

Existing enforcement policy – Public Protection, Housing Services & Community Safety



Public Protection (Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing), Housing and Community Safety Services

Enforcement Policy

This document is the enforcement policy for City of York Council's Public Protection (Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing), Housing and Community Safety services. It sets out the key principles under which officers will seek to achieve compliance with the legislation enforced by these services.

In carrying out their duties officers will adhere to the principles of good enforcement set out in the Regulators' Code (2014) and other relevant codes of practice including those concerned with the investigation of offences or the prosecution of offenders.

All enforcement activity undertaken under this policy will have regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention of the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Please note, whilst this policy acknowledges that officers will adhere to principles of good practice in their enforcement activity, it does not prescribe the way investigations will be conducted or the authorisation of surveillance activity. Furthermore, it does not include enforcement action by Planning, and Transport (including Parking services) which operate under their own guidance.

1.0 Introduction

The main purpose of the Public Protection, Housing and Community Safety Services are to maintain a fair and safe trading environment for consumers and businesses, to help reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York and to improve and protect public health and improve the environment. We recognise that effective and well-targeted regulation is essential in achieving this.

We will ensure legal compliance by:

- Helping and encouraging businesses and individuals to understand and comply with the law.
- Responding proportionately to breaches of the law.

We want to achieve the following outcomes:

- Support economic growth, especially in small businesses, by ensuring a fair, responsible and competitive trading environment
- Protect the environment for future generations including tackling the threats and impacts of climate change
- Improve quality of life and wellbeing by ensuring clean and safe neighbourhoods
- Help people to live healthier lives by preventing ill health and harm, and promoting public health
- Ensure a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefits of consumers and the rural economy.

2.0 Economic Progress

We will carry out our activities in a way that supports those we regulate comply and grow, remembering that it is important to maintain a level playing field for all businesses to thrive.

We will consider the impact that our regulatory activities may have on businesses, including consideration of costs, effectiveness and perceptions of fairness. We will only adopt a particular approach if the

benefits justify the costs and in doing so will endeavour to try to keep any perceived burdens to a minimum.

References to costs and benefits include economic, social and environmental costs and benefits.

3.0 Risk Assessment

We will allocate our resources where they will be most effective by assessing the risks due to non-compliance with the law. The risk factors include:

- the potential impact on residents, consumers, business and the environment in failing to meet legal requirements.
- the likelihood of non-compliance taking into account matters such as:
 - the past history,
 - the systems a business has in place,
 - management competence of the business
 - and willingness to comply.

4.0 Advice and Guidance

We recognise that prevention is better than cure and will actively work with business and residents to advise on and assist with, compliance with the law.

In doing this we will ensure that:

Legal requirements are made available and communicated promptly upon request.

The information we provide will be in clear, concise and accessible language.

Advice will be confirmed in writing where necessary.

We will clearly distinguish between legal requirements and guidance aimed at improvements above minimum standards.

We will signpost towards additional business support services where appropriate.

Please note: there may be a fee payable for our advice. Where this is the case you will be informed and provided with details of the charge or an estimate if the exact fee is not known.

5.0 Inspections and Other Visits

All inspections and other visits to businesses will be undertaken after consideration of the risk the business poses if it fails to comply with the law (see paragraph 3.0 above), where the business has requested advice or where intelligence/information suggests that an inspection or visit is appropriate.

- Where we carry out inspections we will give feedback to the business on what the officer has found; this will include positive feedback to encourage and reinforce good practice.
- Where practicable we will co-ordinate inspections with other regulators to minimise the burden on businesses.
- Random inspection will be undertaken where government guidelines/ policies or a condition of a licence requires us to do so. A small amount of random inspections may also be undertaken to test our risk assessments or the effectiveness of any action we have taken.

6.0 Information Requirements

We will only ask businesses for information that is necessary after considering the cost and benefit to obtaining the information. Where possible we will share this information with our partners (taking account of data protection) to prevent the need for providing the information more than once.

7.0 Compliance and Enforcement Actions

We recognise that most businesses and individuals wish to comply with the law, however firm action will be taken against those who break or flout the law or act irresponsibly.

We will carry out all of our enforcement duties, including taking formal enforcement action (described below), in a fair, equitable and consistent manner. Whilst officers exercise judgement in individual cases, we will

have arrangements in place to promote consistency including liaison with other agencies and authorities.

Formal enforcement action will only be considered and taken in the first instance in cases involving unfair practices against individuals or businesses, illegal sales of age restricted products, supply of counterfeit goods and other intellectual property crime, occupational health and safety, public safety, risk to public health (including food safety), health and safety in the home, statutory nuisances, animal health and welfare, damage to the environment, dog fouling, trading standards offences committed by doorstep sellers, breaches of licence conditions or operating without a licence when one is required and any other case in which a head of service considers formal enforcement action is necessary.

Formal enforcement action will also be considered and may be taken where advice has been ignored.

Where formal enforcement action is necessary, we will consider the most appropriate course of action (from the range of sanctions and penalties available) with the intention of: -

- Aiming to change the behaviour of the offender
- Aiming to eliminate any financial gain or benefit for non-compliance
- Being responsive and considering what is appropriate for the particular offender and issue involved, including punishment and the public stigma that may be associated with criminal convictions
- Being proportionate to the nature of the offence and harm caused
- Aiming to restore the harm caused by non-compliance
- Aiming to deter future non-compliance.

When formal enforcement action is taken:

- We will take all reasonable steps to discuss the circumstances of the case, unless immediate action is required e.g. to prevent the destruction loss of evidence or there is an imminent risk to the environment, public health or health and safety. This discussion

may be in the form of an interview under caution if a prosecution is being considered. We will provide the opportunity for further dialogue about the proportionality or consistency of our action upon request.

- Where immediate formal enforcement action is taken, which will usually be the service of a written notice, reasons for such action will be given at the time (if possible) and confirmed in writing within 10 working days.
- Where there are rights of appeal against formal enforcement action, notification of the appeal mechanism will be clearly set out in writing at the time the action is taken.
- Clear reasons will be given for any formal enforcement action taken, and confirmed in writing.

For the purpose of this policy 'formal enforcement action' includes serving a legal notice e.g. an improvement, suspension, prohibition, fixed penalty or abatement notice and civil penalty notices to letting agents and landlords, the seizure of goods, suspension or revocation of a licence, a formal 'simple' caution, prosecution or other court action.

If the formal enforcement action being considered is a prosecution we will also consider a number of additional factors in line with the Code for Crown Prosecutors and any other nationally recognised guidance such as the Enforcement Management Model published by the Health and Safety Executive. These factors, not an exhaustive list, may include the following:

- The seriousness of the alleged offence
- The history of the party concerned
- The willingness of the business or the individual to prevent a recurrence of the problem and co-operate with officers
- Whether it is in the public interest to prosecute
- The realistic prospect of conviction
- Whether any other action (including other means of formal enforcement action) would be more appropriate or effective

- The views of any complainant and other persons with an interest in prosecution.

These factors are NOT listed in order of significance. The rating of the various factors will vary with each situation under consideration.

When formal enforcement action is being considered for an acquisitive crime i.e. the acquiring of assets (including money) from offences such as fraud or intellectual property crime, we will undertake a financial investigation into the circumstances of the case. In serious cases this may result in the seizure of a suspect's cash and legal proceedings for money laundering and confiscation of assets under the provisions of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

8.0 Accountability

We will be accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of our activities:

- We shall provide businesses and individuals with effective consultation and opportunities for feedback on our service.
- Officers will be courteous, fair and efficient at all times, and will identify themselves by name and, where appropriate, identity card.
- Any complaints about the way you have been treated will follow the City of York Council's complaints procedure 'Have Your Say'. A copy of the complaints procedure can be obtained from our website at www.york.gov.uk

9.0 Application of our enforcement policy

All officers will have regard to this document when making enforcement decisions.

Any departure from this policy must be exceptional, capable of justification and be fully considered by the head of service before a final decision is taken. This proviso shall not apply where a risk of injury or to health is likely to occur due to a delay in any decision being made. In cases of emergency or where exceptional circumstances prevail, the chief executive may suspend any part of this policy where it is necessary to achieve the effective running of the service and/or where there is a risk of injury or to health of employees or any members of the public.

10.0 Review

There will be an annual review of the action taken under this policy. This document will also be subject to review as and when required. Improvements will be made if there are any changes in legislation or in local needs.

If you have any comments please contact the Head of Public Protection, Head of Housing or Head of Community Safety by calling 01904 551550 or by writing to City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA or email to ycc@york.gov.uk

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

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