

Agenda Item 4

JOINT REGULATORY COMMITTEE

09 DECEMBER 2014

SERVICE UPDATE (PAUL FOSTER)

The Regulatory Services Partnership (RSP) between the London boroughs of Merton and Richmond comprises a range of statutory, regulatory services that includes Environmental Health¹, Trading Standards and Licensing

A brief summary of the main types of activities carried out by each service area is listed below:

Environmental Health

- Food safety – programmed inspections of food businesses, investigation of complaints, labelling and composition of foods, sampling of foods.
- Infectious diseases (including food poisoning) – working closely with the SW London Health Protection Unit to minimise the spread of infectious diseases by educating cases and close contacts on good personal hygiene.
- Occupational safety – investigation of notifiable accidents and dangerous occurrences (can include fatalities).
- Pollution – investigation of noise and smoke nuisances, assessment of contaminated land, air quality monitoring, authorisation and regulation of polluting industries, pre-planning acoustic assessments.

Trading Standards

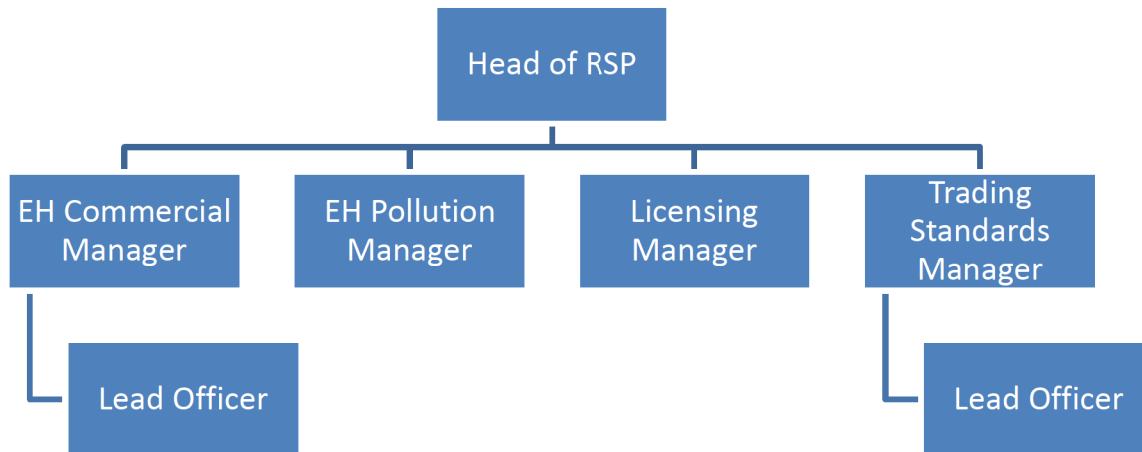
- Doorstep crime – prosecution of rogue traders that prey on the elderly and vulnerable
- Age restricted goods i.e. knives, alcohol, tobacco, spray paints etc., - regular programme of test purchases to identify under age sales
- Counterfeit goods
- Scams – criminal schemes to defraud consumers
- Fair trading – clocked cars, misleading claims
- Product safety – furniture, children's toys, mobile phone chargers
- Weights & measures

Licensing

- Alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment – pubs, clubs and bars
- Gambling – betting shops, bingo halls, amusement arcades
- Animal welfare – boarding & breeding establishments, pet shops, dangerous wild animals
- Special treatments – tattooing, skin piercers, beauty therapies, nail bars
- Street trading – markets, forecourts, mobile food vans
- Sexual entertainment venues – lap dancing clubs, hostess bars
- Lotteries

¹ Doesn't include private sector housing

The structure of the service is divided into the four functional areas i.e. EH Commercial, EH Pollution, Trading Standards and Licensing. The management structure chart is as follows:



Underneath the management tiers there are 41 operational, front-line staff split equally between offices in Morden and Twickenham. As the service grows there may be the potential to co-locate and realise financial savings.

ICT

Both boroughs utilise different case management systems and again, there may be an opportunity to rationalise them thereby creating efficiencies and realising financial savings.

Finances

- The partnership has a combined total revenue budget of approximately £2.7m the vast majority of which are staffing costs.
- The combined service also attracts a total income of approximately £607,000 the vast majority of which is from licensing fees.

Income Generation

Aside from licensing income, which is based solely on strict, not for profit, cost recovery principles, the service is exploring new, innovative ways to generate income and offset overheads and a few of these are listed below:

- Developing a hard charging mechanism by which it will be possible to accurately cost each functional activity and then charge/recharge existing and future partner organisations depending on the level of service(s) they require.
- Charging commercial developers for pre-planning application advice on the environmental impact of new developments. Currently this service is currently provided free by both

Merton and Richmond but other local authorities are starting to charge developers for this service.

- Charging commercial organisations for business advice. Currently Trading Standards provide free advice to businesses on the sale of goods and services and especially due diligence surrounding terms and conditions.
- Acting as a Primary Authority for large, national and international companies whose headquarters are located in either Richmond or Merton. Currently, Trading Standards and Environmental Health, provide free advice on the redundant Home Authority principle. By adopting the new Primary Authority protocol, it is legitimate to charge businesses for advice on regulatory compliance.
- Creating new street trading opportunities and licensing them e.g. markets, roving bikes selling coffees and busking

Performance Management

Both Merton and Richmond monitor regulatory services performance quite closely. Typical key performance indicators are as follows:

- Numbers of high-risk food premises inspections carried out compared against the number scheduled to be done
- Number of licensing applications processed within the required timescales
- Amount of licensing income generated
- Numbers of under-age sales test purchases carried out
- Numbers of complaints responded to within five days
- Numbers of FOI requests responded to within the required deadlines
- Numbers of Member enquiries responded to within the required deadlines

In addition to departmental performance monitoring the service is also subject to periodic audits by the internal audit teams and, in the case of food safety, by the external Food Standards Agency.

Consultation with residents and businesses

The service does carry out periodic customer satisfaction surveys that are sent to both residents and businesses and whilst these are helpful in providing a snapshot of service quality they are by their very nature reactive as opposed to proactive and consideration is currently being given to canvassing the views of businesses on exactly what sort of service they would like and using this data to inform future service delivery.

Update on implementation

The Regulatory Services Partnership has been operational since the 1st August 2014 and in that short time has managed to complete a management restructure and achieved the financial savings target set for phase 1 of the project. The benefits of sharing are also starting to be realised by both management and staff not least the resilience provided by having a greater pool of staff from which to deploy staff across both boroughs to assist with short-term service delivery issues. Morale is also starting to improve following the inevitable dip which followed the restructure.

Looking ahead

- We have received tentative enquiries from two neighbouring boroughs interested in joining the partnership.
- We need to harmonise wherever possible the fees and charges across the two boroughs. Currently we are operating separate fee structures but when Merton became the host authority Richmond delegated the function to them and there is now a need to ensure that both authorities charge on a similar basis.

END