

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 OCTOBER 2016

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGULATION

Report from: Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation,
Councillor Chitty

Summary

This report sets out progress made within the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation which fall within the remit of this Committee.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation:

- Economic Development
- Local Plan
- Markets
- Planning Policy
- Regulation – Environmental Health/Trading Standards/Enforcement and Licensing (executive functions only)
- Social Regeneration
- South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership.

Note: The Leader and Full Council have delegated the Council's building control functions to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee. The terms of Reference of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee are set out within the Council's Constitution and include executive and non-executive functions. Councillor Chitty is appointed to sit on the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee.

1.2 Achievements for 2015/16 are detailed by service areas below:

2. Economic Development and Social Regeneration

2.1 Employment

2.1.1 A total of 759 jobs were created and protected in Medway against a target of 400, and 35 jobs to date since April 2016 against a target of 39.

2.1.2 634 intensive assists to local businesses were provided during 2015/16, against a target of 350. For Quarter 1 of 2016, a further 191 intensive assists have been delivered to businesses, giving a total for the two periods of 825.

2.2 Funding

2.2.1 Partners for Growth interest free loans and start-up grants totalled £44,200 in 2015/16 and Q1 of 2016. A total of 23 businesses were assisted, 20 as start-up grants each valued at £500, and 3 interest free loans of £4,700, £14,500 and £15,000 respectively. This has levered in £114,623 of bank and business owner funding.

2.3 Apprenticeships

2.3.1 A total of 67 apprenticeships were directly assisted into local businesses through the Medway Apprenticeship Placement Service (MAPS) in 2015/16. A further 38 apprenticeships have been pledged and are currently being placed. Young people have been placed into business sectors such as signwriting, catering, engineering, digital marketing, dentistry, social media, and business administration. Medway directly funded 49 of these apprenticeships at a cost of £49,000.

2.4 Medway Business Awards 2015

2.4.1 The 31st annual Medway Business Awards ceremony was held in November 2015. The overall winner was DCB Kent, taking the top prize of a trophy and £1,000 that they promptly gave to charity. DCB has seen 400 per cent turnover growth since 2008. The company provides professional, high quality building, refurbishment, disabled adaptations and maintenance services across the South East. Customers are predominately housing associations, local authorities and education providers.

2.5 Innovation Centre Medway (ICM)

2.5.1 ICM is currently 95% occupied, with a total of 44 businesses. Businesses that have recently become tenants at the centre include Tortuga Software Ltd, and ADI Computer Services.

2.5.2 ICM is supporting 290 employee jobs in total, contributing £4.5 million to Medway's GVA (Gross Value Added).

2.6 Box Clever workspace (part of the new Innovation Studios offer)

2.6.1 Innovation Centre Medway is expanding its offer with the development of flexible, modular workspace for small and start-up businesses in Strood. Box Clever will start development at the end of October 2016, and will consist of 15 first floor workspace units and 19 storage units on the ground floor. This is an innovative design and construction, made from shipping containers.

2.6.2 The Box Clever units will be managed by the Innovation Centre Medway management team, and will benefit from extremely high quality broadband.

2.7 Enterprise Zone status for Rochester Airport

2.7.1 In 2015, Medway Council successfully bid for and won Enterprise Zone status for the Rochester Airport master plan area, that will release significant amounts of land for valuable commercial development. The announcement was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his November 2015 Autumn Statement.

2.7.2 The principal benefit of EZ status is that businesses locating to the site will be able to claim up to £55k of business rates relief per year, for a maximum of five years (total £275k incentive). This five year incentive is claimable by businesses that occupy the site up until the very last day of March 2022. The discounted rates are refunded to Medway Council by Government, so that the Local Authority does not lose out on valuable income.

2.8 Local Growth Fund for Rochester Airport redevelopment

2.8.1 In April 2016, Medway Council submitted via the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP) a business case to secure £4.4 million of funding to redevelop Rochester Airport's operational infrastructure, which will lead to the release of land for commercial development. The business case was subject to an HCA Green Book Appraisal that showed an overwhelming set of benefits that would accrue from the site following funding and subsequent development. These benefits would include a huge number and quality of jobs (well in excess of 1,000), enormous land value uplift, modern commercial workspace and significant image and branding attention on Medway.

2.8.2 There is a further business case for £3.7 million of Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding to develop the enabling infrastructure to part of the site earmarked for commercial development. If successful, this funding will allow development of access roads to the site, as well as water and drainage system, power, broadband and site landscaping. It is anticipated that the decision on this business case will be announced in November 2016. The business case was prioritised 4th out of 41 in SELEP's list of projects for funding consideration.

2.9 Local Growth Fund for Chatham Destination Place making

- 2.9.1 A business case for £4 million was submitted in April 2016. The project will deliver a city centre that will create a high quality Civic Square public space that highlights and enhances connections to established world class heritage at Fort Amherst; proposed mixed use regeneration sites at Chatham Waterfront, Medway Street and Medway Creative Quarter, and the proposed Chatham Waterfront Marina and established town centre facilities and services.
- 2.9.2 In the region of 300 homes and 700 new direct jobs will be created with the funding intervention, as well as leverage of £37.8 million of private sector investment.
- 2.9.3 The business case was prioritised 22nd out of 41 in SELEP's list of projects for funding consideration.

2.10 Local Growth Fund for Strood Civic Site Flood Mitigation Works

- 2.10.1 A business case for £3.5 million was submitted in April 2016 to mitigate flooding at the Strood Civic site. Once protected it will be an area of prime, high quality residential land with potential for premium housing, offering fantastic un-interrupted views of Rochester Castle and Cathedral.
- 2.10.2 Development of the site will also provide employment land which is targeted at Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's,) encouraging local cafes, restaurants and independent retailers, as well as enabling job creation.
- 2.10.3 The mixed use development is expected to create a total of 479 new jobs and 325 new homes, and leverage £32m of private sector investment.
- 2.10.4 The business case was prioritised 6th out of 41 in SELEP's list of projects for funding consideration.

2.11 Markets

- 2.11.1 Total gross rental income across all of the markets in 2015/16 was £158,651.
- 2.11.2 A total of 208 markets were held in Strood, Gillingham and Rochester (Farmers' Market) over the financial year.
- 2.11.3 Additional markets were held as part of the English Festival, Sweeps and Dickensian Christmas celebrations and events.
- 2.11.4 Gillingham market continues to remain strong, and is very well supported by local people living in close proximity to the High Street.

2.11.5 Strood market will benefit from public realm improvements being designed for the Tolgate Lane area and the car park where the market takes place. Consultation on the improvements has taken place and the project about to enter the detailed design phase. Phased development work is currently scheduled to start in February 2017.

2.11.6 Rochester Farmers Market has relocated to the Blue Boar Lane car park, which has been very well received by traders and customers. Numbers of traders at this market has increased regularly from traditionally what was approximately 20 to a regular attendance of 30 traders.

2.12 Employ Medway

2.12.1 The Employ Medway Service continued its high performance throughout 2015/16. A total of 311 people registered for the service, of which 122 were Work Programme registrations. This represents an achievement of 80% against the target of 400 which was set early on in the programme. Numbers referred to the Work Programme have been significantly lower but this is in the context of a significant decrease in the number of local people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

2.12.2 The number of jobs taken up, at 184 (compared to a target of 88), was slightly lower than in 2014/15 but in line with contract targets set by DWP. Employ Medway is currently third in the league tables of providers delivering the Work Programme in Kent, Surrey and Sussex contract to date. With a job start achievement of 46.2% we are delivering to contract with even those customers furthest from the labour market.

2.12.3 A jobs fair held at the Pentagon Centre on 3 September 2015 attracted 35 organisations advertising over 1000 jobs, and was attended by 1200 local unemployed people. As a direct result of the jobs fair 452 local unemployed moved into employment. Another jobs fair was held in September 2016 with similar success. We are currently awaiting feedback on numbers into work.

2.12.4 Also to add to the above is the recognition of the Employ Medway team through the Directorate's Make A Difference Awards securing Team of the Year. There were 30 nominations for this category, so this was an excellent result.

2.12.5 Employ Medway experiences most success in employment support with the 18-24 cohort. The service has a 52% referral to job start ratio with this demographic, who are all long term unemployed.

3. **Planning Policy**

3.1 Local Plan

3.1.1 The council published an Issues and Options document as the first formal stage of work on a new Local Plan for Medway. The Local Plan will set out a framework for the area's development up to 2035. The

Council carried out consultation on this document in January and February 2016. Over 200 written responses were received to the consultation from residents, developers, businesses, community groups, statutory and voluntary organisations, representing diverse interests.

3.1.2 The Planning Service is working towards the next formal stage of preparing the Local Plan. Comments received on the Issues and Options document have been considered, and officers are collating and analysing information to produce a more detailed consultation report. This will be presented to Cabinet in December 2016, and consultation will be carried out in January and February 2017.

3.1.3 The Planning Service successfully bid for a £25,000 grant from DCLG to support work on the Local Plan.

3.2 Brownfield Land Register

3.2.1 The Planning Service participated in a DCLG pilot scheme to set up a brownfield land register, in advance of the requirements of the Housing and Planning Act. This supports the government's aims to boost the supply of land for housing. The register was published in June 2016. 42 sites have been identified in Medway.

3.3 Self-build and Custom Housebuilding register

3.3.1 In line with new duties on local authorities, the council has established a register of people interested in seeking plots of land for Self Build and Custom housebuilding in Medway. This provides useful information on the level of demand for such plots in drawing up the local plan and considering planning applications.

3.4 Neighbourhood Planning

3.4.1 The Planning Service has supported the steering group preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Cliffe and Cliffe Woods. This has included joint consultation events in the villages.

4. **Development Management**

4.1 Planning Applications - Performance for Quarter 1 2016

4.1.1 Comparing performance against the latest data available nationally (January to March 2016), Medway performed significantly above the national average for all types of applications.

4.1.2 During the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 the authority received 404 planning applications; this is compared to 383 for the same period in 2015. For the year 2015/16 the authority received 1426 applications, this compares to 1452 in 2014/15.

- 4.1.3 Performance for major applications **not** subject to an extension of time during the quarter is 91.67%. Applications subject to an extension of time is 85.71%. This is against a target of 60%.
- 4.1.4 Performance for minor applications **not** subject to an extension of time during the quarter is 88.46%. Applications subject to an extension of time is 86.67%. This is against a target of 65%.
- 4.1.5 Performance for other applications **not** subject to an extension of time during the quarter is 89.69%. Applications subject to an extension of time is 90.91%. This is against a target of 80%.
- 4.1.6 The annual meeting with Major Developers was held in May 2016. This meeting provided developers with an opportunity to meet with Members of the Planning Committee and senior officers within the Planning Service. Developers were provided with an update on Issues and Options concerning the Local Plan and Natural England gave a presentation on a possible new approach to protected species regulations. Developers expressed their appreciation of the update of the Local Plan, and the positive way that Medway engages with them throughout the planning process, which includes the use of Planning Performance Agreements and all-Member presentations early in the application process.

4.2 Appeals performance

- 4.2.1 The Council has bucked the national trend for large scale appeal decisions despite a lack of a 5 year housing land supply and an ageing Local Plan, through the appeal decisions for Land West of Hoo and Moor Street, where both appeals were dismissed.

4.3 Enforcement

- 4.3.1 Breakdown of work undertaken in relation to derelict buildings for the period 1 January – 30 June 2016:

New cases received	78
Cases closed	26
Site visits carried out	130
Number of properties with S330 notices served	12
Number of properties with S215 notices served	4
Total number of live cases	146

- 4.3.2 Breakdown of enforcement activity during the period 1 January – 30 June 2016:

New Cases received	280
Cases closed	201
Site visits carried out	362
Breach of Condition Notices served	4
Planning enforcement Notices served	2
Prosecutions	6

4.4 Trees

4.4.1 Breakdown of TPO (Tree Preservation Orders) activity during the period 1 January – 30 June 2016:

Number of TPO applications received	92
Number of TPO applications received within a conservation area	137
Number of TPO applications determined	53
Number of TPO applications determined with a conservation area	33

5. **South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (STG)**

- 5.1 Despite STG facing fierce competition in all areas (commercial, industrial, education and residential) building applications have increased by 25%.
- 5.2 STG has re-engineered processes and revised application forms which have been simplified to improve customers' application process. This has been greatly received by architects and agents.
- 5.3 There has been further development of STG's mobile solution to feedback 'real time' information at various stages of inspection on site.
- 5.4 Despite an increase in applications STG has met the upper quartile of National Performance targets for plan vetting times.
- 5.5 STG has improved turnaround times in consultancy services and exceeded the SLA quota for stock condition surveys.
- 5.6 A 93% was achieved by STG in Medway's Health & Safety Audit.
- 5.7 STG achieved the highest recommendation after being audited by Medway Council and also maintained ISO 9001 QA accreditation following an audit by the British Standards Institute.

6. **Regulation – Environmental Health/Trading Standards/Enforcement and Licensing (executive functions only)**

6.1 Environmental Health Food and Safety Team

6.1.1 The Food and Safety Team delivers a broad range of statutory duties and functions including: food safety; health and safety at work; infectious disease control and port health. The team also carries out food and health and safety training courses and is responsible for Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) certification at Gillingham Football Club.

6.1.2 Food Hygiene key achievements for 2015/16:

- Delivered 100% due interventions in the food hygiene inspection programme

- Reduced high-risk premises (categories A & B) by 50%, to just 2% of the total
- Reduced unrated premises to zero at 31 March
- Broad compliance increased to 95% of food premises (highest in 7 years)
- 90% of food businesses rated as “Good” or “Very Good” under the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme with 1,517 premises rated in Medway under the scheme
- 50% reduction in the number of food businesses required to be formally closed (to just 1).

6.1.3 It should be noted that compliance is the desired outcome and formal enforcement is undertaken as a last resort. During 2015/16 the team put more emphasis on educating and supporting businesses as a more sustainable and cost-effective way of promoting and maintaining public safety. This is in line with the Government’s *“Better Business for All”* initiative, which promotes local economic growth through supporting “good” businesses to thrive whilst focusing resources on tackling rogue traders and promoting a level playing field.

6.1.4 The team provided advice and guidance to over 182 new and existing premises for food hygiene and 38 premises for health and safety.

6.1.5 The team promoted food safety messages in the run up to Christmas 2015 and for Valentine’s Day 2016. This latter message encouraged customers to check the food hygiene rating of restaurants before making a booking.

6.1.6 The service also participated in two national food sampling programmes: for salads from takeaways; and self-service counters and fillings for sandwiches and jacket potatoes. Unsatisfactory results were taken up with the premises concerned.

6.1.7 The team participated in the Food Standards Agency’s Food Safety Week 2015 in an efficient manner by using media as a low cost resource to promote its messages.

6.1.8 The team investigated over 252 cases of infectious disease, including E. coli, Hepatitis A, Legionella and Listeria.

6.1.9 The Team also investigated:

- 323 food service requests
- 192 health and safety service requests
- 133 reports of serious work-related accidents
- 1 work-related fatality.

6.1.10 The Team continued to carry out monitoring inspections for spectator safety at Gillingham Football Club and supported the work of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The annual inspection was completed in September 2015. This work helps to ensure that the arrangements put in place by the club meet sound, modern safety standards.

6.2 Strategic Environmental Protection Team

6.2.1 The Environmental Protection team delivers a broad range of statutory duties in relation to contamination of land, local air quality management, private water supplies and distribution systems, environmental permitting, licensing and planning.

6.2.2 During 2015/16, the team undertook an extensive 12-week public consultation on a draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The AQAP details the steps to be taken to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide to below the EU-set health objective levels, within the three air quality management areas within the area. Overall, comments received on the consultation were positive and supported the proposed measures. The final AQAP, which took on board the consultation feedback, was formally approved by Cabinet on 15 December 2015, and has been accepted by Defra.

6.2.3 In April 2015 the council adopted new air quality planning guidance, which was produced by the Environmental Protection team in conjunction with the Kent & Medway Air Partnership (K&MAQP). The guidance has been prepared in response to changes in national planning policy, through the National Planning Policy Framework, and aims to improve local air quality across Kent and Medway. To raise awareness of the guidance, presentations were delivered to colleagues in Planning, and Members of the Council's Planning Committee. The team also presented the guidance to the Kent Planning Policy Forum and Kent Planning Officers Group to raise wider awareness amongst planning officers in the rest of Kent.

6.2.4 During 2015/16, the team additionally:

- Completed 100% of the Environmental Permitting inspections that were due
- Provided comments on 740 planning consultations and discharge of conditions applications
- Commented on 83 licensing consultations.
- Provided information and advice in respect to 108 environmental enquires/searches
- Maintained the two air quality stations within Medway
- Continuously worked towards ensuring that new development and activities are placed in suitable locations whilst having regard to the past, present and future uses of the locality.

6.2.5 The service also provided comments and guidance to the Planning team on proposed major developments within Medway, and areas that may affect the environment of Medway, including:

- 130 houses, Stoke Road, Hoo
- 140 houses, London Road, Rainham
- 250 houses, Roman Way/Knight Road, Strood
- 160 houses, Mierscourt Road, Rainham
- 131 houses, Peninsula Way, Hoo
- 190 houses, Moor Street, Rainham
- 89 houses, Gleamingwood Drive, Lordswood (Maidstone area)
- 200 houses, London Road, Newington (Swale area)
- Completion of the new site for the relocation of Rochester Rail station, which opened in December 2015.

6.2.6 The team was also involved in issuing consents under section 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to control noise, dust and air pollution from construction sites. Section 61 consents for undertaking noisy works were issued for the Chatham Waters Development at Pier Road, Chatham and the upgrading works undertaken by British Rail at Rochester Railway Station. The team continues to support the Council with its regeneration programme for Medway.

6.3 Noise and Nuisance

6.3.1 The team deals with statutory noise and other nuisances. This involves an initial investigation following any complaint of statutory nuisance from a local resident. Statutory nuisance is mainly defined as something that seriously disturbs the comfort and enjoyment of a person's property. It relates to noise, light, air pollution and odours, sewers and drainage, pest infestations and hoarding.

6.3.2 Last year, the team dealt with 2,459 such complaints from members of the public. The vast majority of these complaints are resolved without the need for formal action. The team operates an out-of-hours call-out service, which is essential in establishing whether or not a statutory nuisance exists.

6.3.3 In relation to noise nuisance, 51 written warnings were issued and 14 abatement notices were served. Four audible intruder alarms were silenced in default of notice.

6.3.4 Stereo equipment was also seized from an address in Jenkins Dale when a resident continued to breach a notice served.

6.3.5 It was necessary to prosecute in just one case last year. The team had received a number of complaints from residents in Chatham relating to loud amplified music during services at St Bartholomew's church. These would take place late at night as well as on Sunday mornings. The church ignored the team's informal approaches and attempts to assist with sound control and an abatement notice was served. This was breached 19 times and the pastor was prosecuted.

6.3.6 Four notices were served relating to filthy and verminous premises and 5 relating to drainage where rats were involved.

- 6.3.7 The team's new initiative, encouraging dog day care and home boarding establishments to register with the Council has continued to grow. There are now 15 establishments which are registered and licenced by the Council. This gives dog owners peace of mind knowing that those looking after their pets meet animal welfare standards.
- 6.3.8 The 'Day for Every Dog' event took place at parks across Medway, engaging with thousands of people in the process. 171 dogs were micro chipped free of charge. Utilising the kennel club's safe and sound scheme, 205 children were taught the key elements of interacting safely with dogs. Battersea Dogs Home provided 347 engraved tags to dog owners free of charge and 61 free pet checks were carried out by the PDSA. The week was rounded off by a free to enter dog show in which just over 100 dogs took part.
- 6.3.9 Last year also saw the arrival of Medway's first zoo at The Fenn Bell pub. There are a number of licencing issues to be addressed before the zoo can be fully opened to the public and the team is doing everything they can to assist the owner with this.

6.4 Environmental Enforcement

- 6.4.1 This section is split into two teams, which work very closely together to take action against those that blight our environment so as to create a cleaner and safer Medway.
- 6.4.2 The Environmental Enforcement Team consists of 7 FTE and deals with the investigation of fly tipping and other waste related crime such as untidy private land, trade waste and illegal waste carriers.
- 6.4.3 The Street Scene Enforcement Team consists of 7 FTE and deals with on street enforcement of littering and dog fouling offences as well as the removal of fly tipping.
- 6.4.4 Last year the team dealt with 6,757 cases, most of which were resolved without the need for formal action. However, it was necessary to prosecute in 69 cases.
- 6.4.5 The team secured a 100% conviction rate. Fines and costs totalled £37,820.
- 6.4.6 Included in this total is an untidy land case where the landlord repeatedly failed to clear the land in question despite promises to the court. He eventually cleared the land after being summonsed for the second time – a year after the expiry of the original notice. Fines and costs in this case totalled £9,600. This case received attention both in the press and online.
- 6.4.7 Other sanctions included:
- 1 x 3 month prison sentence
 - 1 x 30 days suspended prison sentence
 - 4 arrest warrants

- 2 cautions
- 1 x 12 month conditional discharge
- 210 hours community service.

6.4.8 Officers also executed a warrant to enter premises in order to investigate and gather evidence at an illegal waste disposal site.

6.4.9 481 fixed penalty notices were issued for littering and dog fouling. A 7% increase on the previous year.

6.4.10 2,442 fly tips were attended, searched and cleared. 78% of these fly tips were removed within one working day, including 563, which were dealt with proactively; i.e. they were removed before a complaint was received from a member of the public.

6.4.11 The total amount of waste removed from the public realm for the year was 223 tonnes.

6.4.12 The team's success in the investigation and quick removal of fly tipping has led to it providing a service to the Housing Revenue Account on an SLA basis, bringing in an annual income of £23k.

6.5 Trading Standards Team

6.5.1 The Trading Standards team delivers against a broad range of statutory duties and functions including: product safety; food standards & feed safety; weights & measures; intellectual property; trade representations; unfair terms; unfair trading practices; animal health & welfare; price indications; explosives & petroleum and the Medway Council Act 2001.

6.5.2 The year has seen the team being highly commended by the Municipal Journal for their work addressing the topic of illegal tobacco sales and smuggled tobacco. The team made a number of large seizures and works extensively with *HMRC*. This has resulted in the team's work being highlighted as a 'pathfinder project' by *Public Health England* and Medway Trading Standards Team was requested to take a national lead and write a Tobacco Enforcement Manual as national guidance by *The National Trading Standards Board*.

6.5.3 The service continues its work controlling age-restricted goods and is presently investigating two premises that sold alcohol to a fourteen year old girl. The businesses are being interviewed with a view to the prosecution of those responsible and consideration will be given to the submission of licensing reviews for the offending businesses.

6.5.4 Over 42,000 'No Cold Calling' stickers have been issued to local residents and an early warning system developed with local banks to support vulnerable consumers. The scheme is now well established with numerous referrals coming from banks and building societies. This work is essential in preventing victims of fraud, many of whom have been coerced into handing over hundreds or thousands of pounds in cash and some who have suffered financial losses in excess of

£68,000. The simultaneous promotion of Medway Council's established Fair Trader Scheme is improving awareness and access to accredited trades people, and reducing the opportunities for rogue traders to exploit.

- 6.5.5 The service also participated in a joint enforcement day in partnership with Kent Police addressing the issue of psychoactive substances. All former "head shops" have now closed down and it is positive news that no shops were found to be selling illegal psychoactive substances in the area. The topic will remain under constant review and immediate action will be taken if they appear in the retail marketplace.
- 6.5.6 The service delivered a comprehensive food standards inspection programme and inspected 100% of high-risk premises and 100% of medium risk inspections as required by the Food Standards Agency. This year saw the team continue to advise local businesses on the controls on the allergen labelling of food products. The service also undertook a comprehensive food-sampling programme.
- 6.5.7 The team undertook a summer screen testing campaign to ensure that sunglasses afford the correct level of UVA/UVB protection, twenty eight samples were tested and four models failed. This resulted in the removal of the non-compliant sun glasses and product recalls being implemented by the importers. The team participated in a number of national safety campaigns in areas ranging from cosmetics to electrical chargers.
- 6.5.8 The service is undertaking a major campaign with local vets to get them to report illegally imported dogs. The team are finding an increasing number of dogs being imported in the area that do not hold valid pet passports. This creates a risk of the importation of diseases such as Rabies. All Medway based vets have been visited and provided with a 24 hours reporting telephone line. Since June the team have placed three illegal imported dogs into quarantine.
- 6.5.9 The team is preparing to undertake 100% inspections of local premises selling fireworks to ensure that only compliant products are stocked and that the explosives products are being stored safely. The team also acts as a national contact point for two major importers of fireworks and are responsible for overseeing the compliance checks of imported fireworks from China.
- 6.5.10 The team, in its capacity as the Petroleum licensing authority, is overseeing the building of the new petrol forecourt at the Chatham Asda site on Maidstone Road. Officers have also overseen the recommissioning of the village petrol forecourt in Lower Stoke which gives local residents access to nearby petrol facilities.

6.6 Business Compliance Team

- 6.6.1 The business compliance team sits alongside the Trading Standards Enforcement Team and the Food and Safety Team.

- 6.6.2 One of the main tasks is to act a portal for complaints and to triage each customer contact to ensure that appropriate advice and guidance is given to customers at the earliest opportunity. Only the more serious issues requiring specialist intervention are passed to the relevant team, allowing the most qualified and specialised officers to spend more time out in the field, and/or to enable them to concentrate on the higher risk areas and to therefore improve the efficiency of resources.
- 6.6.3 In 2015/16 the Business Compliance Team successfully dealt with over 60% of Trading Standards contacts and 42% of Environmental Health food complaints without the need to involve more specialist officers, in accordance with '*Better for Less*' principles and providing value for money.
- 6.6.4 The team, supported by Special Constables, works with the National Scams Hub to provide support and advice to the victims of scams in Medway through a series of personal visits. In 2015/16 over 60 visits were carried out to residents who had been identified as potential victims of scams. This work is backed up by a series of talks to local groups and training of local PCSOs to raise awareness and help protect the most vulnerable.
- 6.6.5 The Fair Trader Scheme is administered by the Business Compliance Team and aims to both protect consumers and promote local businesses, whilst deterring and/or restricting rogue traders. Following a number of successful marketing campaigns, including the placement of scheme information onto a number of council vehicles, 2015/16 reported further increase of revenue to almost £36,000. This being a total increase of almost 20% compared to the income target.
- 6.6.6 Each March the team hosts the Consumer Challenge Quiz (CCQ), which is open to the Special Educational Needs schools in Medway. This year saw a hotly contested competition resulting in the Hundred of Hoo School being declared the overall winner. The CCQ teaches the children about their consumer rights and who can help them when things go wrong as well as a number of other important messages. Once again a number of local businesses and Fair Trader Scheme members sponsored the event, which offset the cost, making this valuable event cost-neutral to the Council for the second year running.

Appendices

None

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Background documents

None