

**MINUTES OF THE TRADING STANDARDS  
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD  
Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Jones (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Councillors Baker, Gupta and Hashmi (London Borough of Brent) and Councillors Hall, Idaikkadar (alternate for Ferry) and Kinnear (alternate for Weiss) (London Borough of Harrow).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ferry and Weiss.

Officers in Attendance were: Bill Bilon (Director of Trading Standards, London Boroughs of Brent & Harrow), Andrew McKenzie (London Borough of Harrow), Michael Read (Assistant Director, Environment and Culture, London Borough of Brent) and Simon Martin, Ash Shah and Simon Legg (London Boroughs of Brent & Harrow Trading Standards).

1. **Appointment of Chair (from amongst Brent members)**

Councillor Jones was appointed to Chair the meeting.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008 be approved as an accurate record.

3. **Annual Report of the Director of Trading Standards for the year 2007/08**

Bill Bilon introduced the latest Annual Report from the Trading Standards Service by asking the Board to note that the unique partnership between Brent and Harrow Councils was responsible for one of the most efficient and effective Trading Standards bodies in London. He stated that this was important due to the increasing number of Acts of Parliament and other legislation that the Trading Standards Service were now required to deal with.

It was explained that it had been a difficult year for the Service due to a major reorganisation that had resulted in the loss of a number of senior posts and with them a number of experienced Trading Standards officers. However, their work had continued relatively unhindered to the extent that they were able to retain their ISO 14001, Charter Mark and Notified Body status. In addition, the Service had received a Brent Council Staff Award in recognition of their work at the new Wembley Stadium.

Bill Bilon continued his introduction by drawing Members' attention to various sections of the report including the issue of the sale of alcohol, knives and other items to underage people, including the newer issue of internet sales. Work to deal with fair trading, building scams and clocking cars were also noted. The work of the Metrology & Safety and Development & Support Teams were also highlighted.

Members' attention was drawn to the significant results achieved from the Proceeds from Crime Act that had allowed the Trading Standards Service to recoup costs from those convicted of serious crimes. It was explained that more than £130,000 had been recovered in this way in the past year and that they would look for more opportunities in the future. Members of the Board expressed an interest in having a report on this issue later in the year.

In conclusion Bill Bilon again noted the difficulties that had been overcome over the past year and thanked his staff for their efforts and the Board for their continuing support.

A discussion followed during which Members asked a number of questions relating to the funding of the service, the impact of the reorganisation and specific aspects of the Service's work. In response, Bill Bilon explained that the continued reduction in the Service's budget had caused problems and was one reason behind the recent reorganisation, however he felt that overall they were performing well and indeed were significantly ahead of Trading Standards Services in other boroughs and he was also hopeful that the reorganisation would prove to have been a useful exercise in particular with its emphasis on freeing up officer time for front line services. Concern was expressed by several Members regarding the ability of the Councils to recruit replacement staff of sufficient experience but officers assured them that, so far, they had managed to fill all advertised posts. However officers reported that due to all the changes they felt the Service was now less proactive and more reactive than it had been in the past.

Responding to further questions, officers explained that they worked closely with the police on a number of issues including the sale of knives and that there were efforts to target identified crime hotspots as this was the most efficient use of resources. Regarding internet sales it was reported that large companies, as well as small e-bay traders, had been responsible for sales of prohibited items to underage people and that more action on this issue was planned for the coming year.

Finally, officers explained that Self Storage businesses had been identified as a possible concern due to the ability of criminals to hide goods at these sites but that most such businesses co-operated well with the police and trading standards officers and the issue was being monitored.

In conclusion the Chair commended the Service on their work, in particular, noting the extremely low level of complaints and the number of positive letters received from the public and the Board unanimously passed on a vote of thanks to all the officers of the Service.

4. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Trading Standards Advisory Board was scheduled to take place on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008 at the Civic Centre, Harrow.

The meeting ended at 8:25 pm

LESLEY JONES  
Chair

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