

**Email response from West Sussex County Council Trading Standards Service
in connection with the issues raised in the Consultation on Business
Leadership in Consumer Protection**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Consultation on Business Leadership in Consumer Protection, and for the Conference which you held on March 18th.

The Conference was most helpful in the way in which interrelated issues were explored.

As invited, we would like to make the following points in connection with the Consultation:-

1. We agree with the concept of Business Self Regulation Schemes, but with the caveat that they must be objective and transparent in their operation, and that they must also have effective sanctions.
2. We feel that such schemes are effectively complemented by Local and Regional Trading Standards Approved Trader schemes.

In West Sussex, we operate a 'Buy With Confidence' scheme, with 250 member businesses at present. This offers benefits to both business and consumers in that:- Consumers are offered a choice of independently approved and vetted businesses which meet published minimum standards
Member Businesses are supported in their legal compliance and are availed of further advice on specific issues, when necessary.

The West Sussex 'Buy with Confidence' scheme is part of a Regional Scheme with over 2500 members across TSSEL and the South West.

3. We understand from your presentations at the Conference, and from ensuing discussion, that one of the major impediments to the creation of certain further OFT branded of Self Regulation Schemes is the method for protecting consumers' deposits. We understand that the OFT does not recognise as suitable for OFT branding, schemes which offer the protection of deposits by means of a credit card payment. We feel that there may be merit in giving further consideration to this condition since, whilst there might be a time delay in recovering a deposit in the event of a company failure, there should at least be a reasonable certainty of the recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

Michael Harvey
Principal Trading Standards Officer