

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, 21st July 2004 at 7.30 pm**

**PRESENT: Councillor: Gate
Arnold London Borough of Harrow
Kinnear**

**Councillor: Jones
J. Long London Borough of Brent
O' Sullivan**

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: None

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, 3 March 2004

RESOLVED:-

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

3. Matters Arising

The Commissioner of Harrow informed the meeting that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) had not been finalised due to minor legal issues and advised that the report on the SLA would be deferred to the next meeting.

The Director of Trading Standards reported that the 'Good Trader Scheme' which focused on new and used car dealers, was due to be introduced in September 2004 instead of July 2004. Members and motor traders would be invited to attend the launch.

4. Annual Report of the Director of Trading Standards for the year 2003/04.

The Director of Trading Standards referred the Board to the Annual Report and noted some key areas of interest and concern. The Director stressed the decrease in underage sales of tobacco products, Brent's registration to ISO14001 for their Environmental Management System, a major seizure of counterfeit DVDs in Harrow and the increase in complaints from the public to the Service. The constant need for staff

training to meet changing needs and legislation reviews was also emphasised.

The Director of Trading Standards thanked all staff for their work and Members for their support during the year and invited questions from Members.

In response to Members' queries regarding the recruitment and retention of officers, the Director replied that there had previously been a shortage of qualified Trading Standards Officers, but this had been dealt with by introducing a supplement to the basic salary and as a result, two new officers had been recruited. He explained that obtaining a qualification was a lengthy process, however, there were new methods in place which allowed sufficiently experienced enforcement officers to sit exams to qualify as Trading Standards Officers.

In response to a Member's concern that a significant number of traders had sold alcohol to children, it was explained that the restrictions on tobacco sales had long been enforced while the legislation on sales of alcohol and knives was more recent and, consequently, less work had been carried out to inform and inspect traders. It was also advised that the alcohol test purchases were difficult to perform as traders were reluctant to sell alcohol to unknown children.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the officer training budget, the Director replied that the budget included a fixed estimated sum for training purposes which was often later increased during the year if any extra income was received through successful prosecutions, hence the impression that the budget for training had decreased from last year. It was noted that the Service provided regular in-house training to officers and that staff from other Boroughs also participated in these sessions providing the Services with an extra income.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the higher number of visits made to high and medium risk premises in Harrow than in Brent, the Director replied that other duties took priority in Brent and that officers proceeded with their investigations differently according to the characteristics of a particular Borough.

In response to a Member's comment on the Service's performance statistics, it was advised that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) would standardise the benchmarking used to assess Trading Standards performance in the future which would make comparison between Services easier.

The Chair expressed concern regarding the sales of counterfeit DVDs and their potentially illegal content. He advised that there was an ongoing antipiracy campaign and a number to call to report piracy: 0845 6034567.

In response to the comment, officers recognised the problems with counterfeit DVDs, but advised that there was a new London Local Authority Bill in place which permitted officers to take direct action confiscating goods and removing illegal stalls.

In response to a question from a Member regarding reporting street traders, suspected to be illegal immigrants or having a criminal record, to other agencies, the Director of Trading Standards replied that the Service reported their findings to other agencies but had obtained little support from them, other than the police.

RESOLVED:- That 1) the Annual Report and the Members' contributions be noted.
2) all staff be thanked for their excellent work over the year.

5. **Presentation on the new legislation affecting Trading Standards Service.**

The Deputy Director of Trading Standards made a presentation on the different legal acts and regulations affecting Trading Standards Services and detailed some of the issues:

It was advised that a review of the Firework Act would lead to substantial changes. There would be new curfews and regulations for underage sales of firework.

The Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) allowed test purchasing of age-restricted goods. This had earlier been challengeable which had certain implications for the Service.

The Anti Social Behaviour Act and the forthcoming Housing Bill, estimated to be implemented in April 2005, were singled out as future challenges for the Service.

It was reported that it was not yet clear how the Anti Social Behaviour Act would affect the Service. So far, only the monitoring of traders selling spray paint to children would be of interest to the Service.

The Housing Bill would introduce the 'Home Sellers Pack' which would make the public liable to make accurate descriptions of houses on sale. This would have important implications for the Service as around 20% of house sales were not through estate agents and a minimum of one officer per Borough would be required to deal with this. This would also mean that the Service would take on a different role in regulating the public rather than just businesses.

Members noted the restraints on the Service in the future and the requirement of new staff.

RESOLVED:- That the presentation of the Deputy Trading Standards Director be noted.

6. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none at this meeting.

7. **Date of Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board would be held on Wednesday, 24th November at Brent Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.

COUNCILLOR B GATE

Chair