

**2 March 2023****LGA Public Protection Services – A Handbook  
for Councillors**

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**Purpose of the report**

To inform the Committee of an online publication that is available for Councillors which provides an overview of council Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing services.

1. Councils are responsible for a huge range of services. While some services such as social care, planning or waste collection have a high profile, others are much less obvious, partly because they are preventative in nature and may only become more visible when something goes wrong.
2. This handbook provides an overview of council environmental health, trading standards and licensing services which collectively fall under the broad theme of public protection services and are part of a spectrum of place-focused protective services ranging from environmental focused services, through public protection, to community safety.
3. The handbook sits alongside related LGA handbooks on different areas of licensing and is intended to assist all councillors in understanding the key functions of these important but complex services and how they can be used to support a wide range of key council priorities.
4. Additionally, it can be used by portfolio holders or other councillors to support understanding of what to look out for in scrutinising and leading these services within your council.
5. Trading standards services – under their formal name of Weights and Measures authorities – have a historic role which can be traced back to Acts of Parliament dealing with weights and measures over several hundred years. The development of modern trading standards services arose in the late 1960s when successive governments recognised the need to protect consumers from trading malpractice. This began with the Trade Descriptions Act, now largely replaced by the Consumer Rights Act, and was fundamental to the development of a comprehensive framework of protection measures around product safety, food and feed standards, package holidays and rogue traders.

**Public protection services in the twenty-first century**

6. Due to their role in enforcing various regulations, environmental health, trading standards and licensing services are often referred to collectively as 'regulatory

services.’ This description is often perceived as a negative, with successive governments framing regulation as something to be cut back in order to reduce red tape and burdens on businesses. However, although regulation is a key part of these services’ toolbox, it is not an end in itself: regulations are ultimately focused on delivering a wide set of objectives that protect local people and research suggests that many voters are supportive of retaining them.

7. Tragically, the Grenfell Fire tragedy stands as a stark warning of the fatal consequences that can occur when there is insufficient regulatory oversight of issues that protect the safety and wellbeing of local communities.
8. Through their work, often although not exclusively with local businesses, public protection services protect different aspects of local life, including:
  - local businesses and the economy.
  - people, in their different roles as local residents, consumers, tenants, employees/workers etc.
  - communities, as places where people live and work, and
  - the environment, including animals.
9. However public protection services are arranged, there is value in them working collaboratively within or across organisations, as joining the dots between different elements of them is key to optimising practise and maximising increasingly scarce resources. It also ensures that the services are best placed to contribute to a range of council priorities.

### **What should councillors be looking for and think about**

10. This overview aims to encourage councillors to take a close interest in public protection services in their council, and how they are contributing to local and national priorities that go beyond the immediate demands of individual pieces of legislation.

### **Recommendation**

11. The Committee is asked to note the information and read the full handbook available here, <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/public-protection-services-councillor-handbook>

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