

**LONDON BOROUGHS OF BRENT AND HARROW**

**TRADING STANDARDS ADVISORY BOARD – 16th July 2003**

**REPORT NUMBER 3/03 FROM THE DIRECTOR OF TRADING STANDARDS**

**FOR INFORMATION**

Title of Report: **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TRADING STANDARDS OFFICERS**

**1.0 SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides Members with information concerning the recruitment and retention problems of qualified Trading Standards Officers within the consortium.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Members consider the report and comment where appropriate.

**3.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 In order to attract qualified staff and to retain them, the consortium is likely to have to offer improved financial incentives which could increase the budget in future years.

**4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report details recent problems recruiting and retaining staff holding the Diploma in Trading Standards. The posts involved within the consortium include one Principal Officer in each borough, two Trading Standards Officers in Brent, one Trading Standards Officer in Harrow and one Laboratory and Systems Manager.

**5.0 DETAIL**

5.1 At the Advisory Board meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2002, Members were advised of recruitment and retention problems within the Service relating to qualified Trading Standards Officers. Members resolved :- “that a report outlining current staffing issues, including retention and remuneration within the Service be presented to Members for consideration”

5.2 As Weights and Measures Authorities, Section 72 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 requires Brent and Harrow to appoint “such number of inspectors of weights and measures as may be necessary for the efficient discharge.... of the functions imposed under this Act”. It is therefore a statutory responsibility to employ such officers. The Service, like most authorities in both London and nationally, has experienced problems recruiting and retaining qualified staff. There is, and from memory always has been, a national shortage of such staff which is acute in London. Matters have steadily got worse as house prices and the cost of living have increased faster in London than elsewhere, leading to virtually no interest in local jobs from outside the capital.

- 5.3 Some time ago the Service, unlike many authorities, decided to employ qualified officers to carry out metrology and related work only. The bulk of the enforcement work is carried out by Enforcement Officers. Coupled with this, it was realised that recruitment from other authorities was unlikely and a comprehensive training programme has been in operation for many years with a view to producing our own qualified officers. Over the years this has worked well and many officers have qualified and given good service to the consortium. It now appears that this Service is falling behind others in London in remuneration offered to staff. Combined with the realisation that young staff likely to be “first time” house buyers cannot afford to buy in London, or in the outskirts, this has led to our staff looking outside London or to authorities nearer their homes for work.
- 5.4 In September 2001 a qualified officer resigned to take up promotion outside London. The post was advertised without receiving a single response. A Principal Officer resigned in June 2002 to take up promotion outside London. The post was advertised and only one internal application was received. On promotion of that officer, the resultant vacant post was advertised in September 2002 and again no applications were received. One of our Enforcement Officers has been training for two years for the qualification and successfully completed the Diploma in Trading Standards in February. That officer left the Service at the beginning of June to take up a post at Barking and Dagenham. Our other Trading Standards Officer, who qualified in 2001 after three years training also left the Service at the beginning of June to take up a post at Milton Keynes.
- 5.5 As a first step I have had an independent job evaluation exercise carried out on the Trading Standards Officer posts. This was successful in upgrading the posts one grade. This may have make us more competitive, but recent advertisements show similar (but not higher) salaries elsewhere in London and in Milton Keynes.
- 5.6 The problems we are experiencing are not unique to this profession and officers are working with Human Resources in Brent who are considering a range of incentives that could be offered across a number of disciplines. These include “golden hellos”, market supplements and accelerated increments. Brent Council have decided that a market supplement of 10% can be offered in approved cases, Trading Standards being one of them, and we are awaiting final release of funds for this. This will be funded centrally and for Brent officers will cost approximately £21K.per annum. The Service will have to pay Harrow officers the same supplement which will amount to approximately £11K.per annum. The Harrow part year cost this year will be met within the existing budget, but the Director and Commissioner for Harrow will be discussing the implications of this for future years. If a supplement is not successful it may well be that one off payments such as “golden hellos” could be funded by the Service through vacancy savings. Ongoing market supplements would require extra resources for the Service in future years.
- 5.7 It appears at present that the market supplement might be sufficient as a recent advertisement has produced two candidates for interview and we await the result of that.

## 6.0 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### 6.1 Recruitment file

Any person wishing to inspect the above should contact: John Taylor, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Quality House, 249 Willesden Lane, London, NW2 5JH. Tel: 020 8937 5500.

**JOHN TAYLOR**  
**Director of Trading Standards**