

## LONDON BOROUGHS OF BRENT AND HARROW

### TRADING STANDARDS ADVISORY BOARD – 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2008

#### REPORT NO. 05/07 OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRADING STANDARDS

#### FOR INFORMATION

TITLE OF REPORT: TRADING STANDARDS BUDGET FOR 2008/2009

#### 1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides Members with the latest information concerning the Trading Standards Budget for 2008/2009 together with the implications on service delivery.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Members consider this report and comment where appropriate.

#### 3.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The whole report concerns the finance of the Trading Standards Service.

3.2 Although this report does not itself have financial implications, it reflects the position following further reductions by both Councils to their respective 2008-09 budgets. Members will recall that following the restructuring of the Service substantial savings were made to the 2007-08 Trading Standards budget by both Councils which resulted in the loss of one Enforcement Officer from each of the two borough enforcement teams. The budget approved by Brent and Harrow for 2008-09 will result in further financial cuts as outlined below.

#### 4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Although this report does not itself have staffing implications, it reflects the position following a major reorganisation of the Service at the beginning of this financial year to provide substantial savings to each borough. Report No 6/06 concerning the reorganisation was presented to Members at the Advisory Board on 28th November 2006. As part of this reorganisation, both Councils took the decision to reduce the establishment by one Enforcement Officer each. The budget that has already been approved by Brent and Harrow will result in further cuts to the Trading Standards establishment in 2008-09 as outlined below.

#### 5.0 DETAIL

5.1 At the Trading Standards Advisory Board meeting on 27th November 2007, Members considered report No.4/07 concerning the Trading Standards Budget for 2008/2009 and asked to be kept updated on the situation. At that meeting, Members also raised concerns that the 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 effect on the Service of any further budget reductions.

5.2 Brent is providing a total budget of £947,000 (which will include all the notional rent for the Trading Standards accommodation) for the 2008-09 financial year. This is a reduction of £41,000 from the 2007/08 budget. As stated above this reduction

will result in the loss of one frontline Enforcement Officer post which was specifically created at the time of the reorganisation for the purposes of conducting financial investigations for the seizure of criminal assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. Fortunately, the reduction in the Brent budget will not result in redundancy as the post in question was kept vacant to make additional savings that were required during this financial year. However, it will seriously affect the Service's ability to conduct complex investigations which will invariably lead to a loss of 'income' from the Government's Proceeds of Crime incentivisation scheme.

5.3 Harrow is providing a budget of £816,000 for next year which is identical to the amount provided in 2007-2008. The net effect of this 'cash freeze' budget is that there is no increase in for inflation or staff salary. Therefore, as stated above with respect to the Brent team, this will lead to the deletion of one frontline Enforcement Officer post from the Harrow team. Similarly, this will have an adverse effect on the Service's ability to carry out its core functions and to conduct financial investigations for the seizure of assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

5.4 The combined Brent and Harrow budget for the Service for 2008-2009 will be £1,763,000. The overall work output will be as detailed in report 06/07, which appears later on the agenda for this meeting. There will be a reduction in service delivery and, like Brent, a great deal of prioritisation will occur, with some duties inevitably taking a lower priority. Although service delivery will be reduced in each borough, it is anticipated the Service will achieve the upper threshold in the relevant Trading Standards National Indicators for both Councils' Comprehensive Area Assessment

## 6.0 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

6.1 2008/2009 Budget File.

Any person wishing to inspect the above should contact N Bilon, First Floor, 249 Willesden Lane, London NW2 5JH, telephone 020 8937 5500.

NAGENDAR BILON  
DIRECTOR OF TRADING STANDARDS