

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

approval noting

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UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP WORKING BETWEEN POLICE SCOTLAND & TRADING STANDARDS

From Andrew McPherson, Head of Regulatory Services & Waste Solutions

Email mcpersona@northlan.gov.uk **Telephone** 01236 638575

Executive Summary

This report presents Elected Members with an update on the continuing success of the partnership working project established between Police Scotland Lanarkshire Division, North Lanarkshire Trading Standards and South Lanarkshire Trading Standards.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Infrastructure Committee:

1. Note the contents of this report; and
2. Endorse and support future joint working partnership activity between Trading Standards and Police Scotland.

Supporting Documents

Council business plan to 2020

(a) 'Improve the health and care of communities'. The adoption of formal joint working between respective agencies has seen the benefit of increased targeted working to reduce the impact of organised crime groups upon local communities.

(b) 'Improve economic opportunities and outcomes'. Every enforcement action taken against criminal enterprise helps to level the playing field for legitimate local businesses, enabling them to prosper without the pressure of unfair competition caused by criminal activity in their trading sphere.

1. Background

- 1.1 In this day and age, when serious and organised criminals operate across several trade sectors at the same time, partnership working is key, particularly when it comes to tackling organised crime. North Lanarkshire Trading Standards contacted Police colleagues locally, then devised and implemented the attachment of Trading Standards staff, placing them in the heart of the Police Division's operations, in an initiative which was the first of its kind in Scotland, and concentrating upon matters in respect of intellectual property crime and doorstep crime.
 - 1.2 We agreed to establish a three month pilot project during which a member of the Trading Standards service was embedded within the Lanarkshire Police Division from December 2014. Subsequent partnership projects have taken place annually, including South Lanarkshire Trading Standards as a partner, to ensure maximum effectiveness of coverage in a pan Lanarkshire approach which encompasses the whole of the Police divisional area.
 - 1.3 This provides a significant opportunity for our officers to develop their skill set, establish best working practice guidelines between us and our Police colleagues and enables respective agencies to work toward common aims and ensure positive outcomes. By targeting the perpetrators of crime and pursuing methods to tackle the rogue businesses, we can create a fairer environment within which legitimate business has more chance to prosper. We can also serve Community Plan aspirations to reduce the harm caused to our communities by serious and organised crime.
 - 1.4 The continuing partnership project also gives Trading Standards in both of the Lanarkshire authorities a greater capacity to feed in to financial asset restraints and confiscations via Proceeds of Crime legislation extant in Scotland.
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2. Report

- 2.1 Contact was made by senior officers of both Councils' Trading Standards services and Police Scotland Q Division. The initial proposal was to attach an officer from North Lanarkshire Trading Standards, based in Airdrie Police office. Authorisation via extended scheme of delegation was given by South Lanarkshire for the officer to undertake work in their jurisdiction, thus ensuring the scope of the project matched the boundaries of the Police division. Subsequent projects have included South Lanarkshire Trading Standards as a full partner, with reciprocal authorisation status being granted to their officer to operate within North Lanarkshire.
- 2.2 Between the partners to the initiative we have:
 - Agreed an Information Sharing Protocol;
 - Signed off appropriate risk assessments;
 - Secured Non-Police Personnel Vetting for Trading Standards staff, allowing unescorted access within Police buildings as well as access to confidential Government Protective Marking Schemes;
 - Ensured trading Standards staff taking part in the attachments sign the Official Secrets Act, to safeguard the security of sensitive intelligence provided by Police partners.

- 2.3 Project time frames to date have been:
- Year 1 – December 2014 to February 2015;
 - Year 2 – November 2015 to February 2016;
 - Year 3 – September 2016 to December 2016;
 - Year 4 – September 2017 to January 2018;
 - Year 5 – May 2018 to August 2018 to concentrate upon doorstep crime in conjunction with Lanarkshire Police division's Operation Doric team;
 - Year 5 – a further project from October 2018 to January 2019.
- 2.4 Within the first 4 years of the partnership working project we have identified and reported upon several measures of success, including:
- Total intellectual property infringing seizures in excess of £2.5 million;
 - Proceeds of Crime applications totalling £2.715 million;
 - Personal development and upskilling of officers involved;
 - Established working relationship between partners strengthened, with improved ongoing communication and sharing of appropriate intelligence;
 - Effective progress against joint targets, including the use of Trading Standards' covert investigation online tactics;
 - New processes established to share information regarding applicants who apply for a licence under the Explosives Regulations 2014;
 - Dedicated Police Intelligence Officer assisting in the sharing of information and the collation of evidence packages, culminating in warrant applications and their successful execution;
 - Use of the Enterprise Act 2002 by Trading Standards for lower level offenders, reducing the pressure on Police Scotland and ultimately the Scottish Courts Service, by removing these crimes from the system, whilst ensuring that civil enforcement action can still be pursued if the offenders fail to desist in their criminal activities.
- 2.5 Whilst working in the partnership project from May to August 2018, officers apprehended a known serial fraudster in connection with outstanding cases of fraud and Road Traffic Act offences, and he was remanded in custody: <https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/villages/16232474.notorious-fraudster-swindles-thousands-from-ardgowan-estate/>. Additionally, 3 vehicles worth a total of £110,000 and which had been fraudulently obtained, were seized and have been subsequently recovered by the lease companies.
- 2.6 In June 2018, following receipt of intelligence concerning the alleged sale of counterfeit goods via a business premise in North Lanarkshire, and confirmation of same via covert test purchase, warrants were executed and counterfeit goods in the region of £15,000 were recovered. One individual was the subject of a report to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to that recovery, and significant assets were identified for subsequent Proceeds of Crime action to be pursued.
- 2.7 The May to August 2018 project resulted in 12 individuals being the subject of reports to the Procurator Fiscal in connection with alleged fraud offences related to their doorstep crime activity. The alleged offences amounted to a total loss of approximately £370,000 to consumers.
- 2.8 Prevention was also a key theme of this partnership project. The team of Police and Trading Standards officers delivered educational inputs to a number of financial institutes and community groups, to promote the use of the recently

launched banking protocol and give reassurance that swift action will be taken on instances of doorstep crime.

- 2.9 The results of the latest project are currently being compiled and will be reported through the normal channels in due course.
- 2.10 Trading Standards staff are currently in consultation with colleagues from the Community Safety Partnership, with a view to securing grant funding to establish a pilot scheme for the installation of video / CCTV doorbell equipment in the homes of vulnerable adults who have been or may become the victim of doorstep crime.
- 2.11 Due to the obvious success of this initiative, discussions will now continue with both Police Scotland and South Lanarkshire Council to determine how the opportunities associated with effective partnership working can be fully realised. It is recognised that the Council resources attributed to Trading Standards are relatively small and through the further reductions in this resource over previous years, it is imperative that partnership approaches such as this are utilised to ensure we achieve the maximum impact.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

There are no unfair aspects contained within this report.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

There is no adverse impact on equality or diversity contained within this report.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

There are no financial implications contained within this report

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There are no HR/Policy/Legislative impacts.

4.3 Environmental Impact

There are no environmental implications contained within this report.

4.4 Risk Impact

No significant risks are identified within this report.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 Specific measures of success are reported above.
- 5.2 The successes to date show that we are delivering best value, illustrating that by working together we are greater than the sum of our parts, delivering greater outcomes with no extra resource spend and delivering on our common principles of community protection and protecting the most vulnerable in society.



Andrew McPherson
Head of Regulatory Services & Waste Solutions