

SUBJECT:	CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY
REPORT OF:	<i>Healthy Communities – Councillor Paul Kelly</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To obtain Members' approval for the draft Corporate Enforcement Policy

RECOMMENDATION

To approve the draft Corporate Enforcement Policy for regulatory compliance and enforcement services at Appendix 1.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

The Regulators' Code came into statutory effect on 6 April 2014. A key action required to comply with the Code is to have an enforcement policy explaining how the local authority responds to regulatory non-compliance. With the majority of services now being shared across both Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils it is appropriate at this time to review the enforcement policies and to publish a joint Corporate Enforcement Policy that sets out the guiding principles of how regulatory services will engage with those they regulate.

3. Report

The government is committed to reducing regulatory burdens on business and supporting the growth of compliant businesses through open and constructive relationships between regulators and those they regulate.

The Regulators' Code came into statutory effect on 6 April 2014, replacing the Regulators' Compliance Code. It provides a principles-based framework for how regulators should engage with those they regulate. The specific local authority services covered by the regulatory code are all within the Services Directorate (food safety, environmental protection, health and safety, private sector housing, public health, waste and licensing). There are also a number of other regulatory and enforcement services which are not covered by the code most notably Planning, Building Control, Revenues and Benefits and Parking Services enforcement. However the broad principles contained within the draft enforcement policy are equally applicable to all council enforcement services and it is therefore recommended that this is adopted as a corporate approach to enforcement.

Local authorities need to have regard to the Code when developing standards, policies or procedures that either guide their regulatory activities with business or apply to other regulators.

The Regulator's Code

The Regulator's Code is based on 6 broad principles which are set out below. The Code contains a section on each of these which sets out what is expected of the regulator in each case:

- Regulators should carry out their activities in a way that supports those they regulate to comply and grow;
- Regulators should provide straightforward ways to engage with those they regulate and hear their views;
- Regulators should base their regulatory activities on risk;
- Regulators should share information about compliance and risk;
- Regulators should ensure clear information, guidance and advice is available to help those they regulate meet their responsibilities to comply
- Regulators should ensure that their approach to their regulatory activities is transparent.

A key action required to ensure compliance with the Code is to have an enforcement policy explaining how the local authority responds to non-compliance. The majority of regulatory services are now within shared services across Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils and so it is an opportune time to develop a joint Corporate Enforcement Policy that sets out the main principles of enforcement for all regulatory compliance and enforcement services.

It is also a requirement of the Code that mechanisms are put in place to engage with those they regulate including engagement in the development and review of policies and service standards.

Overview of the Enforcement Policy

Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils carry out a wide range of regulatory roles in meeting its many statutory duties of protecting the public, individuals and the environment. These functions are discharged through a combination of programmed inspections, responding to complaints, issuing licences and offering advice. This policy is an overarching policy that applies to all the Councils' services with enforcement duties but it should be noted that various additional service specific enforcement requirements may also apply.

The enforcement policy is intended to protect the public, the environment, consumers and workers through:

- Enforcing the law in a fair, equitable and consistent manner;
- Assisting broadly compliant businesses to meet their legal obligations;
- Taking firm action against those who flout the law or act irresponsibly.

The policy sets out the broad approach that the Councils will take to enforcement which takes account of the Regulator's Code and commits us to being:

- *Proportionate* – our activities will reflect the level of risk to the public and enforcement action taken will relate to the seriousness of the offence;
- *Accountable* – our activities will be open to public scrutiny, with clear and accessible policies, and fair and efficient complaints procedures;
- *Consistent* – our advice to those we regulate will be robust and reliable and we will respect advice provided by others;
- *Transparent* – we will ensure that those we regulate are able to understand what is expected of them and what they can anticipate in return, and
- *Targeted* – we will focus our resources on higher risk enterprises and activities.

Services covered by the policy will work with and consult other council services, partners and other regulators where there is a shared or complementary enforcement role to ensure a consistent approach to enforcement and to avoid duplication.

The policy sets out the levels of enforcement action available to the councils, how we will determine which action is appropriate in the event of non-compliance and how we will conduct our investigations.

4. Consultation

The draft enforcement policy has been consulted upon internally with other regulatory services and externally with trade representative bodies. This took the form of an online survey advertised through the Councils' websites and specific email contact with local Chambers of Commerce, Revitalisation groups and Bucks Business First.

Two responses were received, both in support of the policy. The policy has been slightly amended at 3.8 in response to a comment to make it clearer when correspondence is posted to help those who have been asked to respond back to the councils.

5. Options

No alternative options have been identified which would secure compliance with the Regulators' Code

7. Corporate Implications

Reports must include specific comments addressing the following implications;

3.1 Financial - none

3.2 Legal – local authorities with enforcement and regulatory services are required to have enforcement policies that comply with the Regulator's Code

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

This policy contributes to the key aims and objectives of:

1. Delivering cost- effective, customer- focused services
2. Working towards safe and healthier local communities

and the Joint Business Plan 2016-20.

9. Next Step

When approved, the Corporate Enforcement Policy will be published on the Councils' websites. Staff briefings will be held to promote the principles within the corporate policy and Heads of Service will be required to have regard to it when developing their own service plans.

Background Papers:	Regulator's Code
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