

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 30th October 2013
Report of: Executive Member for Highways and Environment

Report Title

Update in response to the Scrutiny Topic Group Report on Doorstep Crime

Summary

This report sets out the Executive's response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Topic Group which were formally referred to Executive on 24th June 2013.

Recommendation(s)

That the content of the report be noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Graeme Levy
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Background Papers: None

Background

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress following the Scrutiny Topic Group's report into Doorstep Crime in June 2013. For context the original recommendations are included below followed by an update on progress in implementing these recommendations.

The Topic Group's conclusions and recommendations were based around a number of themes:

- Prevention
- Intelligence and Enforcement
- Trusted trader Scheme
- Victims

Prevention

As a result of evidence gathered, the Topic Group recommended that an increase in iCAN membership would significantly improve levels of awareness and resilience to doorstep crime in the community. However, the Group felt that iCAN, as a service, needs to be more user-friendly. Currently, a form has to be completed and returned and Members felt that an opportunity existed to streamline processes such as electronic registration to support an increase in Membership.

The Topic Group was disappointed to see that, at the time of writing, only 26 Members had signed up to the Scheme, despite reminders, and felt that all Members of Council should receive such alerts.

Additionally, the Topic Group felt that as part of the preventative agenda, householders should be provided with cards to deter cold callers which could be placed on front doors and support householders to say "no" to doing business on the doorstep. Whilst resources are finite, the Topic Group suggested that the most vulnerable of Trafford residents should be provided with these.

Recommendation 1: That Trading Standards work with the Communications Team to make registration for the iCAN system simpler and more accessible.

Update – Following recent changes to devolving website content management to service level, staff in Trading Standards have acquired the necessary training and have devised an online registration form that will be uploaded to the website soon. This will make things easier and quicker for some potential members to join the iCan scheme, though it is recognised that many of the "core" target audience are not internet users and will still want the option of returning a paper copy of the registration form.

Recommendation 2: That Trading Standards work with partners to consider the preparation and dissemination of small cards to be placed on the front doors of residents to deter doorstep traders.

Update – To assist in fully implementing this recommendation Trading Standards have submitted a bid to Trafford Housing Trust for financial support to expand this initiative. If successful this will fund the printing and distribution of a much greater number of these cards and stickers than would otherwise be possible.

Intelligence and Enforcement

The Topic Group acknowledged the different methods used to address doorstep crime in the Borough and felt that the balance between prevention, intelligence, enforcement and service improvement was appropriate.

However, members recognised that there was a need to ensure that active enforcement using available intelligence is done as regularly as possible. As a result Inspector Burgess offered further resources in relation to future Rogue Trader Days that will also be supported by Trading Standards staff.

Recommendation 3: That Trading Standards work with the Police to maximise the number of Rogue Trader Days within the Borough.

Update – Trading Standards have continued to prioritise this area of work at a time of many competing demands on the service. In the four months since the report was finalised four Rogue Trader Action Days have been conducted, in conjunction with Greater Manchester Police and other partners. In addition to this, Rapid Responses to Doorstep crime incidents have been mounted by Trading Standards, supported by GMP, on eleven different occasions to support vulnerable residents targeted by rogue traders. Information about the iCan scheme is now also included in burglary packs delivered by GMP to help to prevent repeat burglaries.

Trusted Trader Scheme

The Topic Group established that there were subtle differences between the two Trusted Trader lists operated by Age UK and Trafford Care and Repair. Members agreed that it would be helpful to ensure a degree of uniformity in the ways in which the lists were used and the approach to monitoring the quality of work undertaken. The Topic Group felt that there was an opportunity for Trafford Trading Standards to work with Age UK in particular in order to support the organisation to enhance their scheme without the need for extra resources.

Recommendation 4: That Trafford Trading Standards work with Age UK to provide direct support in order to enhance their current Trusted Trader Scheme.

Update – Trading Standards have continued to develop closer working with Age UK on a number of fronts, including referring potential businesses to their Trusted Trader Scheme, particularly in trade sectors with existing gaps in provision, such as roofers. In addition joint work has taken place in raising awareness of Doorstep Crime issues through a number of projects, including Age UK's free electric blanket testing initiative, joint talks to targeted groups and work supporting people with dementia problems.

Conclusion

It is recognised that the problems of Doorstep Crime are not going to be eliminated. What is achievable however is that all those with a role to play, join forces and work in partnership, as effectively as possible, to help raise awareness to prevent crime and provide support to victims when it's needed. It is felt that there has been a positive response to implementing the recommendations in the original Scrutiny Topic report and these improvements are helping to reduce the impact that incidents of Doorstep Crime have on some of Trafford's most vulnerable of residents. The concerns and recommendations of the Scrutiny Topic Group on Doorstep Crime have made a valuable contribution to supporting the work that the Council and partners do to protect the people of Trafford.