

Safer City Partnership Strategy Group
Thursday 8 June 2015

Public Protection Service (Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards) update

Economic Crime – The City of London Trading Standards Service working in partnership

- The City of London Trading Standards Service is continuing with two large investigations: Operation Addams and Operation Curie, with the assistance of the City of London Police, the Metropolitan Police and the Tri-Regional Scambusters Team. A third investigation, Operation Wade has been reviewed and will not be continued. The investigations are into the fraudulent selling of alternative investment commodities such as diamonds, gold, wine and carbon credits. There are still over 500 victims involved and more than £1 million in consumer detriment, but the team anticipates a decision on charging in respect of Operation Addams by June and arrests in respect of Operation Curie soon afterwards.
- Rosa, a proactive initiative targeting criminality associated with Mail Forwarding Businesses across Greater London has now ceased, as no further funding was made available by the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB). However the NTSB is still considering the most appropriate way forward to deal with the criminality associated with Mail Forwarding Businesses nationally.
- The City's Trading Standards Service is continuing to take part in Operation Broadway, a joint operation with the City of London Police, the Metropolitan Police, National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, the Financial Conduct Authority and HM Revenue and Customs.
- This operation is addressing the problem of "boiler rooms" that perpetrate these frauds and which are based at serviced and virtual offices across within the City of London. The operation is now being rolled out into other areas of London which experience this type of criminality. The operation continues to be successful to date, and a full report was submitted to the Port Health & Environmental Services and will go to the Police Committee on 26 February.
- On 19 March Operation Broadway held a Day of Action, with all agencies involved, to raise awareness of this issue and identify and disrupt fraudulent activity. Joint visits were made to the premises that had attracted most complaints to gather further intelligence, and speak to building owners/landlords/serviced or virtual office managers and boiler room staff. Leaflets were distributed at identified transport hubs and outside offices which host fraudulent activity. 165 intelligence checks were conducted and a large amount of information obtained, identifying virtual squatters and previously unknown suspected boiler rooms (further disruption activity will follow). The event received national coverage on ITV news, radio and in the press.
- The Day of Action was judged to be a success by all agencies involved and it is planned to repeat the exercise in September 2015.

Street Trading

- No further Street trading licences have been issued for temporary trading and there appears to be limited demand for this facility at present as foreseen in the City Street Trading Policy. We currently have one application for an ice cream van to trade during the London Marathon
- There is still very limited street trading activity in City, mainly ad hoc occasional nut sellers on the south side London Bridge/Millennium Bridge. Ice Cream vans have been sighted on London Bridge at weekends where they are positioned for a 'quick get-away' to avoid enforcement action. A limited joint operation with City Licensing team and City Police will take place on Friday March 27 in this location. Further joint operations will be planned dependent on intelligence received on activity within the City.

Late Night Levy

- The Levy came into effect on 1 October 2014. 70% of levy goes to City of London Police for activities involving improving the impact of Licensing on the night time economy, and 30% to the City Corporation.
- To date the Levy has raised £150K (including March invoices. Most renewals of fees (and hence raising of levy) occur in August through to September.
- A report to Licensing Committee has been requested after six months of operation on 6 May 2015, and accounts will be the subject of public report after a year - October 2015.

Safety Thirst

- Applications for 2015/16 will be invited from April 7 2015 to 30 June 2015. It is anticipated that the large majority of assessments will be completed by the end of August with a contingency for any necessary revisits/late applicants in September. The awards date will remain at the beginning of October 2015.
- Application forms are being tailored to particular premises. Certain criteria applicable to night clubs will clearly not be applicable to a supermarket. This will make the application form easier to complete and assist granting awards for different types of premises such as pubs, hotels and restaurants comparing like with like.
- The criteria for passing the award are also in the process of being re-assessed. This will assist in introducing different grades of premises award. The likely grades being a pass (which will also meet the requirements for a 30% reduction in the late night levy), commended, highly commended and an award for the best premises if sufficient in any given category.
- Assessment criteria are also being prepared to help officers considering whether a particular premises meets the safety thirst requirements. This will speed up the inspection process and make it easier for a wider range of officers to carry out the inspections in a uniform and consistent manner. The same criteria will be made available for the applicants.

- It is proposed that the Licensing Service within Markets and Consumer Protection takes responsibility for the management and administration of the scheme. As it is not a statutory function, the funding will need to be transferred from the Community Safety Team to enable the scheme to continue, although it may possible to cover some expenditure from the Late Night Levy. The cost is estimated to be approximately £10,000, but this will be calculated more accurately based on the resources deployed this year.

Noise Service

- The Pollution Team dealt with 62 noise complaints between February and March 2015 of which 95.5% were resolved. In addition, they also assessed and commented on 199 Planning, Licensing and construction works applications and 135 applications for variations of work outside the normal working hours.
- The Out of Hours Service dealt with 69 complaints in February to end of March and response (visit) times were within the target performance indicator of 60 minutes in 90% of cases, and often only 30 minutes.
- Further noise nuisance service training to maintain competency in line with Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) guidelines is being planned in the next business year for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and for Street Environment Officers (SEOs) from the Department for the Built Environment (DBE) who have provided first response for the City noise and other environmental concerns outside usual office hours since April 2014. Further training on powers delegated to officers by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is anticipated which will also be made available to City Police Licensing Team.
- The Safer City Partnership will facilitate the City's response to the new 'Community Trigger' under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act which can be sought by individuals affected by repeated incidents, and the Pollution Team will be represented on the panel considering case reviews as they arise. To date the powers have not been needed or invoked.

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7 April 2015