

27th March 2012

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Date 10th April 2012

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Geraint Hopkins
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Protection**

**SUBJECT: Animal Health and Welfare Enforcement – Collaborative
working arrangements by Trading Standards**

REPORT FOR: Information

Summary

This report provides information for members on the current work being undertaken by Powys Trading Standards Service in relation to the Animal Health collaborative agenda in Wales and beyond. Members will be aware that The Welsh Government, through its `Simpson` Agenda, has been highlighting the need for authorities to work together and collaborate wherever possible to increase efficiencies and improve performance of public services.

The Trading Standards Service, whilst delivering a very local agenda has identified various aspects of its work which lend themselves a more regional approach, particularly in Animal Health and Welfare enforcement. The following paragraphs demonstrate the commitment that we have towards this agenda and the innovative approach adopted thusfar.

Data Entry of Sheep Movements

Collaboration with Shropshire

Members may already be aware that last year (2011/12), in a pilot project, Powys Trading Standards Service entered into a Service Agreement with Shropshire Trading Standards to enter licences for the movements of sheep into Shropshire onto the national database (Animal Movement Licensing System - AMLS) on their behalf. Movement forms were sent either directly by Shropshire markets or gathered by Trading Standards and then sent to our Licensing Office in Brecon, where they were inputted by staff employed by the BPU. A standard charge was levied and it is estimated that a reasonable profit (around 18k) was generated from approx 20,000 licences being sent through. This and some other initiatives, has assisted the Trading Standards service to minimise cuts to Animal Health staffing levels despite a severe funding cut levied by DEFRA, which was passed onto local authorities by WAG.

This agreement with Shropshire was the first such arrangement undertaken by any authority in Wales and its success is tantamount to the dedication and

support from the staff currently employed by the BPU and to the Licensing Officer and Managers located within the Brecon Office.

FURTHER COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Animal Health Service Delivery Collaboration

Enquiries and discussions with other authorities about potential collaborative opportunities has resulted in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) approaching us to see if we would consider not only entering data on sheep movements on their behalf, but also to deliver the whole of their Animal Health service under a Service Level Agreement. BGCBC is being so severely hampered in its ability to deliver an animal health service due to the cuts in its direct funding grant, that they see delivery by another authority - which has the necessary expertise in place - as the only viable option open to them. They have approached Powys Trading Standards directly with a request for us to consider this as an option.

A 3 year service level agreement and delivery plan will be developed under which Powys County Council will receive funds over the 3 year period to conduct inspections of their livestock farms (approx 100 in total), answer queries relating to animal health matters (approx 120 pa) and to deal with any animal welfare issues or disease control matters (rare). The amount being offered comfortably covers the anticipated cost of delivering these duties and again helps support our existing levels of staffing. This initiative effectively extends Powys` border by approx 20 miles to the south and is a very important development for us as an authority. Our officers will need to be authorised to take action within the BGCBC area. It is hoped that Powys members will support this innovative arrangement.

Other Data Entry collaboration

The success of the Shropshire pilot has resulted in further enquiries from neighbouring authorities such as Merthyr Tydfil, Pembrokeshire, and Ceredigion. Merthyr Tydfil has decided to engage with Powys and we will, from 1st April 2012, be entering their sheep movements into AMLS. Such movements are mainly into the abattoir St Merryn Meats. This will again provide a valuable income to the Powys TS Service and increases further efficiencies within the Licensing Office.

Mid and West Wales Collaboration

We have also been working with colleagues in Mid and West Wales to develop areas where benefit can be derived from having joint procedures and protocols in place which will lead to a consistency of service delivery, save costs in terms of development of such matters in each LA and where applicable share expertise in areas of specialism, such as in Zoo and Dangerous Wild Animals inspections. Colleagues from Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen are working hard at arriving at mutually

agreeable documents and protocols will be in place shortly to which we have all agreed to follow.

An Action Plan has been developed covering such matters as Joint Licensing Conditions for Dog Breeding or boarding establishments, support for authorities dealing with a major disease outbreak or severe welfare problems in terms of officer support, responding jointly to Consultation documents and using a shared `out of hours` contact point for emergency referrals are all contained within this document and before such conditions are fundamentally changed I shall produce further Reports for members.

Proposal

That the Trading Standards service continues to explore and develop such a collaborative agenda in relation to its animal health service with the view to sustaining staffing levels appropriate to its importance in animal health in Wales, and wherever financial opportunities arise, that they are considered in the light of the diminishing central funding.

Powys Change Plan

The role of the Trading Standards Services` animal health section is critical to ensuring a fair and level playing field for farmers and landholders within the County, enabling a trading environment which encourages investment in the farming industry in Powys.

The ability to effectively respond to a disease outbreak is a vital component in enabling the prevention of the spread of disease, controlling the areas of the county where disease exists and in aiding the recovery from such a devastating event. In 2007, Wales was released first from the movement standstills imposed by DEFRA because of the controls it had in place in preventing the movements of animals at a time where the source of the disease was not known at the time. The Trading Standards service is a key component in the PCPs aim to “develop the agriculture sector in Powys into a dynamic and competitive sector” in ensuring that the health and welfare of animals is maintained and improved in order to maximise prices paid through well run and policed markets, through farm inspections and checks on records and transportation of livestock.

The animal health sector also ensures that food chain integrity is maintained and that the identity and traceability of animals is secure

Options Considered/Available

Option1 Powys Trading Standards does not consider collaborative arrangements and reduces its service according to the diminishing budget allocated by Welsh Government.

Option 2 That Trading Standards considers and where appropriate undertakes additional paid work on behalf of other authorities which ultimately protects and enhances our ability to respond to a disease outbreak within our own County. We will continue with discussions about collaborative delivery of animal health services in Wales and endeavour to make Powys a centre of excellence in this field.

Preferred Choice and Reasons

OPTION 2 provides the authority with the capability and stability needed for the forthcoming period, enabling the Animal Health service to be sustained at present levels of staffing and therefore enabling a resilient service in the event of a disease outbreak.

Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

N/A

Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

N/A

Local Member(s)

This paper relates to the whole of Powys.

Other Front Line Services

N/A

Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

The Service Accountant can confirm that Finance have been involved in the analysis and reconfiguration of the service budgets going forward with the Trading Standards Manager based on the funding figures from WG for 12/13 onwards. Trading Standards has attracted an income of approx £18,000 through its data entry project with Shropshire and this is continuing for the 2012/13 year and that discussion has taken place about a purchased in option with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council that will also realise a net benefit to the service.

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Communications

N/A

Statutory Officers

Strategic Director, Finance & Infrastructure (Section 151 Officer) – is in agreement with the Report as long as Option 2 is viable.

Strategic Director, Law & Governance (Monitoring Officer) – is in agreement with the report.

Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Future Status of the Report

N/A

Members are invited to consider the future status of this report and whether it can be made available to the press and public either immediately following the meeting or at some specified point in the future.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That Trading Standards pursues joint working arrangements and collaborative opportunities which are financially viable to its service delivery	The service has a rare opportunity to increase income by entering into service level agreements with neighbouring authorities on animal health services

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: