

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

Thursday, 16 February 2017

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR K DODDS (CHAIR)

Councillors: M Foy, T Graham, D Duggan, Councillor D Huddart,
Councillor Nick Kemp, Councillor S Lambert, Councillor S Graham,
Councillor J O'Shea, Councillor A West, Councillor J Blackburn,
Councillor J Fletcher, Councillor M Mordey and Councillor A Wilson

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Councillor M Lowson, Councillor A Ellison and
Councillor J Perry

TW27 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 24 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

TW28 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2017/18

The Committee has considered the proposed budget for 2017/18. The salary estimate includes a 1% increase and it has been assumed that current increased income levels will be maintained.

Contributions from the member authorities have been maintained at the same level. Although a reserve in excess of £111,000 has been built up, it is proposed that a business plan should be drawn up spanning the next three years, with proposals for an optimum staffing structure, likely income, equipment and transport requirements, along with an indication of what will be needed from the reserves. It will then be possible to review contributions in the light of this.

RESOLVED - (i) That the latest estimate of £340,869, as set out in appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

(ii) That a business plan be prepared for discussion at the June meeting of the Committee and finalised in time for the October meeting of the Committee to form the basis of future budgets.

TW29 REPORT AND STATISTICAL RETURN FOR THE QUARTER ENDING DECEMBER 2016

The Committee has received an update on the current work of the Metrology Laboratory and the statistical return for the quarter ending December 2016.

In respect of the Metrology Laboratory, the Committee was given its cumulative income to date for 2016/17 against the target for the financial year. The Committee

requested that this information be provided in future quarterly reports.

RESLOVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That future reports include the financial information outlined above.

TW30 REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. ANIMAL WELFARE IN ENGLAND: DOMESTIC PETS

The Committee has received an update on the report by the House of Commons, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee of the review of Animal Welfare in England; Domestic Pets.

The Committee found that there are many flaws in the legislation, from licensing through enforcement and to sale, which lead to inadequate protection of animals. They have focused their recommendations on the need for transparency, traceability and enforcement.

The Committee queried whether local authorities were the most appropriate bodies to have the responsibility for enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act 2016 and suggested that the RSPCA's powers could be extended to cover these. It also stressed the need for the bodies given these responsibilities to be adequately resourced to carry out these duties effectively.

It was also suggested that the regulations should cover the need for dog walkers to be registered to carry out this work.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That a letter be sent to the LGA outlining the Committee's concerns regarding responsibility for the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act 2016 and the funding needed carry out these responsibilities effectively.

TW31 AVIAN FLU UPDATE

The Committee has been advised of the latest developments with the current outbreak of Avian Flu and the Government's response.

Avian Flu controls are enforced by designated officers in Environmental Health and/or Trading Standards services.

Some strains of Avian flu can pass to humans but it is very rare. It usually requires very close contact between humans and infected birds. Based on what is known about the current strain of the Avian Flu, the risk to public health is considered very low. The Food Standards Agency has advised that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

TW32 PROPOSAL TO BAN THE RETAIL SALE OF FIREWORKS

Following a request at its last meeting, the Committee has considered a range of options in order to progress the possibility of introducing a ban on the retail sale of firework.

There was a recent petition signed by 147,702 individuals requesting the Government to look towards banning the retail sale of fireworks. This request received a negative response from the Petitions Committee and Government.

In the light of this petition, the Committee considered that it should send a letter to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy highlighting its concerns regarding the retail sale of fireworks.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That a letter be sent to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy raising its concerns regarding the retail sale of fireworks.

TW33 UPDATE ON THE SAFETY OF BUNK BEDS

The Committee has been advised of the national response to a recent product safety alert concerning the safety of bunk beds.

A bespoke bunk bed manufacturer based in South Yorkshire is being investigated following the tragic death of a seven month old child. The firm ceased trading days after the death on 3 November 2016.

Police and Trading Standards have launched an investigation and a safety warning has been issued for consumers who have purchased the bunk beds from the supplier to stop using the beds as they could strangle children.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted and a further report be received on the conclusion of the above investigation.

TW34 GATESHEAD TO HOST NATIONAL CALL CENTRE FOR CITIZENS ADVICE

The Citizens Advice Service will deliver the consumer service through a small number of local Citizens Advice delivery centres from April 2017 onwards. The transition to the new delivery centres commenced in February.

Gateshead CAB was successful in its application to host one of the large call centres and training has commenced with advisers going live on 13 February 2017. The call centre is being hosted in Gateshead Civic Centre.

The Committee was advised that Gateshead councillors would be receiving a

briefing on this matter and this would also be circulated to all members of the Committee.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That a visit to the call centre in Gateshead Civic Centre be arranged prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

TW35 REPORT OF THE NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE: PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM SCAMS, UNFAIR TRADING AND UNSAFE GOODS

The National Audit Office (NAO) on 15 December 2016 issued a report on its review of the Consumer Landscape. It is a report to the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which will respond in due course.

The recommendations in the report are formulated to build on the work that BEIS and the consumer protection delivery bodies have done since the last NAO review in 2001. They are aimed at promoting greater system coherence across central government departments and local government. Many of the recommendations fall under the responsibility of the BEIS but can be taken by the Consumer Protection Partnership where relevant.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

TW36 UPDATE ON THE SAFETY OF NITROUS OXIDE

The Committee has been advised of the latest developments with the marketing of and alleged abuse with the supply of products containing Nitrous Oxide.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

TW37 UNITED KINGDOM ACCREDITATION SERVICE AUDIT 2017

The Committee has been advised of the latest audit of the Metrology Laboratory by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

The audit covered:

- Mass calibrations from 0.5mg to 25kg at four accuracy levels to ISO17025.
- Mechanical and Physical toy testing to EN71, Part 1 and ISO17025.
- Flexible scope applied to testing in accordance with UKAS Lab 39

The Laboratory has maintained its accredited status for the first two activities. UKAS implied that they were nervous about laboratories having flexible scope due to a perceived lack of control by them and tried to encourage the Metrology Laboratory to surrender that part of the accreditation. The Committee supported the continuation of this work by the Laboratory.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That the continuation of the flexible scope work by the Metrology Laboratory be approved.