

AREA COMMITTEE: NORTH LUTON

DATE: 19th SEPTEMBER 2007

SUBJECT: CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING A NO COLD CALLING ZONE

REPORT BY: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER SERVICES

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	✓	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	✓	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING		OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

PURPOSE

1. To advise the North Luton Area Committee on the current position with No Cold Calling Zones in the Borough and the criteria upon which Zones are established.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. North Luton Area Committee is recommended to note the report.

BACKGROUND

3. In 2004 as part of its Doorstep Crime Initiative to combat the incidence of rogue trading activity the trading standards service introduced its first No Cold Calling Zone in the Wardown area. It had a dramatic effect reducing

markedly reported rogue trading, distraction burglaries and suspicious callers.

4. These scheme is aimed at giving people the confidence to say 'no' when callers try and sell them goods and services at the door, provide practical support on how to stop villains entering their homes, and a hot line number to get immediate professional assistance, either from trading standards or the police when necessary.
5. Since the introduction of this first zone two more areas in the borough have become No Cold Calling Zones and two more have been identified as areas where their introduction would be beneficial.

REPORT

6. Areas are selected as No Cold Calling Zones based upon specific criteria, that is to say -
 - a) reported incidents to trading standards of rogue trader activity;
 - b) crime statistics from the police of reported distraction burglaries in the area (there is a proven link with (a) above);
 - c) the target properties - predominantly owner/occupier, mature housing stock; anda strong and organised community presence in place, for example, Neighbourhood Watch.
7. For each zone trading standards will consult with the residents of the area. If the consensus indicates support for the introduction of a zone and the criteria satisfied then the area will be so designated and signage erected. In addition; each household will receive a booklet containing advice on how to deal with unwanted doorstep callers to prevent residents becoming a victim of doorstep crime and a window sticker deterring doorstep traders.
8. For residents who currently live outside any of the designated No Cold Calling Zones trading standards provide the same booklets on how to deal with unwanted doorstep callers and the window stickers. There is no charge for either of these items. The telephone hotline may be used by any resident for reporting doorstep incidents whereupon a senior officer will decide on the response required.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

9. That the report be noted.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10. National data indicates that the profile of a typical victim of doorstep crime is aged 81, female and living alone. Criminals posing as cold callers tend to target homes of the elderly or vulnerable using visible clues such as hand rails or wheelchair access ramps, and in some cases they have even been known to trawl obituaries columns to identify the recently bereaved. In extreme cases people have lost their life savings, or have had to move into residential care as a result of being repeatedly targeted by unscrupulous cold callers.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no financial implications to this report and this has been agreed with Brenda Vale in Legal Services on 5 September 2007.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no specific financial implications to this report. However, the number of zones that can be properly maintained is dependant on available resources within the trading standards service and Bedfordshire Police. This has been agreed by the Chief Accountant on 3 September 2007.

APPENDIX

13. Appendix A: No Cold Calling Zones

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

There are no background papers relating to this report.