

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 5th FEBRUARY 2003

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF TRADING STANDARDS

Report by Director of Community Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Community Services Committee of the background to the national report by the Accounts Commission entitled “Made to Measure” along with details of the local report on East Ayrshire’s Trading Standards Service.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 23 February 2001, Audit Scotland presented a paper to Society of Local Authority Chief Executives on proposals to review performance audit and reporting for Scottish local authorities. A final project brief in July 2001 confirmed that Trading Standards would be used as a pilot during the 2001/2002 audit round.
- 2.2 In November 2001 notification was given that the audit would incorporate performance management planning, performance indicators and value for money.
- 2.3 The initial audit took place on 29 November 2001 with further meetings and correspondence thereafter.
- 2.4 An overview of Trading Standards Services in Scotland was published on 3 October 2002 and the local report specific to East Ayrshire Council’s Trading Standards Services was received on 28 November 2002.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Despite the fact that the national review produced a degree of adverse publicity for trading standards in Scotland, the local review is on the whole quite positive. Main findings from the audit in respect of East Ayrshire’s Trading Standards Service included:-
- ◆ “The Service performed strongly against the good management practices identified and, therefore, currently appears to be taking active steps towards providing a comprehensive best value service”.

- ◆ “The positive outcome of the Management Practices review reflects a strong best value influence from the Service’s leaders, which has been adopted throughout the Trading Standards team. The drive towards best value should however be detailed explicitly within the Service Plan incorporating Trading Standards in order to formalise the process”.
 - ◆ “East Ayrshire Council is one of the largest investors in Trading Standards per head of population within its grouping. The Council was also one of the strongest performers in regard to comparisons with good management practices”.
- 3.2 The national report contained the comment “small trading standards services perform worse overall than large services and there is a risk that they do not have the capacity to further develop their services”.
- 3.3 This comment prompted a suggestion that a Trading Standards grouping based on that which operates for Glasgow Scientific Services would permit better management of the service. However, as an analysis of the final report shows that East Ayrshire Trading Standards Service outperformed Glasgow City in 8 out of 10 fields of management practice and were marginally outperformed by Glasgow in only one, there would appear to be no merit in this proposal. However, it may be that greater collaboration between the three Ayrshire authorities could provide service benefits.

4 ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 An Action Plan was developed as a result of the audit and is attached as appendix.
- 4.2 A copy of the national report and the local report is available in the Members’ library.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Nil.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission has conducted a national audit of Trading Standards in Scotland which included a specific audit on East Ayrshire's Trading Standards Service.
- 8.2 Although the national report produced some adverse publicity for Trading Standards the local report reflected well on the Trading Standards Service in East Ayrshire.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JD/SD

6 December 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Audit Scotland paper presented to SOLACE in February 2001
2. "Made to Measure" National Report
3. "Made to Measure" Local Report

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers above should telephone 01563 576111 and speak to John Crawford, Head of Protective Services.

Implementation Officer – john.crawford@east-ayrshire.gov.uk