers from each of the two Local Authorities (this includes Cllr Martin Phillips and Phil Dart from BCC).

If a positive decision is reached, the aim would be to fully create the Joint Service to enable a go-live from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

Documents attached – Business Case with appendices, and Equalities Impact Assessment.