

Ref: RDB/RP/NM/07.05.2019

14 May 2019

Councillor Norma Mackie,
Chair of Licensing & Public Protection,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Mackie,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 7th May 2019

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the meeting on Tuesday 7th May 2019 to discuss the item on the 'Draft Shared Regulatory Services – Business Plan 2019/20'. The comments and observations made by Members of the Committee on this item are set out in this letter.

Draft Shared Regulatory Services – Business Plan 2019/20

Members were concerned to hear that the service had experienced some recent issues around recruitment and retention, particularly for the Food Hygiene Service that is in the process of recruiting five new officers to replace staff who had left to pursue other employment opportunities. They hope that the current recruitment process is successful and that the temporary reduction in staff does not have a negative impact on the Food Hygiene Service's ability to carry out all of the necessary visits. They ask that the Shared Regulatory Service undertake a short review to assess what can be done to prevent such a sudden loss of staff in future, and that they share any findings and future actions from this work with the Committee.

During the meeting officers explained that the Shared Regulatory Service had a supply of 'cold calling zone stickers' that they could make available to any councillors who wanted them to distribute in their wards. The Committee thought that this would be very popular with local councillors and have asked for a supply to be sent to Cardiff Council's Member Services. On arrival,

Member Services could send out a short email explaining that they are available to all councillors for collection and distribution.

At the meeting a Member expressed his frustration at the outcome of a recent illegal tobacco investigation in his ward in which the Shared Regulatory Service had played a major role. He commented that they had caught the shop owner selling illegal tobacco, confiscated the contraband and then fined him £2,000. Despite this, it was obvious that the shop owner had quickly restocked and continued with the illegal trade. The fine and inconvenience were merely 'a part of the business plan'. The Member felt that the service needed to be able to apply more sanctions and pressure, but was told that this would not be possible as a dedicated resource would be required. This is something that is not affordable within the constraints of the current Shared Regulatory Service budget. An officer went on to explain that such an operation would only work if new powers were introduced in Wales, it was properly funded and supported by trading standards professionals. On this basis, the Committee ask that you work with the Shared Regulatory Service to lobby Welsh Government for more powers and money to tackle the illegal tobacco trade, because without such an investment the problem will persist.

The Committee is concerned that the future of the 'Out of Hours' service looks uncertain due to financial and other pressures. Members believe that this is an important service, which if lost would make it difficult to tackle a wide range of late night anti-social behaviour. Should a proposal be put forward to close the 'Out of Hours Service', then I would ask that you inform the Committee directly before a decision is taken so that scrutiny can be undertaken on the matter.

I would be grateful if you would consider the comments above and provide a response to the content of this letter. This information has also been included in a letter to Councillors Michael and Thorne, therefore, I am happy to receive a combined response.

Regards,

Handwritten signature of Ramesh Patel in black ink.

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Andrew Gregory - Director of Planning, Transport & Environment
- Dave Holland – Head of the Shared Regulatory Service
- Christina Hill – Operational Manager, Commercial Services
- Helen Picton – Operational Manager, Enterprise & Specialist Services
- Will Lane – Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Services
- Davina Fiore - Director of Governance & Legal Services
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee