

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD
Tuesday, 13th March 2007 at 7.30 pm**

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

Officers in Attendance were: John Taylor (Director of Trading Standards, London Borough of Brent), Bill Bilon (Director of Trading Standards, London Borough of Brent), Gareth Llywelyn-Roberts (London Borough of Harrow) and Simon Martin and Ash Shah (London Borough of Brent).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Benson and Weiss and from Michael Read (Assistant Director, Environment and Culture, London Borough of Brent)

Appointment of Chair (from amongst Brent members)

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor Jones be appointed as Chair for this meeting.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 28th November 2006

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2006 be approved as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

Members were informed that a report regarding the reorganisation of the Trading Standards Service had been submitted to Harrow's Cabinet, as well as the issue being discussed at this meeting.

Regarding trading in illegal goods at Wembley Market, Officers reported that investigations were still ongoing and that Officers had attended the market and seized 1.5 million tonnes of goods. However, it was explained that the main efforts were now being concentrated on the wholesalers and suppliers rather than the market traders as this was seen as a more effective way of combating the problem.

3. Trading Standards Budget for 2007/08

John Taylor introduced an item about the Trading Standards Budget. He explained that this was an update to the report submitted to the meeting in November 2006 that was attached to the current report as an appendix.

John Taylor reported that since the last meeting each borough had increased the savings detailed in the previous report by removing one enforcement officer post per borough and that the new budget had been agreed by both Brent and Harrow councils.

It was explained that under the final approved budget, the overall work output would be as detailed in report 9/06, later on the agenda for this meeting. Although the service delivery would be reduced in each borough, it was anticipated the Service would continue to achieve the upper level of each authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment performance indicators as applied to the Service.

As an additional issue it was reported that in the week before the meeting the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) had decided that it was to be a statutory duty on Trading Standards departments to enforce the Copyright Design Patents Act 1988 and so from April 2007 additional funding was to be provided by the DTI to enable the Service to recruit one additional officer to share between the two boroughs. This additional funding would continue into the future, and should be included in the base budget for future years. Officers agreed to produce a short report on this new requirement for presentation at the next meeting.

A general discussion followed where Members congratulated the Trading Standards Service on its continuing high levels of performance but expressed continuing concern over the levels of funding being received. Councillor Hashmi noted that the staffing levels and the budget for the Trading Standards Service were falling significantly but that the demands placed on the Service by new government regulations and local requirements were continuing to rise. All Members expressed concern that there was only so long this could continue before there would be a major impact on the service levels offered.

In response to the concerns expressed by Members, Officers agreed that the reductions in funding would cause problems for the Trading Standards Service and that they would continue to look to prioritise certain areas of high concern as outlined in the work output report but that lower priority areas could well suffer as a result.

Officers also explained that they were looking to maintain as many front-line officer posts as possible and that several management posts had been cut instead as a result.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

4. **Trading Standards Work Plan 2007/08**

Bill Bilon introduced the report on the Trading Standards Work Plan for 2007/08. He explained that the report was issued every year to detail the Service's plans for the coming year but that this year's report had been revamped to make it clearer and to reduce it in size.

He explained that the main areas of work were chosen following consideration of any new government regulations and any specific areas of concern that had been raised by Members and the public. Work plans were introduced for the Brent, Harrow and Customer Services Team. It was explained that one of the responsibilities of the Customer Services team was to conduct customer satisfaction surveys and that these proved an extremely useful guide to the Service's performance and highlighted areas of concern from the public.

National rule changes for inspection of businesses were highlighted, in particular that the requirement to visit traders had been reduced after concerns at central government that there was too much bureaucracy involved at present. However, this Service would continue to visit 100% of the businesses considered 'high risk'.

During discussion Members again noted resource concerns. It was suggested that a review of the Service in relation to its Consortium Agreement between the two boroughs could be beneficial in helping to identify the value for money the Service provides, funding issues and highlight major pressures on the Service. It was agreed that the Commissioners in Brent and Harrow examine this option and to report back at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

5. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Trading Standards Advisory Board was provisionally scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 17th July 2007 at the Civic Centre, Harrow. This date would be confirmed at both councils' annual council meetings in May 2007.

6. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to John Taylor for his many years of service to the Trading Standards Consortium. Members noted that John Taylor had worked for the Service for nearly 40 years, including 22 as its Director and that during that time the Trading Standards Service had been a highly regarded and award winning service. Members wished John all the best for his retirement. Members also congratulated Bill Bilon on his promotion to Director.

In response John Taylor thanked the Members for their kind words and for the support they had offered the Service over the years. He also paid tribute to the hard work of his staff, in particular mentioning Councillor Anne Swaine for her work in keeping the consortium going during difficult times. John Taylor wished everyone well for the future.

The meeting ended at 9:02 pm

JONES
Chair