

02 March 2023**Report for period to March 2023**

**Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Economy, Innovation & Growth,
Gateshead Council**

Purpose of the report

To inform the Committee of the work of the Joint Metrology Laboratory for the period and operational duties to present.

Metrology Laboratory**Operational**

1. The laboratory is operating at full strength with 6 members of staff but with the Senior Trading Standards Officer (STSO) working on a part-time basis of 2 days. As previously reported, Allan Winthrop (STSO) is retiring on the 31st of March 2023. The post has been advertised but so far, a suitable replacement has not been identified. Various options are being considered and the committee will be kept informed of any relevant appointments.
2. David Malone and Stephen Rudd continue to act as Laboratory Manager and Technical Manager respectively.
3. Submissions to the laboratory remain consistent. Attached as Annex 1 to this report are annual totals of submissions for 2022, with 2021 added for comparison. Overall submissions are slightly up which should have a positive effect on end of year finances.
4. The building adjacent to the laboratory has recently changed ownership and is undergoing refurbishment into retail units. The overall building has right of access through the laboratory car park. To make access for staff, laboratory customers and the new neighbours as safe as possible the car park is remarked to introduce a 1-way system and designated parking bays.

Aid and Advice to Industry

5. The laboratory's hire weights have been in high demand in recent months with up to 4 tonnes at a time being used to assist external partners in the calibration of weight platforms at pharmaceutical and other manufacturing sites.
6. The Public Weighbridge continues to offer an essential service within the region both to regular business customers and to individuals keen to ensure their vehicles are roadworthy and legal to use on public roads. As we approach the holiday season, we are seeing an increase in the number of motorhomes and caravans using the weighbridge.
7. The laboratory has booked the weighbridge test unit (WBTU) for a week in May to enable each of the 5 Tyne and Wear authorities to check weighbridges in their

areas. The WBTU is available to each authority for 1 day.

Inter-Laboratory Comparisons

8. The laboratory took part in an 'inter-lab' comparison on our accredited volumetric work with Howard Burnett Consultancy. These comparisons are seen as good practice throughout the industry and are recognised by UKAS during the annual audit. In this instance, the ILC was conducted alongside the recent UKAS visit so was also used as a competency check. The aim is to increase volumetric submissions to the laboratory.

UKAS Calibrations

9. The submissions have been consistent, as reflected within in Annex 1.
10. The laboratory underwent its annual UKAS audit in January for both mass calibration and toy testing, receiving positive feedback from the auditing team. There are some minor points for the laboratory to clarify with UKAS before the report is finalised but nothing to prevent both accreditations being renewed for a further year.

Product Safety

11. As the Office of Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) regional hub for product safety, the laboratory serves not only the North-East but also Yorkshire and Humberside. As we approach the end of the financial year it is pleasing to note that all the £28,000 budget has been used. Whilst most of the funding has paid for external testing the laboratory is reimbursed for staff time. Some of the items tested this year include, fireworks, motorcycle goggles, mattresses, soaps, candles, and toys.
12. The laboratory has recently had another successful bid for OPSS funding for which there is a separate report. The funding is for up to £10,000 for the supply of a public safety information activity.

Recommendation

13. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

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Annual Total 2022

Submissions		Items
244	UKAS M1	3475
32	UKAS F2	217
257	UKAS F1	1726
66	UKAS E2	731
Total UKAS Submissions		6149
42	Sec 74(4)	131
0	NAWI	2
2	Volume	1
0	Traders	0
0	Verification	1
Total Submissions		6284

Annual Total – 2021

Submissions		Items
373	UKAS M1	3060
37	UKAS F2	222
528	UKAS F1	1959
139	UKAS E2	722
Total UKAS Submissions		5963
36	Sec 74(4)	50
8	NAWI	8
1	Volume	1
12	Traders	67
8	Verification	8
Total Submissions		6097