

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
TYNE AND WEAR TRADING STANDARDS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 21 June 2018

PRESENT: Councillor K Dodds (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Foy, T Graham, I Patterson,
Councillor J Perry, Councillor J Blackburn,
Councillor A Wilson, Councillor Nick Kemp,
Councillor M Lawson and Councillor J O'Shea

APOLOGIES: Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor S Graham, Councillor P Lovatt, Councillor D Waller

TW25 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED - That Councillor K Dodds be appointed as Chair for the Municipal Year 2018/19.

TW26 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED - That Councillor J Fletcher be appointed as Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2018/19.

TW27 CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED - That the Constitution of the Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year be noted.

TW28 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 February 2018 be agreed as a correct record subject to it being noted that Councillor J O'Shea was in attendance.

TW29 REPORT AND STATISTICAL RETURN FOR THE QUARTER ENDING MARCH 2018

The Committee received the report for the work of the Joint Metrology Laboratory for the quarter ending March 2018.

The laboratory continues to support the work of the five authorities offering specialist services, equipment and personnel and conducting petrol verifications.

The two students who were trained for their practical and oral examinations at the laboratory have since passed their qualification and been awarded their certificates from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

The laboratory has continued to provide the following services, including:

- Aid and Advice to Industry
- EC Verifications
- UKAS Calibrations
- Toy Safety
- Electrical Safety
- Cigarette Samples

The laboratory has also hosted a tour of licensing committee members from South Tyneside Council. Citizens Advice have also visited the laboratory and have had a pupil from Cardinal Hume on work experience.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

TW30 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT AS AT 31 MARCH 2018

The Committee received an update on the current budget and outturn for 2017/18 and the proposed budget of £351,084 for 2018/19 subject to the Audit of Gateshead's Accounts.

From April 2015 onwards the accounts of the Trading Standards Joint Committee are reviewed as part of the Gateshead Council's Final Accounts process. A loss of approximately £10,000 was reported which will be funded from reserves. It is proposed that the contributions from the 5 constituent authorities remains the same as previous years.

The budget was agreed at £338,000, the increase to £351,000 is due to salary increases.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

TW31 UPDATE ON BUSINESS PLAN

The panel received a verbal update on the work being undertaken to produce a Business Plan for the Metrology Laboratory. Officers have been in discussions with finance and have been looking to identify where there are gaps in the market. Officers have also been looking into extending the scope of the UKAS Calibrations. It is difficult as the market is continually fluctuating.

Officers have discussed with finance capital input for investment in new equipment and are looking at the design and maintenance of the website.

Work is also ongoing on the development of a training programme, currently there are 2 staff on a training programme.

It was suggested that some competitor analysis needs to be done. It was noted that it is being suggested to the Committee that investment needs to be undertaken, however, it was important for the Committee to have some concrete facts and figures to base their decisions on.

It was agreed that a further written draft of a business plan in order that members of the Committee can make comments will be produced for the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED - That the verbal update be noted.

TW32 CODE OF PRACTICE ON PRODUCT SAFETY RECALLS

The Committee were provided with a report to update on developments around the issue of Product Safety Recalls.

The Government on 21 January 2018 announced the creation of a new national oversight body tasked with identifying consumer risks and managing responses to large-scale product recalls and repairs.

The new Office for Product Safety and Standards is seen as enabling the UK to meet the evolving challenges of product safety by responding to expanding international trade, the growth in online shopping and the increasing rate of product innovation.

The Government has promised to continue to work with stakeholders such as consumer groups, manufacturers and retailers to ensure the office coordinates the UK's product safety regime as effectively as possible.

This will not lessen any of the legal responsibilities that sit with manufacturers, importers and retailers to present safe products to the market, and to take rapid effective action when safety issues arise with their protocols.

One of the key actions identified as part of the government's response to the working group is to; work with the British Standards Institute to provide guidance on product recalls and corrective action.

Officers from across the region attended a training event on the new Code of Practice which was hosted by the Office of Product Safety and Standards in Newcastle in April.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

TW33 SCAMS AWARENESS MONTH 2018

The Committee received a report on the work undertaken as part of Scams Awareness Month which took place in June 2018.

Scams Awareness Month takes place each year and aims to create a network of confident, alert consumers who 'don't miss a trick' when it comes to scams. It is a true partnership event between Citizens Advice, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and the local authority Trading Standards services.

Whether you are an individual consumer looking to protect your family from scams or an organisation or group representing consumers, all such efforts during Scams Awareness Month in June 2018 are important.

There are a number of types of scams which people can fall victim to including; online scams, mail and phone scams, employment scams, investment scams, pension scams and property fraud scams.

There are a number of organisations who offer help and advice on both how to protect yourself from scams and what to do if you have been the victim of a scam.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

TW34 TRADING STANDARDS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE TENANTS FEES BILL 2017-2019

A report was presented to Committee to provide an update on the proposed role of Trading Standards services under the Tenants Fees Bill.

During the Queen's Speech 2017, the Government announced an intention to bring forward a Draft Tenants Fees Bill to tackle "unfair fees on tenants" and "make the private rental market more affordable and competitive". The Tenants Fees Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons on the 21 May 2018.

Other action the Government is involved with includes:

- A new requirement for all landlords to be members of a redress scheme to give tenants easier access to dispute resolution
- A new requirement for all letting agents to be registered and members of a client money protection scheme
- The introduction of banning orders and a database of rogue landlords and agents
- Consultation on the benefits and barriers of longer tenancies in private rented sector

This has been welcomed by consumer organisations and housing charities such as Shelter, Which and Citizens Advice, however, organisations such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA), the Residential Landlords Association (RLA)

and the National Landlords Association (NLA) whilst expressing support for the wider regulation of lettings/managing agents to drive up standards, do not support the abolition of letting agent fees.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

Chair.....