

Appendix B

EXTRACT TAKEN FROM MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 9 January 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair) and Councillors Colacicco, Crane, Ezeajughi, Mashari, S Choudhary and Kabir

Also Present: Councillors McLennan, Miller and Southwood

9. Review of Trading Standards' Role and Priority Areas

The Chair advised that the committee had visited the Trading Standards team in preparation for this item and welcomed Councillor Miller (Lead Member for Stronger Communities), Amar Dave (Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment), Simon Legg (Senior Regulatory Service Manager), Samuel Abdullahi (Acting Team Leader) and Anu Prashar (Senior Prosecutor).

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Miller introduced the report reviewing the role and priorities of the Trading Standards Service (TS). It was noted that many of the outputs of the service had a direct impact on Brent residents, helping people often in extremely vulnerable circumstances. The TS had operated on a joint consortium basis between the London Borough of Brent and the London Borough of Harrow for over 50 years, with Brent acting as the host authority. The committee heard that TS performed the statutory role of a 'weights and measures authority' with the responsibility of enforcing more than 250 pieces of legislation covering a wide ranging remit. Councillor Miller advised that the budget for TS had reduced significantly in recent years, whilst demand had continued to increase and welcomed the committee's views regarding priorities for the service going forward.

During members' discussion, the committee sought further detail on spend-to-save opportunities for the service, referencing the Proceeds of Crime (PoC) Act 2002 and the Home Office incentivisation scheme as a potential source of income. A query was raised regarding the TS's scope to take enforcement action against ticket touts. Members queried whether the TS worked with the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to raising awareness around fraud and scams and supporting victims of such acts. A member noted the proliferation of online scams and questioned how the TS had evolved to respond to this trend. Clarification was sought regarding the powers of the TS to prosecute in cases of fraud. Discussing the rising number of acid attack incidents across the country, members questioned how the TS worked with Brent traders regarding the sale of chemicals used in such assaults.

In response to the queries raised, Councillor Miller agreed to explore spend-to-save opportunities but cautioned that there were Home Office controls regarding the way in which income generated through the PoC Act 2002 could be applied in this regard. Simon Legg advised that the most appropriate powers to address ticket touting were those belonging to the Licensing Team (in relation to illegally trading without the appropriate street trading license) and the Police's powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (prevents the reselling of tickets to avoid opposing fans creating matters of public order). The TS did work with the voluntary sector including Age UK and Citizens Advice but noted that much of the work undertaken by the TS was done so in line with its statutory responsibilities. Online scams were reported via Action Fraud, a national fraud and cyber crime reporting centre. The TS also had a dedicated standalone computer to allow officers to go through the details of online scams without leaving a cyber footprint of their investigation. It was emphasised that scams still took place in person, face to face and not just online. Anu Prashar clarified that whilst the TS had no powers under the Fraud Act, in many cases could pursue prosecution using powers available due to breaches of other Trading Standards legislation. Councillor Miller advised that much of the work with Brent's traders regarding the sale of chemicals used in acid attacks was about building relationships with those business and providing educational material to increase understanding of the types of materials used.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and officers for their responses.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment and Lead Member for Stronger Communities be asked to take into consideration the committee's view that the priorities for the Trading Standards Service be underpinned by an invest-to-save rationale and a commitment to protecting Brent's vulnerable residents..
- ii) That the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment and Lead Member for Stronger Communities ensure that an analysis is undertaken of the potential invest-to-save opportunities for the Trading Standards Services and report the findings to the committee in due course.