



ARTICLE NO: 1D

**COPORATE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

MEMBERS UPDATE 2011/12

Article of: Director of People and Places

Issue: 1

Relevant Head of Service: Assistant Director Community Services

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Fowler

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

1.1 To inform Members about the new National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and the Council's implementation of the scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will recall that in November 2010, Council approval was given to the implementation of the new National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in West Lancashire.

2.2 Members were also advised of the Council's successful bid to the Food Standards Agency for some financial assistance to implement the scheme.

2.3 The National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is a Local Authority / Food Standards Agency partnership initiative which covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.4 It has been designed to provide consumers with information about hygiene standards in food premises, so as to allow them to make informed choices about the places where they eat out or from which they purchase food.

2.5 It is also seen as a means of encouraging businesses to improve their hygiene standards.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 The scheme has now been successfully implemented in West Lancashire, having gone 'live' on 1 June 2011.

3.2 There are 762 establishments currently listed on the scheme for West Lancashire, with a further 53 premises being excluded due to the type of business. Such businesses include manufacturers, primary producers, etc.

3.3 By using this Council's website and that of the food Standards Agency, members of the public and businesses are now able to check food businesses in West Lancashire, and in other council areas participating in the scheme, to easily see for themselves the standard of food hygiene found at a wide range of food premises.

3.4 Local publicity of the scheme has been provided to increase public awareness of the new scheme in West Lancashire and to help the public's access to the scheme through both this Council's website and that of the Food Standards Agency.

3.5 This Council has worked closely with other local authorities in Lancashire to ensure the scheme went live on the same day to ensure a consistent approach across the county. A regional launch event was organised on 1 June 2011 in the Ribble Valley area where representatives of Environmental Health Lancashire joined with the Chairman of the Food Standards Agency in launching and further publicising the scheme in the different local authorities in Lancashire.

3.6 In addition, at a local level, the Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Health and the Assistant Director Community Services launched the new scheme by presenting a local butchers company with their Rating of 5 Certificate.

3.7 Premises such as restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, supermarkets and other retail food outlets, as well as any other business where consumers can eat or buy food, have been given a hygiene rating as part of the scheme.

3.8 The scheme has six different hygiene ratings (from 0-5), where the top rating represents a very good level of compliance with legal requirements so that all businesses can achieve this. The rating given will reflect the findings from the most recent food hygiene inspection of the premises to show how closely the business is meeting the requirements of food hygiene law. The higher the score, the better the standard of compliance. The rating itself, is based on the numerical scores for three elements of the existing Intervention Rating Scheme, which is used to rate how frequently a premises should receive an inspection or other intervention. The three elements relate to:

- Compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures;
- Compliance with structural requirements; and

- Confidence in management / control procedures.

3.9 Ratings for all businesses included in the scheme are now being published on a national website, and businesses will be encouraged to display them at their premises. The 762 establishments in the scheme are broken down into the following rating groups:

- 4 premises with a Rating of 0 (Urgent improvement necessary)
- 49 premises with a Rating of 1 (Major improvement necessary)
- 29 premises with a Rating of 2 (Improvement necessary)
- 262 premises with a Rating of 3 (Generally satisfactory)
- 169 premises with a Rating 4 (Good)
- 172 premises with a Rating 5 (Very good)

3.10 The remaining establishments are awaiting inspection (as they are new premises) or have been exempted due to the low risk type of the business.

3.11 Much preparation work has been undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the information used in the scheme. Letters were sent to all food businesses in West Lancashire in December 2010 to advise them of the scheme and to ask them to check the accuracy of their premises details against those provided to them. This information was processed and our food premises database amended as part of a detailed data cleansing procedure required by the FSA.

3.12 The financial assistance received from the FSA was provided to support the data cleansing process and communications with businesses. The Council could receive up to £8,233 once all claims, etc. have been processed through the FSA.

3.13 Once the data cleansing process was concluded, all food businesses were informed of the proposed rating for their premises. This provided businesses with a further opportunity to resolve any remaining issues on any inaccuracies.

3.14 Following this, a certificate of the business's rating were provided to businesses prior to the launch.

3.15 Ratings for businesses will be regularly updated following future food hygiene inspections of their premises by the Council's Food Safety Service.

3.16 It is anticipated that businesses will want to improve their rating in order to encourage the demand for their services. Indeed, this has very much been the case since businesses were informed of their rating.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

4.1 Implementation of the NFHRS in West Lancashire will benefit consumers, where the scheme will help them make informed choices about where to eat or buy food and they will be able to easily compare one business with another within their own area and more widely.

- 4.2 The scheme will also benefit businesses, by providing an incentive for them to improve standards and do better than their competitors – good food hygiene ratings will be good for business whilst poor food hygiene ratings may make their customers think twice.
- 4.3 Implementation of the scheme will therefore have significant implications in working towards improving the health of the local communities within West Lancashire

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All of the work to implement the scheme has been met from existing resources and using the financial assistance received from the FSA
- 5.2 In the future, it is difficult to predict what other impacts the scheme will have on current resources. There is a possibility that establishments with a low score will wish to be revisited to improve their score rating. In the short term this could increase the workload but over the long term it should mean that establishments won't need to be visited as often if quality is improved. Such re-rating visits are outside Local Authorities' existing planned intervention programmes.
- 5.3 However, the Agency is aware of this and is committed to keeping this under close review and to revising the procedure as necessary to ensure that it does not compromise public health protection. It is anticipated, however, that existing resources will be sufficient to run the scheme.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The scheme will present consumers with easy to use information on food hygiene standards when eating out or shopping for food, and will provide a level playing field for businesses.
- 6.2 By being part of a single scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it will help to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries.
- 6.3 The scheme will encourage the raising of standards in food businesses and in doing so also contribute to reducing foodborne illness on a local and a national level.
- 6.4 Implementation of the new National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is seen as an important means of improving health and wellbeing outcomes in West Lancashire

None

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does have a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required.

The Equality Impact Assessment is attached as an appendix to this report.

The Assessment indicates that there is no adverse effect on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1

Equality impact assessment

Question 1

Using information that you have gathered from service monitoring, surveys, consultation, and other sources such as anecdotal information fed back by members of staff, in your opinion, could your service/policy/strategy/decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy) disadvantage, or have a potentially disproportionately negative effect on, any of the following groups of people:

- People of different ages – including young and older people
- People with a disability
- People of different races/ethnicities/nationalities
- Men
- Women
- People of different religions/beliefs
- People of different sexual orientations
- People who are or have identified as transgender
- People who are married or in a civil partnership
- Women who are pregnant or on maternity leave or men whose partners are pregnant or on maternity leave
- People living in areas of deprivation or who are financially disadvantaged

No, there is no adverse effect.

Potentially, there could be an adverse effect on non-English speaking food business operators and their ability to get higher scores in the Scheme. However, this Council and the Food Standards Agency have provided suitable guidance in a range of languages to help and support businesses to comply with food safety legislation and produce safe food. Therefore, such businesses are able to achieve the higher Rating score in the Scheme.

Question 2

What sources of information have you used to come to this decision?

Guidance documents, leaflets and booklets published by the Food Standards Agency, relating to food safety issues.

Question 3

How have you tried to involve people/groups in developing your service/policy/strategy or in making your decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy)?

The Food Standards Agency has involved a range of groups in developing their guidance on food safety matters, which is used for a range of communities on a national basis.

Question 4

Could your service/policy/strategy or decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy) help or hamper our ability to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010? Duties are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity (removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting the needs of people)
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

No. The actions detailed in this report aim to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, as well as with food safety legislation and national best practice guidance.

Question 5

What actions will you take to address any issues raised in your answers above?

Through the Food Standards Agency, this Council will continue to provide suitable guidance in a range of languages to help and support businesses to comply with food safety legislation and produce safe food.