



Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board Minutes

4 June 2025

Present:

Chair: Councillor Krupa Sheth – London Borough of Brent

Councillors: Norman Stevenson – London Borough of Harrow
Pritish Patel – London Borough of Harrow
Rashmi Patel – London Borough of Harrow
Daniel Kennelly – London Borough of Brent

1. Election of Chair

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

2. Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members

Apologies were received from Councillor Steve Crabb (London Borough of Brent) and Councillor Krishna Suresh (London Borough of Harrow).

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 be taken as read 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. Trading Standards Annual Report 2024-25

The Senior Regulatory Service Manager for Trading Services presented the Trading Standards Annual Report for the year 2024/2025 and added that it was a requirement of the Trading Standards Consortium Agreement that an Annual Report was presented to the Joint Advisory Board with details of the work undertaken during the financial year to which it related.

The Service sought to promote and maintain a fair and equitable trading environment for consumers and businesses alike, creating a level and equal marketplace in which consumers could spend in confidence, business could confidently trade and the local economy could grow. There were over 250 pieces of legislation to abide by as well as given standards.

The Service continued to work in partnership with the Citizen's Advice Consumer Service and accepted referrals for consideration, of cases involving criminal activity or ongoing consumer harm that affected Brent and Harrow residents.

Unfortunately, the Service could not investigate or deal with every request received, so each service request was assessed and scored to determine whether it would be investigated further. This year 321 reports were investigated in Brent and 145 in Harrow.

The Service strived to contribute towards both Borough's objectives of supporting business growth by delivering effective regulation for the benefit of legitimate businesses. Officers responded to 112 separate requests for advice and information from local businesses (Brent 62 and Harrow 50). This was an increase of 12% from the previous year.

Officers conducted 236 compliance inspections (Brent 117, and Harrow 119) to verify that businesses were adhering to consumer protection laws, product safety standards and fair trading practices.

The Service continued to deliver support and advice to Primary Authority businesses and guided partners through complex safety matters, including product recalls and withdrawals from UK and EU markets. Staff created a new partnership with Sabre Retail Fashion Limited trading as Mint Velvet, a national clothing retailer. Brent delivered 57 hours and Harrow 20 hours of Primary Authority advice.

In March 2025, the Service wrote to 703 businesses (422 Brent and 281 Harrow) advising them of the single use vape ban coming into force as of 1 June 2025.

The Service continued to undertake a wide range of activities to protect Brent' and Harrow's residents and promote the well-being of its communities. Compliance inspections, market surveillance and investigations had been carried out on an e-bikes modification business, cosmetic products, PPE and homeware products.

The team had a statutory duty to carry out market surveillance and enforcement activities concerning the storage and sale of fireworks and was responsible for ensuring that fireworks sold in Brent & Harrow were manufactured to the relevant standard and not sold to minors. The Service issued 32 fireworks licences to 29 businesses in Harrow.

Working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, the Football Association, brand protection teams and our Environmental Enforcement Officers, the team saw a huge improvement in compliance levels on event days, with a substantial decline in illegal street traders, making the events much more pleasurable for all who attended.

The Service contributed to the 'Weeks of Action' in Harrow working alongside the Police, Licensing, Environmental Health, Community Safety teams and other colleagues within the Council. Officers conducted compliance checks on local businesses across all areas including knife sales, vapes, counterfeit products.

Another key priority for the Service was to prevent children from accessing age-restricted products. The Service provided training and advice to businesses selling age restricted products both online and in-store. Throughout the year, Enforcement Officers ran several test purchase operations whereby child volunteers were employed to test business processes and ensure compliance in the sale of knives, vapes, cigarettes, alcohol, solvents and butane.

This year, the Service had conducted 61 visits using child volunteers. 30 were carried out in Brent and 31 in Harrow. 83.61% of businesses tested did not sell to children, 4 were prosecuted and the remainder were giving warnings or a caution.

The Service operated a Responsible Trader Scheme, which provided guidance to assist businesses with the training of their staff regarding age restricted products. The Scheme promoted best practice and allowed businesses to demonstrate a commitment to protecting young people in the borough. The training pack provides advice on a whole range of age restricted products including knives, vapes and corrosive substances. 34 Businesses were visited concerning the Responsible Trader Scheme.

13 visits targeting retailers of knives in Brent & Harrow (5 Brent and 8 Harrow) were carried out as part of Operation Sceptre, the national initiative led by UK police forces to combat knife-related violence. Officers focused on educating businesses on safe storage and display of knives so they cannot be stolen or used as a weapon against staff or someone else.

A total of 36 businesses had been visited during this reporting period with 21 in Brent and 16 in Harrow. Some of these visits included the use of a tobacco sniffer dog to find hidden tobacco and conduct thorough searches.

The Service continued to pro-actively conduct online audits of letting agents advertising rental services as well as responding to complaints. The websites of 50 agents (22 in Brent and 28 in Harrow) were examined and issued 10 Notices of Intent (NOI) to issue monetary penalties. 5 of the NOIs issued resulted in a monetary penalty amounting to £9,550.

A total of 11 businesses across both boroughs had been visited and 26 weighing instruments were tested (9 in Harrow and 19 in Brent) by our inspectors. 8 weighing scales were found in use without initial verification (3 in Harrow and 5 in Brent) however, they weighed accurately and short measure was not an issue.

The Service was intelligence-led and had focused resources around high-risk and most complained-about businesses, from used car dealers and cosmetic importers to small convenience shops. Officers had conducted compliance visits, provided detailed advice and information to 56 of these businesses (25 in Harrow and 31 in Brent) and facilitated refunds, much to the gratitude of the consumers.

Officers secured a refund of £1,500 from a used car dealer in Harrow and £7,300 from another in Brent following complaints received around false and restrictive statements on receipts/invoices, vehicle descriptions and vehicle quality. In October 2024, a used car dealer pleaded guilty to car clocking and was fined over £5,000 and made to pay £17,500 to the victim.

The Service was set to deliver a rapid response service to residents to prevent, disrupt, and deter doorstep criminals. This financial year officers saved residents a total of £37,000 (£9,000 in Brent and £28,000 in Harrow). The Service continued to receive complaints about building and renovation services which will be investigated further.

The team had officers who were Friends Against Scam 'SCAM Champions' and provided training on how to support and reduce the chances of being a scam victim.

- A total of 4 Confiscation Orders - totalling £301,502
- 3 Restraint Orders granted on assets
- 29 Production Orders
- 2 International Letters of Request granted to establish the individuals behind an overseas corporation and associated business activities

The team had recently recruited two Investigation Officers.

Comments were then sought on the update provided, with the following issues raised:

- Members noted that there were a team of 6 Enforcement Officers spread across both boroughs and asked if cases that were not prioritised returned. Members were informed that the team maintained a rolling spreadsheet of the most complained about traders and assessed this regularly.

- Members queried what Primary Authority was. It was explained that this was when a business approached the Service for advice, audit and support and was a cost recovery service.
- Clarity was sought on whether there was a planned follow up regarding the single use vapes. Anu Prashar said that there would be a follow up on single use vapes following any complaints.
- Members asked whether the responsibility of recalling the neck massager, as mentioned in the report, would lie with Amazon as the selling platform or trader. Anu Prashar advised that the Service would establish where it was bought from and deal with the trader but also work with Amazon to take it down from their website. When purchasing an item, the contract of purchase was with the trader and not the platform.
- Members noted that there was a case in February 2025 in Wembley where tobacco was successfully confiscated from a trader and asked how the news was being disseminated to raise awareness. Members noted that the Service was working with the communications department of Brent Council to get a press release out. The matter was publicised in local business news and news had spread amongst local shop keepers.

With no further comments raised the Chair thanked officers for the update provided and it was **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

8. Knife Crime proposals regarding age verification checks

The Senior Regulatory Service Manager for Trading Services presented an overview of the report that provided Members with information regarding proposals to implement age verification checks and to seek control of the doorstep dropping of knives and bladed articles to greater protect young people from knife crime.

In terms of the process outlined members were advised that a stringent 2-step system would be mandated for all retailers selling knives online requiring customers to submit photo ID at point of sale and again on delivery. In addition, delivery companies would only be able to deliver a bladed article to the same person who purchased it.

Under the proposed new measures, a person may need to submit a copy of a photo ID, such as a driving licence or passport, as well as proof of address, such as a utility bill before showing ID again when the package was delivered. This could also include a person submitting a current photo or video of themselves to an online retailer alongside their ID. It would also be illegal to leave a package containing a bladed weapon on a doorstep when no one was available to receive it.

The raft of measures being referred to were known as 'Ronan's Law', in tribute to Ronan Kanda, a 16-year-old who was killed in 2022 by a teenager carrying a 22-inch 'ninja blade' purchased online.

The new rules followed a spate of incidents involving knives, including the Southport attack in which the perpetrator used a knife purchased on Amazon to commit his attack.

The Crime and Policing Bill 2025, which was introduced in the House of Commons on the 25 February 2025 would increase the maximum prison sentence for selling weapons to under-18s from two months to up to two years. That could apply either to an individual who had processed the sale or the Chief Executive of a company – giving online marketplaces an added incentive to take their responsibilities seriously.

The Government had previously announced that they would hold social media executives to account for knife crime related content which glorified and incited violence amongst young people. Senior executives of social media companies would also face significant fines in the region of £10,000 for failing to swiftly remove knife crime related content from their platforms.

Comments were then sought on the update provided, with the following issues raised:

- Complaints about knives to the service remained relatively low.
- Members agreed that it was positive that there had been an increase in fines given and asked how to increase test purchases. Anu Prashar replied that each complaint was assessed individually. The Service ensured to sign the company up with the Responsible Trader Scheme and sometimes a visit from the Service was needed.

With no further comments raised the Chair thanked officers for the update provided and it was **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

9. Date of Future Meetings

NOTED the dates for the schedule of meetings agreed between Brent & Harrow for the 2025-26 Municipal Year as follows:

- Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 6pm to be hosted (online) by the London Borough of Harrow
- Thursday 5 March 2026 at 6pm to be hosted (online) by the London Borough of Brent

10. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 6.40 pm).

COUNCILLOR KRUPA SHETH (Chair)