

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: FOOD HYGIENE INFORMATION SCHEME.	
From: HEAD OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES		
Date: 30 OCTOBER 2012	Ref: CM/ GC1	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval of the proposed implementation of the national Food Hygiene Information Scheme initiative.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) is an initiative developed by the Food Standards Agency Scotland in conjunction with consumer organisations, local authorities and the private sector. Consumer Focus Scotland have been particularly active in campaigning for the introduction of the FHIS throughout Scotland. Their research clearly shows that members of the public want to know how hygienic local food businesses actually are but in a format which is easily understandable.
- 2.2 North Lanarkshire Council has already been operating a similar scheme known as Surf4fooD. This has been an extremely successful initiative which was recognised nationally as an example of good practice in Local Government. It is proposed to proceed and adopt the FHIS format but retain some key features of Surf4fooD such as publishing all inspection reports on the relevant website. This effectively provides a "hybrid" option which combines the best features of both systems.
- 2.3 The aim of the Food Standards Agency (Scotland) is to try and seek agreement of all local Authorities within Scotland to participate in the scheme before the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Subject to committee approval, it is hoped to have the scheme fully operational throughout North Lanarkshire by the end of 2013.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 The scheme will –

- provide a better system enabling members of the public to be able to make more informed choices about where they eat out and shop for food.
- provide an efficient system whereby those seeking information on a Freedom of Information basis regarding hygiene standards in food premises can be simply referred to the FHIS database.
- provide a major incentive to food businesses to ensure that they are complying with the law and meeting relevant food safety standards.

3.2 It is designed to give straightforward, user friendly information about how each food outlet fared at it's last inspection by officers from the Business Regulation Service. This information is provided in the form of a certificate which is normally displayed at the premises. In addition relevant information is also contained within the FHIS web site which contains details of premises throughout Scotland.

3.3 There are three ratings for food premises included in the scheme -

- Pass
- Improvement Required
- Awaiting Inspection

A "Pass" indicates that the business broadly meets relevant legal requirements. These requirements include the conditions found and the management procedures in place for providing safe food at the time of inspection by an enforcement officer.

A food business will be rated "Improvement Required" where it has failed to meet these legal requirements.

Premises "Awaiting Inspection" will be new premises which have still to receive their first routine inspection.

3.4 Relevant ratings will all be published on the FHIS web site. However, so far as the certificates are concerned it is not currently a statutory requirement to display them on the premises. Clearly those premises achieving a "Pass" rating will wish to prominently display the certificate whilst those with an "Improvement Required" rating will probably not wish to do so. Members of the public will doubtless draw their own conclusions in regard to food premises not displaying a certificate.

3.5 Where premises fail to achieve a satisfactory standard in terms of the scheme there is provision for them to be re-inspected within 7 days. If they now achieve a satisfactory standard then they will be re-assessed to a "Pass" rating. Provision is also made in the scheme for the Council to set up a review process where traders can appeal against the award of an "Improvement Required" rating. There is also a "right to reply" facility whereby food businesses owners can request to have narrative published on the web site regarding the inspection outcome. The Council has the right to refuse to publish or edit the narrative where it is believed that it is inaccurate, abusive or offensive.

3.6 Members should also be aware that there is provision for certain types of premises to be exempt from the scheme. It is anticipated that nearly all premises classified as catering establishments will be included, as will retail establishments selling high risk foods, e.g. butchers, supermarkets, fishmongers, bakeries. However, low risk premises such as where wrapped foods are the only food may be exempt although provision can be made to include them if this is the preferred option of the trader.

3.7 Subject to approval it is intended to proceed with work necessary to implement the scheme within the deadline of December 2013. A key part of this work will include keeping local businesses and the public fully informed about the scheme.

3.8 In summary it is anticipated that the scheme will act as an incentive to food businesses to ensure that they comply with food safety standards and that it will also assist the public in deciding where they wish to eat or buy food. It is believed that the achievement of both of these outcomes will ensure that the scheme receives a positive response from the public and responsible food businesses.

4. Financial Implications

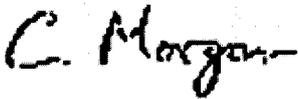
- 4.1 The Food Standards Agency have agreed to provide funding of up to £30,000 to met all expenses incurred as a result of setting up the scheme. It is considered that this will be sufficient to meet all likely costs and therefore there will be no financial implications for the Council in agreeing to proceed with this proposal.

5. Corporate Considerations

- 5.1 The recommendations are consistent with policy and there are no personnel, legal or property implications in the report.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That Members approve the proposal to implement the national Food Hygiene Information Scheme initiative.



**C MORGAN
HEAD OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Gordon Cunningham, Business Regulation Manager on 01236 856459.