

13 July 2023**Report for period to July 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 has undergone a series of staffing changes over the past 18 months, including the retirements of two Senior Trading Standard Officers (STSO). As previously reported, the post was advertised, but no suitable candidates were identified. For 15 months the laboratory has been operating successfully with Dave Malone as Laboratory Manager and Steve Rudd as Technical Manager and with the agreement of the 5 Trading Standards Managers, the following staffing structure has been approved:

- Laboratory Supervisor
- Technical Manager
- Technicians x3
- Senior Support Assistant

This structure leaves the laboratory without a STSO but all legal metrology can still be carried out, with Gateshead Officers acting as signatories. This strong structure will give the laboratory flexibility to best serve stakeholders and external customers.

2. To ensure the quality of service provided by the laboratory, all staff will be undergoing training relevant to their roles. The majority can be carried out in-house by senior staff, but some external courses are also required. Dave Malone and Steve Rudd will be attending a UKAS management course, directly linked to laboratory's UKAS accreditation. Steve will also be attending a technical management course.
3. Annex 1 gives the annual totals for 2022, plus the figures for 2021 for comparison purposes. 2022 was another record year with regard submissions, which is also reflected within the financial report. It is also worth noting that the first half of 2023 has been an exceptionally busy period.
4. Plans for a building refurbishment, including a full electrical re-wire, are at an advanced stage, with work due to start late 2023. The full schedule is yet to be confirmed but it is expected that all work will be complete by the end of the current financial year. The laboratory will remain open during the refurbishment and work will be managed to keep any disruption to a minimum. The

refurbishment also includes the introduction of an additional weight's calibration room to the building.

Aid and Advice to Industry

5. The weighbridge test unit (WBTU) was booked by the laboratory in May and each of the 5 Tyne and Wear authorities were allocated the WBTU for a day. The WBTU is used to check weighbridges in the region are operating legally and customers are being charged the correct amount.
6. The laboratory has renewed its contract with Northumberland Council to calibrate their weights and measures equipment and Cumbria County Council have set up a new contract to calibrate their equipment.
7. The laboratory is carrying out UKAS calibrations on behalf of 2 laboratories that are unable to carry out work within their UKAS scope of accreditation. West Yorkshire are having problems with their air conditioning and Lancashire have suspended their own accreditation. This should lead to increased submissions.
8. In this reporting period the laboratory's hire weights have been used by our external partners to assist with the calibration of platforms at paint and pharmaceutical manufacturing sites.
9. The Public Weighbridge continues to be utilised by local industry and other road users. During spring and summer there is always an increase in the number of customers checking their caravans and motor homes are road worthy.

UKAS Calibrations

10. Annual submissions have once again increased, and the numbers are presented in Annex 1.
11. As previously reported, the laboratory underwent its annual UKAS audit in January. All minor points have now been addressed, with accreditation confirmed for a further year.

Product Safety

12. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has confirmed the extension of product safety sampling budget for 2023/24. The laboratory will continue as the sampling hub for the North-East, Yorkshire and Humberside regions.

Recommendation

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

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Annex 1

Annual Total 2022

Submissions		Items
244	UKAS M1	3475
32	UKAS F2	217
257	UKAS F1	1726
66	UKAS E2	734
Total UKAS Submissions		6149
42	Sec 74(4)	131
0	NAWI	2
2	Volume	1
0	Traders	0
0	Verification	1
Total Submissions		6284
UKAS Certificates		1174
Non UKAS Certificates		135

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
UKAS Certificates		1086
Non UKAS Certificates		56