

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) (Introduced by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods)	Executive Cabinet	14 August 2008

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE – EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To advise and update Members of changes in the national guidance and codes of practice for meeting the Councils statutory obligation to provide a food safety service and to inform Members of the results of a recent external audit undertaken by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) of the Councils food safety service.

RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report relating to the FSA audit of the Councils food safety service and approve the proposed Food Hygiene Intervention Programme in the light of revised national guidance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The Council is statutorily obliged to provide a food safety service under the terms of the Food Safety Act 1990 to ensure that food businesses in the Chorley area comply with relevant food safety legislation. This includes work in the following areas:
 - Food safety inspections
 - Food poisoning investigations
 - Complaints relating to foodstuffs
 - Complaints about food premises
 - Providing advice and guidance on food safety compliance
- In addition the Council undertakes a number of initiatives to raise food safety awareness with both business and citizens including the Recipe4Health award, Safer Food Better Business coaching sessions and a quarterly Food Safety newsletter to food businesses.
- Nationally the food safety agenda is overseen by a Government agency, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), who drafts legislation, issue guidance and direct Local Authorities on food safety service provision by the publication of national Codes of Practice.
- The Councils food safety service was subject to an external audit by the FSA in May 2008 and the final report and action plan **is available** for viewing on the Council's website

through the link shown on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting. Overall the Council's service provision in this area was deemed to be effective and comprehensive and the short action plan that has been produced relates mainly to procedural improvements which have been implemented on the advice of the FSA.

7. The FSA published revised Codes of Practice earlier this year relating to the food premises inspection programme which effectively permits local authorities to reduce the burden of inspection on low risk food business and replace it with alternative interventions such as providing advice and information, surveillance (food sampling) and targeted visits to support business.
8. A Food Hygiene Intervention Programme has been produced and **is available** for viewing on the Council's website through the link shown on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting. It sets out the proposed intervention strategy the Council should adopt in the food safety service area.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

(If the recommendations are accepted)

9. To meet the Food Standards Agency governance and reporting requirements for local authority food safety services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10. None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

11. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	√
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	√

BACKGROUND

12. There are currently about 850 premises in the Chorley area that are subject to a regular full inspection of food safety standards on a frequency that is determined by a risk based scoring approach. The risk rating profile of these premises currently requires around 450 full food safety inspections to be undertaken each year.
13. The FSA has statutory powers to audit local authority food safety services and where poor performance is identified direct changes and improvements or in some circumstances where significant service failure is identified, take over the service provision.

ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS

14. The FSA's revised Code of Practice on Food Safety Services enables the lowest risk premises to receive an alternative intervention to inspection that will have the effect of releasing resource to deal in greater depth with non-compliant and high-risk food business. In the case of Chorley Council this means that currently around 220 businesses (lowest risk) will no longer receive a full inspection but at least every three years will be subject to an alternative enforcement intervention such as a sampling visit, an inspection targeting a particular process or issue at the premises, or a questionnaire to determine the current status of the business. Officers will determine the most appropriate intervention based on historical information regarding the business and the type of food stored, prepared or sold by the business.

NEW NATIONAL INDICATOR

15. Members will be aware of the new national performance indicator set. NI 184 is a new indicator that requires the Council to measure the number of food businesses within its area that are 'broadly compliant' with statutory food safety requirements. The scoring mechanism used to risk rate business for inspection frequency purposes includes scoring parameters that assess compliance. These scores will be used to monitor and report on the indicator NI 184. The target set for 2008/9 is 75%. The redirection of resources that is enabled by the alternative intervention strategy described above will ensure officer time is directed to those 25% businesses that need to be brought up to the broadly compliant standard and target those businesses where their compliance score can be improved.

FSA AUDIT

16. In May 2008 the Councils Food Safety service was subject to a 3-day external audit by the FSA. The audit team were impressed with the service provided and noted examples of best practice in relation to the ISO 9001:2000 accredited documented quality system and officer competency matrix. The report highlights areas for improvement and these are detailed in the action plan, which forms part of the report. All recommended actions have either been implemented or are timetabled for action at the appropriate time. The key actions identified were:
- An annual report on food safety activity to Members with a regular update on performance of the service.
 - Minor administrative changes to the authorisation procedure for food safety officers.
 - Strengthening the link between officer competency requirements and their training requirements.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

17. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	x

ISHBEL MURRAY
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (NEIGHBOURHOODS)

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
S Clark	5732	24 July 2008	Food0808

Background Papers

Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Food Standards Agency's report on arrangements for food premises database management, food hygiene inspections and internal monitoring.	13 – 14 May 2008	---	Members' Room, Town Hall, Chorley
Food Hygiene Intervention Programme	July 2008	---	Members'.Room