

## **Housing and Community Select Committee**

### **Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 23 October 2012**

#### **Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)**

##### **Review of Tobacco Control**

The review is in two phases, firstly regulation and enforcement then health issues. A combined final report will result dealing with prevention, treatment and control.

The Committee has concluded phase one of the review having taken evidence from FRESH NE and HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC).

FRESH NE representatives informed the Committee that regional resources were required to tackle issues involving the sales of cigarettes to children. Evidence had been gathered highlighting single cigarettes were being sold to children for as little as 25 pence each as well as being supplied with matches and lighters making it easier for children to smoke.

Ice Cream van vendors had also been reported for selling cigarettes and although this was not illegal it was if selling to children and if selling illicit cigarettes. Vendors caught doing so could be prosecuted and lose their vans.

HMRC is responsible for seizing illicit cigarettes which were brought into the country without paying the appropriate duties. The majority of illicit cigarettes found in Stockton were those smuggled into the country without paying duties or cheap whites (brands not available in this country) which were sold mainly from 'Tab Houses'. The remainder of the stock would be distributed at other premises or vehicles. Trading Standards worked closely with the Police and HMRC in dealing with this problem.

The work HMRC was involved with in relation to the illicit and counterfeit tobacco market included:

- undertaking civil prosecutions to make it harder for 'tab houses' to operate.
- seizing approximately 145,000 illegal cigarettes in Stockton. HMRC was also targeting those who were operating further up the supply chain.

A tripartite took place on 19 September to scope and project plan the second phase of the review dealing with health issues.

The Committee met on 22 November to receive evidence from The Director of Public Health about the impact smoking had on health, The Director of FRESH NE about the work the organisation, and a Health Improvement Specialist who presented an overview of the Local Approach to Tobacco Control.

An interim tripartite to discuss phases one and two will take place on 14 December 2012.

Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet on 18 April 2013.