

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD
Tuesday, 28th November at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Benson (Chair, London Borough of Harrow), Councillor Ferry (London Borough of Harrow), Councillors Baker and Hashmi (London Borough of Brent)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Weiss and Jones.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 26th July 2006

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th July 2006 be approved as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

There were none.

3. Half Yearly Report: Six Monthly Report on the Operation of the Service, April 2006 – September 2006

The Board received a report of the Director of Trading Standards, which updated Members on the operation of the Service over the first six months of the current financial year.

Officers reported on a number of cases of importance or interest, including cases on sale of alcohol and knives to children, counterfeiting, the trading of unsafe furniture, car clampers posing as official parking attendants, the sale of clocked motor vehicles, a property developer not describing property accurately, and Harrow College overcharging students for a course. It was reported that there had been successful child car seat testing days where local residents had been helped to fit child car seats properly and an event held to test electric blankets for faults.

Other issues noted included projects the Service was undertaking to investigate the weight of goods bought on the Internet and goods delivered to schools, and a project to educate vulnerable people, such as the elderly, about doorstep crime.

Harrow Officers also reported that they continued to have major problems regarding the sale of DVDs in Harrow shopping centre but that anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) were proving effective.

It was reported that satisfaction surveys were being undertaken, awareness of the Service was being raised and leaflets were being produced in ethnic minority languages. The Service would also be making representation to Brent Magistrates Court on the penalties imposed, as these were at the lower end of the scale.

In response to a question from a Member about when the Service would investigate problems in Wembley Market, officers explained that last year, goods worth £1.5 million had been seized and that investigations were still ongoing.

In response to a question from a Member about overseas lottery scams, officers explained that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had funded a team to investigate, nationally.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

4. Trading Standards Budget for the Year 2007/2008

The Board received a report from the Director of Trading Standards detailing information concerning the Trading Standards budget requirements for 2007/2008, to enable Members to agree the recommendations for the budget making process in each Council.

The report contained information on the cost during 2007/2008 to maintain the current service, based on the current structure, as well as an outline of the fixed and variable costs, income and priorities.

It was reported that the Service was now included in the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) in each Council.

RESOLVED:- That

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the recommendations for the budget making process of each Council be agreed.

5. Trading Standards Reorganisation

The Board received a report of the Commissioners for Brent and Harrow, which informed Members of the implications of a reorganisation within the Trading Standards Service, with a view to achieving savings in the year 2007/2008 and beyond.

An officer explained that savings were necessary for many reasons including budget pressures, the Service being high cost in relation to other services and that one-quarter of posts were managerial. It was

further explained that the eight senior posts would be reduced to four and there would be more enforcement posts created. This would mean the volume of work would remain the same but the Service would be more efficient.

It was reported that consultation had taken place and although staff had made representations, there had been no objections from them or Unions. It was acknowledged that there would be a loss of experience.

In response to a Member's question about whether any staff would be demoted, an officer explained that the post of Director would be on a lower grade. An officer outlined which officers would be eligible to apply for each post. It was reported that staff would be contacted about their individual post and the options available to them, and that interviews would be held by the end of 2006.

It was explained that the restructure would generate savings of £65,000 for the Consortium, in the first year.

RESOLVED:- That

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) Members be informed of the results of the restructure proposals.

6. Weights and Measures Act 1985: Fees

The Board received a report of the Director of Trading Standards which set out details of the fees that would be charged during 2007/2008, 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. It was explained that the Local Authority Coordinating Body on Food and Regulatory Services (LACORS) had recommended a schedule of fees and that Brent and Harrow Trading Standards had set their figures slightly above the recommended figures.

Members were informed that the charges proposed were 3% higher than the previous year. Due to deregulation, the Service would be competing with private companies.

RESOLVED:- That

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) The schedule of fees be noted.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

A Member asked for the telephone number of the Service for members of the public. It was reported that these were publicised and there was a direct link through the switchboard of both Councils.

RESOLVED:-

That the Member be provided with a leaflet containing the contact information for the Service.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trading Standards Advisory Board was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 13th March 2007 at the Town Hall, Brent.

The meeting ended at 8:40pm

Councillor Benson
Chair