

EXECUTIVE BOARD

5TH JULY 2021

Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Final Report

TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES – FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION SAFEGUARDING SCHEME (FESS)

Recommendations / key decisions required:

To consider the report and six recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as detailed within the report.

Reasons:

- At its meeting on 10th June 2019, the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to review the Trading Standards Services – Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS).
- The recommendations contained within the report have been formulated by the Group following the consideration of a range of evidence over a series of meetings held between July 2019 and April 2021 (there was a period of hiatus in the review during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic), and approved by the full Committee at its meeting held on the 19th April 2021 (minute 5 refers).

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: This report is being submitted by the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee.

Exec Board Decision Required Yes (5th July 2021)

Council Decision Required NO.

Councillor Philip Hughes – Aelod y Bwrdd Gweithredol dros Diogelu'r Cyhoedd

Chair of the Task & Finish Group:

Cllr. John James

Designations:

Chair of the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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5TH JULY 2021

Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group Final Report

Trading Standards Services – Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS)

1.0 Review Background

The Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee has a key role to play in monitoring services, development of key policies and strategies, as well as identifying areas for improvement or development.

At its meeting on 10th June 2019, the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to review the Trading Standards Services – Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS)

2.0 The Scope and main aims of the review

The Group agreed that the main aims for the review would be to:

- To explore whether the portfolio of crime prevention, victim support and education activities consolidated within the FESS initiative provided an effective strategy to help combat fraud victimisation and promoted corporate health and wellbeing objectives in the wake of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

The Group agreed that the main aims of the review would include:

- Assess the current training provision, integration of services, information sharing and strategy responses of key stakeholders and to explore opportunities for improvement.
- Explore whether current service provision is sufficiently robust, consistent, coordinated, non-duplicitous, provides measurable outcomes and presents value for money.
- Review current prevention strategies and the levels of support provided to fraud victims.
- Research new ways to raise the profile of the service and to attain recognition of the specialist body of skills, knowledge and support that Trading Standards provide to residents of Carmarthenshire.
- Formulate recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.

3.0 Corporate / community objectives and well- being objectives

The Group agreed that the FESS initiatives coincided with the Council's Vision:

'Life is for living, let's start, live and age well in a healthy, safe and prosperous environment'

And that the review, in line with the work of FESS would contribute to achieving the following corporate / community objectives and well- being objectives and outcomes contributed to the following Carmarthenshire's Well-being Objectives from the County Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-23 (<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/1214849/corporate-strategy-2018-23.pdf>):

Start Well/Live	Age Well	In a Healthy Safe and Prosperous Environment
Wellbeing Objective 1 Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life	Wellbeing Objective 9 Support good connections with friends, family and safer communities	Wellbeing Objective 15 Building a Better Council and Making Better Use of Resources
Wellbeing Objective 5 Tackle poverty by doing all we can to prevent it, help people into work and improve the lives of those living in poverty	Wellbeing Objective 10 Support the growing numbers of older people to maintaining dignity and independence in their later years	
	Wellbeing Objective 11 A Council wide approach to support Ageing Well in Carmarthenshire	

4.0 Approach

A total of 10 meetings were held between September 2019 and April 2021, during which the Group considered evidence and information from a wide variety of sources. The sessions were designed to provide the Group with the relevant information, context and background to the topic. Between April 2020 and January 2021, the review took a period of hiatus due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Task and Finish Group's membership was as follows:

- Cllr. John James (Chair)
- Cllr. Karen Davies
- Cllr. Joseph Davies
- Cllr. Penny Edwards
- Cllr. Jeanette Gilasbey
- Cllr. Dai Thomas

The Democratic Services Unit based in the Chief Executive's Department, provided research and general support to the Group.

The following officers provided specialist advice and support during the Group's review:

- Roger Edmunds - Consumer and Business Affairs Manager
- Huw Lloyd – Lead Trading Standards Officer (Fair Trading)
- Heidi Neil – Senior Consumer Protection Officer
- Quita Davies – Trading Standards Officer
- Andrew Passenger – Trading Standards Officer
- Annwen Davies – Trading Standards Officer
- Rhys Williams – Graduate Trainee Financial Safeguarding Officer
- Janine Owen – Democratic Services Officer

5.0 Recommendations

The Group recommends that:

1. That Trading Standards continues with its FESS initiative which supports the Council's well-being objectives and in leading the local authority response to financial exploitation, prevention, detection, education and enforcement.
2. That training packages in relation to financial exploitation and the FESS initiative are created and formally incorporated into the learning and development plan of all relevant authority employees and Councillors and that FESS be presented by way of an annual Members Seminar.
3. Further links should be created between Trading Standards and the Marketing and Communications teams regarding the FESS initiative to ensure greater prominence is given to fraud prevention via the Council Web Site and social media platforms and explore alternative ways of reaching the digitally excluded.
4. That the County Council gives the issue of financial exploitation greater prominence within the organisation by:
 - a. Securing its inclusion in corporate strategy and policy documents in relation to fraud and financial abuse.
 - b. Creating a Performance Measure to capture the scale and scope of fraud reported to the County by its consumers and businesses.
5. That the County Council seeks to safeguard, increase and consider developing budget streams so that the FESS initiative can continue to be sustainable and protect consumers and businesses in Carmarthenshire from financial exploitation/harm.
6. That the former Advice and Support in Carmarthenshire (ASC Network) of key public, private and 3rd sector stakeholders for example Social Services, Dyfed Powys Police, Citizens Advice Bureau and other Private and 3rd Sector partners is resurrected and sufficiently resourced to promote financial safeguarding practice, advice and support.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	NONE	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Key strategic policies have been considered throughout the review and this review contributes towards achieving the Carmarthenshire County Council Well-being objectives as follows:

Start Well

- Objective 1 - Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life
- Objective 5 - Tackle poverty by doing all we can to prevent it, help people into work and improve the lives of those living in poverty

Age Well

- Objective 9 - Support good connections with friends, family and safer communities
- Wellbeing Objective 10 - Support the growing numbers of older people to maintaining dignity and independence in their later years
- Wellbeing Objective 11 - A Council wide approach to support Ageing Well in Carmarthenshire

In a Healthy, Safe and Prosperous Environment

- Wellbeing Objective 15 – Building a Better Council and Making Better use of Resources

2.Finance

There are no additional costs in relation to recommendations 1,2,3,4 and 6 as these would be managed by way of the current CCC staffing resources and progress monitored through an action plan. However, there is an associated cost implication in relation to:

Recommendation 5 – the Task and Finish Group are recommending that the County Council seeks to safeguard, increase and consider developing future budget streams in order to ensure that the FESS initiative can continue to be sustainable and protect consumers and businesses in Carmarthenshire from financial exploitation/harm.

To achieve this the Task and Finish group would advocate additional resources to support the FESS initiative.

Additional finance (from Council Fund, HRA, Intermediate Care Fund and Proceeds of Crime) has already been identified to start new initiatives over the next 12 months.

These includes:

- Over £100,000 dedicated to new Truecall service to support targeted residents;
- £15,000 dedicated to developing FESS/Money Wise website;
- £15,000 on promotional/marketing activities to increase awareness

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones Head of Administration & Law

1. Scrutiny Committee

This is a report produced by the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee.

2 Local Member(s) – N/A

3. Community / Town Council – N/A

4. Relevant Partners – N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Officers from the Communities Directorate have contributed to and supported the work of the Task & Finish Group.

EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE?	YES Councillor Phillip Hughes – Executive Board Member for Public Protection
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Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information	
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:	
THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW:	
Title of Document	File Ref No. / Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Task & Finish Group Planning and Scoping Document – E&PP Scrutiny Committee (10th June 2019)	Draft Planning and Scoping Document / Minutes: https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=2936&Ver=4
County Council’s Corporate Strategy 2018-2023	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/1214849/corporate-strategy-2018-23.pdf
References cited in page 37 of the Task and Finish Report on the review of Trading Standards – Financial Exploitation and Safeguarding Scheme	See page 37 of the Task and Finish Report on the review of Trading Standards – Financial Exploitation and Safeguarding Scheme