

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 01 DECEMBER 2023

Statement from: Councillor Daniel McNally - Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards

TRADING STANDARDS

During the summer, the Trading Standards Service participated in a national project checking trade websites for legal compliance. This year, the project has focussed on the Home Improvement and Vehicle Sales and Servicing Sectors. Each website is audited against a checklist of legal requirements or the best practice in complaint resolution.

Once audited, details of each check made and actions necessary to achieve legal compliance are shared with the business. Checks made include ensuring pre-contract information legally required is provided before payment details are requested, the cost of the contract, distance selling rules, contract terms, payment, and complaint handling.

In total, 42 websites have been audited by Trading Standards Officers. Of those two (5%) were found to be in breach of six or more legal duties and a further 12 (29%) were found to have breached more than three. The most common failure identified is related to the prominence of legally required information, relating to the name and address of the trader (38%) and the provision of cancellation rights under distance selling rules (36%).

Follow up audits will be made later in the year to determine if advice has been followed, or if further intervention is required.

Working in partnership with Lincolnshire Police, the Trading Standards Service have secured 13 temporary closure orders in the first six months of the financial year, against premises involved in the sale of illicit tobacco products and illegal disposable vapes. The majority of those orders have required the premises to remain closed for the maximum period of three months. 28,350 illicit cigarettes, 8.85kg of illicit hand rolling tobacco and 4,256 illegal vapes have been removed from the marketplace.

Trading Standards have worked with underage volunteers to make 20 attempts to purchase vapes resulting in five sales, a 25% failure rate. 20 attempts were made to purchase alcohol or tobacco products resulting in two further sales (a 10% failure). Officers have provided advice where appropriate, and premises will be retested in the future.

Trading Standards Officers have undertaken food safety inspections at 150 premises and taken 132 food samples, with a focus on non-declaration and contamination of food with allergen ingredients, such as peanuts and milk, the speciation of fish and the alcohol content of spirit drinks. Adverse results are dealt with by way of revisits, advice and repeat sampling.

Officers have provided business advice covering a wide range of food standards matters, including ingredient labelling, food supplements, gluten-free labelling, and the labelling of

food prepacked for direct sale. We have worked with businesses to sample, relabel, and certify foods for export from Lincolnshire producers.

WASTE

Waste Services faced some operational challenges in the autumn when the Energy from Waste (EfW) facility experienced some unplanned shutdowns due to mechanical malfunction. The plant was offline for three weeks and was unable to process 6,000 tonnes of waste which meant that the Waste Team had to find alternative locations for the material to be processed. This task was particularly difficult as a large EfW had gone offline in Europe and spare processing capacity quickly disappeared. However, the team managed to source several different disposal locations, which meant that the 6,000 tonnes would not go to landfill. This is excellent news as the environmental and financial benefits of avoiding landfill are considerable, and also means that we have a full year projection of below 1% of waste sent to landfill, which is well below our 5% target.

The rollout of separate paper and card wheely bins continues with South Kesteven being the latest district council to receive the purple lidded bins. The bins will start to be emptied after Christmas and will further contribute to the excellent material, which can be recycled into the highest quality paper. This produces an annual income in excess of £1m, which will help to offset the initial investment of the project and provides financial support to budgets within Waste Services, which have increased significantly in recent times.

The Waste Team who have worked on the paper and card project will soon begin working on other initiatives, which are being introduced across the country to encourage a clearer approach to recycling. "Simpler Recycling" has recently been announced by government as a national strategy for waste management. The proposed simpler, common-sense approach to recycling means people across England will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work, or school, putting an end to confusion over what can and cannot be recycled in different parts of the country. In Lincolnshire, we are fortunate in that we already meet most of the criteria after having taken a proactive approach to waste recycling for many years. Therefore, the most significant change we will have to make is to enable the weekly collection and disposal of food waste by 2026. We will be working closely with our district council partners as part of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership, to enable food waste bins to be collected weekly, and overall, this should create a big improvement in recycling rates and should also create some financial savings if food is disposed of more effectively.

The government are also introducing new legislation called Extended Producer Responsibility, whereby packaging producers will have to pay the full costs of dealing with the waste they produce from when it is placed onto the market. This will ensure that local authorities receive payments for packaging materials to cover the cost of collection, treatment, and recycling with the objective that producers will become more environmentally sustainable.

These will be significant challenges ahead, but we are confident that in meeting them we will produce a cleaner environment for our residents, whilst minimizing the financial cost of the changes.

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