

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD
Tuesday, 22nd November at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Jones (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Councillors Arnold and Kinnear (London Borough of Harrow) and Councillor J Long (London Borough of Brent)

Officers in Attendance were: John Taylor (Director of Trading Standards, London Borough of Brent), Martin Grout (Deputy Director of Trading Standards, London Borough of Brent) Gareth Llywelyn-Roberts (London Borough of Harrow) and Michael Read (London Borough of Brent).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gate, O'Sullivan and Romain.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 19th July 2005

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2005 be approved as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

There were none.

3. Trading Standards Budget for the Year 2006/2007

The Board received a report from John Taylor which detailed information concerning the Trading Standards budget requirements for 2006/2007 which would enable Members to make recommendations to the main Committee in each borough.

It was noted that the Consortium Agreement outlined how the budget was set and that Trading Standards were required to report to this meeting each year for consideration and discussion but that this Committee had no specific power of decision over the budget.

The report explained the different costs involved such as fixed and variable costs and also noted that the variable costs were the largest part of the budget. The report also outlined the expected income for the year which was, again, estimated to be less than the previous year due to regulatory changes and staff reductions.

John Taylor explained that, as always, it was important to prioritise work so that the most important issues were placed higher up the list and suggestions were welcomed as part of the consultation process from the Board Members. It was also noted that new regulations had come into effect recently including a new regime for the sale of

fireworks and that no extra resources had been allocated for these and that even more new legislation was proposed. Existing problems such as the sale of illegal DVDs remained high profile issues which needed to be prioritised but that other areas may end up with a reduced focus.

John Taylor explained that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for both councils would now include Trading Standards work, such as inspections of high risk premises, and satisfaction surveys.

During discussion, specific concerns were expressed by Members that the Trading Standards Service was being presented with many more important areas of work and that there was a danger that current funding levels would not be able to support all this work. Concern was also expressed about the diminishing income and the affect of this on the Service.

Officers agreed and also asked the Board to note that some of the new duties would require Officers to be active outside of normal office hours, which would cause even more of a burden on finances. There was also no guarantee that the projected levels of income would be reached as it was often very difficult to collect the full court costs.

It was, however, reported that, compared to some other London Boroughs, the funding levels were good. It was also noted that the government often allocated additional funding to allow for these new responsibilities but that this didn't always reach the Service due to the way local government funding was calculated and the lack of ring-fencing for the money.

It was explained that when work was prioritised it would not necessarily be the new duties that were given higher priorities than existing issues and that it would depend on which issues were considered more important locally. For example, the proposed new homebuyer's packs may not be given a higher priority than DVD sales.

Officers explained that as well as prioritising work they were also investigating partnerships with other council and government services with the aim of making the service more efficient.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the report be noted
- (ii) that Members consider the implications of the report and agree the recommendations for the budget making process of each Council.

4. **Weights and Measures Act 1985: Fees**

The Board received a report informing them of the fees proposed to be charged during 2006/2007 under the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

The Director reported that the Councils were required by law to set fees to charge for services provided by Trading Standards under the Weights and Measures Act. For example, Trading Standards may be asked to check a weighbridge or a petrol pump. It was explained that the Local Authority Coordinating Body on Food and Regulatory Services (LACORS) recommend a schedule of fees and that Trading Standards set their figures slightly above these recommendations.

During discussion a question was asked as to how this Service would be provided should the council move to the proposed new civic centre. The Director replied that accommodation would have to be provided somewhere for this Service either at the new civic centre or elsewhere but it is too soon to know yet.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that Members agree the attached schedule of fees.

5. **Half-Yearly Report: Six Monthly Report on the Operation of the Service – April 2005-September 2005**

The Board had before them a report which updated Members on the operation of the Service over the first six months of the current financial year.

Officers reported that the Service had been awarded the UK Business Excellence Award and were the first Trading Standards Service to receive such an award. Members offered their congratulations to Officers on achieving this award.

It was also reported that there had been some small reorganisations within the department including to the Customer Service team which had been successful and that this had increased the efficiency of the department.

Officers went on to report on a number of cases of importance or interest including cases on car clocking and illegal car sales, a successful child car seat testing day where local residents had been helped to fit child car seats properly, prosecutions against traders not providing goods using metric measurements and an event where resident's electric blankets were tested for faults.

Other issues noted, included the increased workload caused by the new licensing regime, particularly due to the last minute rush of applications before the new scheme was launched. It was also reported that Officers were working with the police on “Operation Blunt”, which looked at the sale of knives to children, and on “Operation Optic” looking at the sale of alcohol. Harrow Officers also reported that they continued to have major problems regarding the sale of DVDs in Harrow shopping centre.

During discussion a question was asked about how the public could be warned about the dangers of electric fans. Officers replied that it was quite difficult as it was sometimes hard to spot problems until after the item had been purchased but that residents should always be wary of items such as those that are sold extremely cheaply.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that the contents of the report be noted;

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trading Standards Advisory Board was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 21st March 2006 at the Civic Centre, Harrow.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

There was none.

The meeting ended at 8:35 pm

JONES
Chair

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