

**NOTES OF THE INQUORATE TRADING STANDARDS  
JOINT ADVISORY BOARD  
Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Kinnear (London Borough of Harrow),  
Councillors Jones, J Long and O'Sullivan (London Borough of Brent).

Officers in attendance were: John Taylor (Director of Trading Standards, Brent), Martin Grout (Deputy Director of Trading Standards, Brent), Bill Bilon (Brent Trading Standards), Gareth Llywelyn-Roberts (London Borough of Harrow) and Michael Read (London Borough of Brent).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gate and Romain.

The Director informed the Board that the minimum presence of Members for the meeting to be quorate was two from each borough. As the meeting was inquorate an informal discussion took place.

**1. Trading Standards Service Operational Plan 2005/2006**

Officers introduced a report on the Service Operational Plan for 2005/2006 and invited Members of the Committee to comment. It was explained that every year the Service produced an operational plan which detailed the work of the Service. The plan also contained the mission statement, aims and objectives and priorities for the Service. Officers asked the Committee to note that the report contained a number of appendices which outlined results and schedules related to this report. Questions were then invited.

In response to Members' questions the Director outlined some specific areas of work that he wished to highlight. These included action taken regarding the sale of age restricted goods to young people and the results that they received from that area, the difficulties due to new legislation coming into force in particular the Licensing Act and the need to work with the Police and publicans and the extra evening and weekend work that this required.

The Director also highlighted the need for joined up working nationally particularly when dealing with different Government departments and their priorities. Officers explained that recently the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) had tried to put together a list of priorities throughout central government and this underlined the need for greater consultation between central government departments.

In response to further questions, officers emphasized that the Service relied heavily on information from local residents as they were often the people who knew best what was happening in their location. However, they also emphasized that new national and London-wide databases would help with the fight against cross-borough crime problems.

In conjunction with government level priorities, the Trading Standards Service had drawn up a graph illustrating the priority levels that they had placed on various issues to give an indication to Members as to where resources would be placed. Examples included high priorities being given to the sale of age restricted items such as alcohol and knives and lower priorities being given to items such as the Motor Cycle Noise Act and the Broadcasting Act. It was however emphasized that officers would deal with all items brought to their attention as far as possible but those with a higher priority would receive the most attention.

In response to a further question from Members, officers responded that although the sale of untaxed cars was often the responsibility for other Council units, Trading Standards were also involved and had recently undertaken a number of projects to deal with this particular problem but that it was a very intransigent issue. Particular mention was made of problems around Queensbury Circle.

Members felt the priorities were correct.

The meeting noted the report.

## **2. Trading Standards Budget for 2005/2006**

The Director of Trading Standards referred the Board to the budget proposals for 2005/2006. It was explained that because the November meeting was unable to take place, officers had not been in a position to keep Members informed as to the progress of the budget as was the normal procedure. It was reported that Brent was to provide a total budget of £998,794 which was £39,802 less than that identified as required. The reduction in budget would result in the deletion of one enforcement officer post. Harrow's budget was finalised after the report was written and it totalled £797,810 which was £30,942 short of that hoped for. The Director stated that an enforcement officer post would have to be kept vacant.

In response to Members' questions, the Director agreed that they were experiencing increasing demand and yet at the same time the budget was not increasing. It was also explained that the main external source of income from the Weights and Measures Act was likely to decrease due to changes in legislation and that if the Councils employed less enforcement officers, then income from court costs could also decrease. However, it was also explained that compared with other boroughs Brent and Harrow were good funders of Trading Standards and that the CPA ratings reflected this.

In response to a question from a Member, it was explained that the service level agreement between Harrow and Brent was still in the process of negotiation and officers expressed a hope that this could be

completed sooner rather than later. In response to a further question regarding the CPA ratings, the Director replied that out of the four ratings covered the fourth one could be a problem namely regulation to ensure all businesses are compliant due to the number of staff needed to carry out inspections. However, it was felt that the first three would not be a problem.

In response to a Member's concern that a significant number of traders had sold alcohol to children, it was explained that inspections and test purchases were carried out in this area but officers were also concerned but that it was sometimes difficult to perform test purchases as traders were often reluctant to sell alcohol to unknown children. It was emphasized that officers had the power to close premises that do continue to sell alcohol to children.

The meeting noted the report.

### **3. Weights and Measures Act 1985: Fees**

The Director introduced a report on the Weights and Measures Act 1985 fees. It was reported that over the last year the fee income had increased by approximately 3%, however it was estimated that over the next year income would decrease by approximately 18% and that this was a direct result of Government de-regulation which now allowed manufacturers and repairers to verify their own equipment. It was also explained that the fees for next year would remain in excess of those recommended by LACORS and it was estimated that this would provide an income of approximately £15,500 per annum.

The meeting noted the report.

### **4. Half-Yearly Report – Six Monthly Report on the Operation of the Service April 2004 – September 2004**

Officers introduced the six-monthly report on the operation of the Service. It was explained that the first six months had been a very busy and productive time for the Service. Officers were pleased to report that Trading Standards had had its ISO 9001 accreditation renewed and they were also hopeful that their Chartermark would be renewed within the next week.

Officers reported on a successful day's campaign at local superstores regarding the safe fitting of child car seats and that they were investigating the possibility of increasing the number of events such as this to raise public awareness of the work of the unit. Other recent projects were also reported on including action taken against sellers of illegal DVDs and videos, car clocking, illegal auctions and shop owners not displaying metric weights and measures. It was noted that the sale of DVDs was a particular concern at this time and it was estimated

that the Team would seize in excess of 20,000 unclassified videos and DVDs for the whole year.

Significant action being taken against car clockers was also reported, including one case where 24 cars were clocked to an estimate of over 1¼ million miles. Proceedings on these cases would be reported at a later date. In response to Members' questions, it was reported that the Trading Standards Teams had strong links with local Citizens' Advice Bureaux and other local organisations.

The meeting noted the report.

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

It was announced that the next meeting would be on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in Harrow.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Councillor Jones

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