

**REPORT TO:** Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 19 September 2006

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Health and Community

**SUBJECT:** Approved Motor Trader Scheme

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek members' support for the operation of the Warrington Borough Council Trading Standards Approved Motor Trader Scheme in Halton.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) the report be noted,**
- (2) comments and suggestions from Members be noted; and**
- (3) The Executive Board be requested to agree to the operation of the Warrington Borough Council Trading Standards Approved Motor Trader Scheme in Halton.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Warrington Trading Standards Service operates an Approved Motor Trader Scheme for car retailers and repairers in Warrington. A car dealer from Runcorn has approached the Consumer Protection Service requesting that a similar scheme is established in Halton. The dealer concerned receives a significant proportion of his business from Warrington residents and feels that he is at a competitive disadvantage, as he cannot claim that he is 'Trading Standards Approved'.
- 3.2 In 2002, following research with consumers and traders, Halton's Consumer Protection Service attempted to introduce its own Trusted Trader Scheme; unfortunately it was not supported by the trade and was abandoned.
- 3.3 An agreement in principle with Warrington Trading Standards has been reached that their scheme could be extended to allow Halton businesses to join. Halton would support the scheme to the extent of:
- The production and distribution of flyers to potential members (cost of postage and printing of approx 100 flyers)
  - Promotion of the scheme during officers' routine visits (negligible additional time required)

- Liaising with Warrington prior to their annual inspection of members (probably one hour of officer time per member)
- 3.4 Warrington Trading Standards would retain responsibility for the operation of the scheme, including any mediation required between consumers and members, in return for the trader's annual membership fee.
- 3.5 Membership fees are currently being revised by Warrington Trading Standards to ensure cost recovery for the operation of the scheme.
- 3.6 The Scheme is currently badged 'Trading Standards APPROVED MOTOR TRADER SCHEME' and bears no reference to Warrington Borough Council. This will allow for the extension of the scheme to Halton without the cost of re-printing the scheme materials; if it were necessary, the cost of re-printing would make the extension uneconomic.
- 3.7 To launch the scheme in Halton a minimum of three local members would be required; it is anticipated that this could quite easily be achieved.
- 3.8 The extension of the Warrington scheme will allow Halton traders to benefit without the associated costs to Halton of operating such a scheme itself.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The arrangement outlined above is in line with the Best Value principles of maximising cross-border partnership opportunities to the benefit of both the Council and the people we serve.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial and labour costs are minimal as outlined above. Because of the comparatively low numbers of motor traders in Halton, it would not be viable for Halton's Consumer Protection Service to design and operate its own Approved Motor Trader Scheme. Legal Services have been consulted and have no issues with such a cross-border arrangement.

#### **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 6.1 Warrington Trading Standards will retain all the risks of managing and administering the scheme. Such a scheme has been in operation for over ten years within areas of Cheshire and no problems have arisen for the administering authorities.

#### **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 There are no general equality and diversity issues flowing from this report, but on a positive note, supporting the recommendation will enable Halton motor traders to compete on a level playing field with their Warrington counterparts.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.