

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS JOINT ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2003 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor: Gate  
Arnold London Borough of Harrow  
Kinnear

Councillor: Jones  
J Long London Borough of Brent

Also in attendance were John Taylor (Director of Trading Standards), Martin Grout (Deputy Director of Trading Standards) and Gareth Llewelyn-Roberts (Commissioner, Harrow).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Romain

1. **Appointment of Chair** (from amongst Harrow Members)

RESOLVED:

that Councillor Gate be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2003**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Matters Arising**

In response to a question from Councillor Jones, John Taylor informed the meeting that obligation periods for staff that were to receive training had now been incorporated into contracts, meaning that staff training for diplomas were required to stay for two years or could be asked to repay some of the training costs.

4. **Half Yearly Report: Six Month Report on the Operation of the Service, April 2003 – September 2003**

Mr M Grout, Deputy Director of Trading Standards introduced a report which updated Members on the operation of the Service over the first six months of the financial year.

Officers informed the meeting that two qualified Trading Standards Officers had recently resigned to take up posts with Milton Keynes and Barking respectively. However, the consortium had introduced a

market supplement for such officers and had already successfully recruited one new member of staff.

There had been a major safety alert over a product called 'Yo-Yo Balls', leading to representations being made to the Department of Trade and Industry, requesting they issue a prohibition notice.

The meeting was informed of a prosecution carried out against an estate agent that had falsely claimed that a ground floor flat had sole use of the garden, when it did not. This was one of several prosecutions, including successful action against a private clamping company for misleading price indications to consumers and action against a company and director for offences under the Trade Descriptions Act for misleading local businesses as to their Data Protection requirements. The prosecution of the company and director was the first of its kind in the country and the Service received considerable praise from the Information Commissioner. In response to a question from Councillor Arnold, the Chief Environmental Health Officer explained that counterfeit cigarettes were cheaper cigarettes, often from Eastern Europe, packaged as more expensive brands.

In response to a question from Councillor Long, Mr Grout informed the meeting that the sale of alcohol to minors was still an issue in smaller shops. He added that the implementation of till prompts had helped tackle the problem in larger shops. Officers also confirmed that CCTV footage could be and had been claimed for use in prosecutions.

In discussion of the figures detailed in the Service Operational Plan, Mr Grout explained that it was difficult to make accurate estimates of workload as much of the work was demand led.

Councillor Mrs Kinnear commented that there was still much concern surrounding the sale of alcohol, knives and fireworks to minors. Mr Grout informed the meeting that the Service was continuing to attempt to raise the profile of these problems and ensure parents were aware of the dangers. He added that the maximum fine for sale of alcohol to a minor was £1000, which was a substantial sum to a small retailer but not to a large retailer. In addition to knives and butane, the Service were also looking at the sale of replica guns.

In response to a question from Councillor Arnold, Mr Grout informed the meeting that the minimum age to purchase knives was 16. Children were sent in to shops to complete test purchases of knives and other age restricted products. A Trading Standards officer always accompanied the child in the shop, meaning that the child would not have to testify in court. Officers confirmed that they tried to choose children who clearly looked under the age restriction. In response to questions from the Chair, Officers confirmed that the identity of the children was protected and that they received extensive briefings, in line with Home Office guidelines.

Mr Grout informed the Board that the Service had been working in partnership with the Police to tackle the problem of counterfeit DVDs. Mr J Taylor (Director of Trading Standards) commented that evidence had indicated that the counterfeit DVDs were linked to organised crime. He added that the police's cooperation had been essential in dealing with the problem.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Chief Environmental Health Officer commented that he did not expect new laws governing fireworks to be in place by next year. The laws would potentially cover the sale, decibel levels, and the display of fireworks, and would potentially introduce a fireworks curfew. He added that it would appear that some areas of these laws would prove difficult to enforce.

#### **5. Trading Standards Budgets for 2004/2005**

Mr J Taylor (Director of Trading Standards) introduced a report which provided information on the Trading Standards budget for 2004/2005.

Mr Taylor informed the meeting that the budget did not include any growth items and Trading Standards intended to provide the same service next year as they had done this year. A reduction in fixed costs would mean more money available for enforcement work. He reminded Members that it was up to the respective Councils to decide the final budgets. In response to a question from the Chair, Officers assured the meeting that the appropriate processes were in place to keep the Director of Trading Standards informed of any potential changes to the budget.

Mrs Kinnear commented that the only increase in the budget was staff costs. The Chief Environmental Health Officer commented that there were two choices, either keep the same level of service and increase staff costs, or reduce the level of service and maintain the same staff costs.

#### **6. Weights and Measures Act 1985: Fees**

Mr J Taylor (Director of Trading Standards) introduced a report which informed the Board of the proposed changes to fees to be charged during 2004/2005 under the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

Mr Taylor reminded the meeting that the power to change the levels of fees charged had been delegated to the Director of Trading Standards. It was proposed that the levels of fees be increased to compensate for a reduction in volume of work. In response to comments from Councillor Mrs Kinnear, he confirmed that some companies had attempted to do the work themselves, but had faced difficulties in maintaining the same standards. He noted that revenue levels had been affected by the number of petrol stations closing down.

In response to questions, Mr Taylor confirmed that, except for European Union work, the Service was unable to work outside the Borough boundaries. All weighing machines were required to be checked and stamped as genuine when produced, but were not required to be rechecked. However, if there were complaints from the public, the Service would investigate.

7. **Any Other Business**

There was none at this meeting.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:

that it be noted that the next meeting of the Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board would take place on the following date:

- Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2004 at Brent Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

B GATE  
Chair

*Mins0304/otherbodies/tradstand/tsjab19ni*