

The recent initiative by the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC) and Tax Administration Jamaica (TAJ), to collect unpaid Trade Licence fees in the Downtown Kingston District, has begun to reap rewards.

Mayor of Kingston, Councillor Angela Brown-Burke, informed a meeting of the Council on September 11, that in the first week, approximately \$1.5 million was collected by the TAJ. This is in contrast to the just over \$260,000 collected in the month of July.

On September 3, the KSAC and TAJ partnered in a bid to increase the collection of trade licence fees from the current \$10 million per year to \$75 million. Teams from both entities began a street by street assessment of businesses in the area to determine their state of compliance.

“So far the response is positive. Assessments are currently underway and our team will be working assiduously to ensure compliance over the next weeks or months if required,” Mayor Brown-Burke reported.

The Mayor said she has drafted a letter to be sent to the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ), Jamaica Manufacturers Association (JMA), Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC) and the Chinese Benevolent Society (CBA), asking for their assistance in educating members on some worrying issues that the assessment team has found.

“We have found individuals who are wholesalers and retailers and who pay the wholesale fee of \$1,000 and think this is enough. That is not sufficient. As retailers, the fee is \$5, 000,” the Mayor informed.

She reported too, that there were persons who operate businesses from several locations while paying for only one of them, which is insufficient; and individuals who register one company, while trading elsewhere under different business names and not paying for them.

She also noted that there were several companies not registered with the Companies Office

of Jamaica, while some which were compliant, flouted the law by not publicly displaying their licence as is required.

Mayor Brown-Burke said the team will be revisiting companies that were non-compliant to see if their status has changed, as promised.

“We are talking nicely and we are seeking co-operation, because that is how we believe we need to do it. If these efforts don’t result in all of our companies complying, then we will move on and we will bring the full brunt of the law,” she pointed out.

“We are not averse, and certainly that is where we are going if we don’t get the co-operation, to talk openly about those companies by name that are not compliant, because we want Jamaicans to understand that by shopping in non compliant stores and companies, they are also helping to undermine our financial ability to do as much as we can in their interest,” Mayor Brown-Burke said.

Currently, the Trade Licence fee is set at a maximum of \$5,000 for larger companies and the penalty for non-compliance is even lower. Under Section 23 of the Trade Licence Act, “if a person carries on a trade or business... without having, within the time prescribed, taken out the licence herein provided, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding two dollars for every day on which, while unlicensed, he carries on such trade or business...”