

# **TRADING STANDARDS JOINT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

## **22 MARCH 2012**

**Chairman:** \* Councillor Keith Ferry

**Councillors:** \* Susan Hall London Borough of Harrow  
\* Ajay Maru (2)

† Eddie Baker London Borough of Brent  
\* Sami Hashmi  
\* Lesley Jones

\* Denotes Member present  
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Member  
† Denotes apologies received

### **1. Election of Chair**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Ferry be appointed as Chairman for this meeting.

### **2. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no declarations of interests made.

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 28 November 2011**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2011, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- the attendance at page 1 of the minutes be amended to indicate that Councillor Maru was in attendance as an alternate for Councillor O'Dell;
- the duplication of the meeting closing time and Councillor Jones' name be deleted.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

##### Agenda

Members of the Board commented that the agenda had not been circulated in good time to Harrow Councillors. Members commented that it would be a good suggestion for officers from Brent and Harrow to work on a system to ensure that the agendas were placed in the courier service for Harrow Councillors, so that they received it in good time.

Members also commented that there were a few errors on the agenda, which were required to be amended for the next time meetings were held at the Harrow Civic Centre.

##### Proceeds of Crime Act

A Member commented that in relation to the previous request of the Board for Trading Standards to ensure that the legal services in Brent and Harrow appreciated the capacity of work relating to the proceeds of crime, the legal services within Harrow were currently expanding and taking over other legal services of another borough.

In response to a query on whether officers had identified commissioning officers in other London boroughs with a view to marketing the trading standards services to them. The Head of Consumer and Business Protection commented that the Assistant Director of Policy and Regulation was currently in discussions with other boroughs about shared services. The Member commented that Harrow Council's Chief Executive had agreed to sign a letter to be sent out on this subject, so it was important that the services were marketed as soon as possible.

The Head of Consumer and Business Protection commented that the Trading Standards service was currently dealing with cases referred by the Planning departments at both Harrow and Brent Councils relating to the Proceeds of Crime. They were also dealing with a case referred from Environmental Health in Harrow. It was difficult to estimate or rely on income generated from obtaining Proceeds of Crime money as this depended on each individual circumstance. A Member commented that if Trading Standards took on work from other authorities, certainty of income became higher.

**RESOLVED:** That the matters arising be noted.

## **5. Trading Standards Budget for 2012/13**

The Head of Consumer and Business Protection reported to the Board that the budget for the 2012/13 financial year was exactly the same as it was for the previous financial year.

During the course of the presentation the Head of Consumer and Business Protection commented that the team were performing at their maximum capacity and were always looking for additional national or local revenue streams which could be utilised.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Board made a number of comments as follows:

- it would have been helpful if the budget had been clarified by Brent Council as planning was required;
- more clarification should have been sought by officers on the budget. Members of the Board had to be aware if any difficulties were encountered within the budget so lobbying could be performed if necessary;
- the Commissioning officers from Brent and Harrow should have confirmed once the budget was finalised and agreed;
- as part of the budgeting process, it was prudent that any monies received resulting from Proceeds of Crime should not be taken into account as these were difficult to predict and forecast;
- it was important to recognise that staff would be placed under increasing pressure during the Olympics and there had to be an onus on retaining jobs over this period. The officer responded by commenting that in the current climate, financial cuts were required, so prioritisation was a key factor in determining the future work of the service;
- the amount of pressure on the Trading Standards service was increasing and the number of statutory requirements in this area was always increasing.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

## **6. Trading Standards Work Plan for 2012/13**

The Head of Consumer and Business Protection introduced the report providing the Board with information concerning the Trading Standards Work Plan for 2012/13.

The Officer reported the following:

- the Trading Standards service had recruited Mr Paul Walker who was responsible for organising enforcement work in relation to the Olympics. This post was being funded by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to ensure co-ordination relating to enforcement during the Olympic Games;
- it was anticipated that there may be some issues for Trading Standards to deal with during the Olympics. These included a potential increase in crime along the respective high streets, ticket touting and bogus bookings websites;
- one new area of work for the Service would be the operation of the Primary Authority Scheme with local and national businesses. The main aim of this scheme was to provide one point of contact within one Local Authority for all the regulators to refer issues to. These were then raised with the relevant company concerned and solutions developed. This helped businesses in a number of ways including access to robust and reliable advice, the introduction of nationwide inspection plans and avoidance with repetition;
- the Trading Standards service had conducted a presentation for businesses in Brent and Harrow, where they had attempted to discuss the advantages of the scheme and offers its services to act as the point of contact for these businesses. It was hoped that 5 or 6 businesses would sign up with the Trading Standards Service;
- a charge could be made for offering the Primary Authority Scheme service and this could be used to employ more officers to deal solely with this service.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Board raised a number of queries which were responded to by officers as follows:

- the work plan was similar to last year. However there were a number of tasks which the service could no longer afford to perform including toy testing. The service was moving towards being much more reactive than proactive due to the current financial climate. Everyone was working at their maximum capacity but there were limited resources;
- the ODA had provided the Trading Standards Service with approximately £30,000;
- there was already a similar scheme to the Primary Authority Scheme in existence. However this did not have a statutory basis. The advantages of this scheme included resolving issues promptly. Any charge made under this scheme could not generate a profit, it could only cover expenses incurred. The Primary Authority Scheme would not mean that officers would have to travel nationally to the various branches of one company. It would simply set up inspection plans and work with other authorities to ensure checks were conducted and issues were resolved;

- this form of better regulation to a similar scheme already in existence, could assist businesses in a balanced way;
- whilst concerns raised about the scheme were noted, if the service did not bid for this scheme, there could be opportunities missed. In London some authorities had already marketed themselves which meant that there would be strong competition.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Board made a number of comments as follows:

- whilst the benefits of the Primary Authority Scheme were clear for businesses, it was not so clear what the benefits were for Local Authorities;
- Brent and Harrow Trading Services had an excellent reputation and it was important to market this appropriately.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.31 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR KEITH FERRY  
Chairman