

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services

Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee : 2 August 2006

Subject: Regional Intelligence Capability for Trading Standards

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the creation of a new regional intelligence capability for Scottish Trading Standards services

2. Background

- 2.1** In February 2006 the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sought bids for funds to establish regional intelligence capabilities for Trading Standards services across the United Kingdom.
- 2.2** Glasgow City Council submitted a bid on behalf of the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS). The bid proposed the creation of a new post for an intelligence analyst to work on behalf of all Scottish Trading Standards services to enhance their ability to detect and take action against those who perpetrate large-scale consumer fraud.
- 2.3** The DTI announced in April that the bid had been successful. The project will benefit from funding of £110,000 over two years as part of a £1.2 million UK-wide initiative.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The creation of a regional intelligence capability will help Trading Standards services in Scotland to gather and use intelligence about cross-boundary cases of fraudulent and malicious trade practices involving serious consumer detriment. The existence of 32 different Trading Standards services means that it is difficult to monitor and tackle criminals who trade across borders, including those who travel around the country leaving disgruntled consumers in their wake. The sort of activities which this project will monitor include cowboy builders, organised counterfeiting gangs and the sale of pornographic DVDs.
- 3.2** The funding will enable Scottish Trading Standards services to:-
- improve co-operation with partners such as Police intelligence units, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Benefits Agency and agencies which support vulnerable communities;
 - identify and promote best practice across Scotland;
 - use intelligence to inform our service plans and enforcement strategies;

- make better use of resources by targeting activities where it will be of most benefit; and
- receive alerts about scams and other undesirable trading practices which may be coming our way.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5. Personnel Issues

5.1 There are no personnel issues.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This new initiative should enhance Trading Standards' ability to crack down on large-scale consumer fraud and rogue traders who try to evade the authorities by trading across boundaries.

7. Recommendation

7.1 **The Committee is asked to welcome the establishment of a regional intelligence capability for Trading Standards in Scotland.**

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Date: 13 July 2006

Wards Affected: All

Appendix: None

Background Papers: None

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