



Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board

Minutes

**Held as an online meeting at 6pm on
Wednesday 20 March 2024**

Present (in remote attendance):

Chair: Councillor Tom Miller London Borough of Brent

Councillors:

Stephen Crabb	London Borough of Brent
Harbi Farah	London Borough of Brent
Anjana Patel	London Borough of Harrow
Norman Stevenson	London Borough of Harrow
Krishna Suresh	London Borough of Harrow

In Attendance

Simon Legg (Head of Regulatory Service)	London Borough of Brent
Anu Prashar (Senior Regulatory Service Manager)	London Borough of Brent
Emma Phasey (Head of Licensing & Enforcement)	London Borough of Harrow
Samuel Abdullahi (Senior Enforcement Officer)	London Borough of Brent

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED: That Councillor Tom Miller (London Borough of Brent) be elected as Chair for the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies for absence were from Councillor Kennelly (London Borough of Brent) with Councillor Miller attending as a substitute.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 1 November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

5. **Matters arising**

None.

6. **Deputations (if any)**

No requests for deputations had been submitted for the meeting.

7. **Joint Advisory Board Report on Fees and Charges 2024-25**

The Board received a report, presented by Anu Prashar (Senior Regulatory Service Manager, Brent Council) providing Members with information concerning the proposed level of fees and charges to be made by the Brent & Harrow Trading Standards Service during 2024/25.

In considering the report the Joint Advisory Board noted that in accordance with paragraph 13(f) of the Consortium Agreement between the London Borough of Brent and the London Borough of Harrow, the Joint Advisory Board was required to consider and make recommendations on the level of fees and charges to be made in respect of any part of the service. The Board was advised that Trading Standards fees fell into the following categories:

- 1) Statutory fees (set by legislation, although some offered discretion to vary the amount up to a maximum value);
- 2) Retail Price Index (RPI) linked fees (agreed previously by Brent's Executive); and
- 3) Discretionary fees (there was discretion to vary the value charged).

Statutory fees were set nationwide by the Government, with local authorities having no discretion to change the fees although on occasions, the legislation would permit a fee to be set locally up to a maximum value.

Having outlined the proposed charges under each of the above categories, including the Primary Authority fees, Weights & Measures fees & Financial Investigator fees the Board thanked Anu Prashar for her report and **RESOLVED** to note and endorse the Joint Advisory Board Report on Fees and Charges for 2024-25.

8. **Trading Standards Work Plan 2024-25**

Anu Prashar (Senior Regulatory Service Manager, Brent Council) presented a report detailing the proposed 2024/25 work plan for Brent & Harrow Trading Standards.

In considering the report the Board noted:

- The work plan aimed to set out priority areas for the coming year and provide a guide to the expected levels of performance for each of the boroughs' teams whilst also offering flexibility to assist in meeting unexpected demands and to adapt service delivery as required, to meet emerging threats or respond to

major investigations or assist our Primary Authority businesses on complex and legal matters.

- The assumptions on which the work plan had been set, as set out within the Work Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Plan had also been designed to incorporate priority areas of work identified by the National Trading Standards Board and London Trading Standards as well as reflect the key corporate priorities within each borough's Corporate Plan.
- The High Priority areas of work identified within the Plan for 2024-25, which included illicit tobacco and vape products and underage sales.
- The ongoing focus within the Plan on activities in relation to the cost of living and consumer complaints, such as testing weighing scales, price comparisons and promotions to make sure that consumers were not being misled.
- The medium and lower term priorities outlined within the Plan for 2024-25 along with work volumes across the service, which were subject to continual review to ensure priorities were being implemented effectively.

The following issues were then raised by Members of the Board in response to the update provided:

- Clarification was sought regarding the National Trading Standards Board's priority regarding animal feed and how relevant that was to the service. Anu Prashar explained that this work was focussed around the avoidance of contamination with regular site visits undertaken to ensure animal feed was not contaminated. The Service checked that the right controls and procedures were in place similar to HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) used in food safety to ensure little to no contamination. These included visits to supermarkets as well as farms to monitor the quality of the animal food supply chain.
- Clarification was sought on whether pet food was also considered by the Service. Anu Prashar said that pet food was the end product of animal feed and analysing pet food may be the second stage of the project including taking samples of pet foods and ensuring that the statutory declaration was adhering to labels.
- Further details were sought on whether consideration was given to harm when identifying priorities within the Plan and how these were agreed between the joint boroughs. It was clarified that consideration was given to harm as well as national and local priorities. The vulnerabilities of residents were considered as well as signposting to partners like the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Criminal breaches were rated and if the criminal breach was of low value that it would be signposted whereas a criminal breach of high value would be investigated, but each case was bespoke with further work being undertaken to consider how best to capture harm and reflect this within the priorities and monitoring of the work plan. The priorities were also subject to regular and ongoing discussion between lead officers within each authority.
- Members remained keen to ensure that the monitoring of specific trends in terms of service activity continued as a means of assisting to focus priorities, with comparisons provided between the current and previous year in terms of work volume.
- Members welcomed the support being provided by the Trading Standards teams across each borough in terms of advice and guidance and as part of ward visits. Details were also provided in relation to the Friends Against Scams

awareness raising training which had recently been provided for members in Brent and it was felt would also be beneficial for Harrow Councillors to attend, which officers agreed to progress.

In welcoming the update and supporting the positive work being undertaken by Trading Standards, the Chair thanked Anu Prashar for her report and having commended officer for their efforts it was **RESOLVED** to endorse and note the update and Trading Standards Work Plan 2024-25.

09. Dates of future meetings

NOTED the dates for future meetings of the Advisory Board agreed for the 2024-25 Municipal Year, as follows:

- Thursday 6 June 2024 at 6pm to be hosted (online) by the London Borough of Harrow.
- Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 6pm to be hosted (online) by the London Borough of Brent.
- Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 6pm to be hosted (online) by the London Borough of Harrow.

10. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 6:36pm

COUNCILLOR TOM MILLER
Chair