

Committee: Joint Regulatory Committee

Date: 9th February 2016

Wards: All

Subject: The Food Hygiene Rating System

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director for Environment and Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Judy Saunders, Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking (LB Merton); Cllr Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Community and Culture (LB Merton), Cllr Pamela Fleming, Strategic Cabinet Member for Environment, Business and Community (LB Richmond – Chair); Cllr Rita Palmer (LB Richmond)

Contact officer: Paul Foster, Head of the Regulatory Services Partnership

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members to note and comment on the report.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To inform members of the current position with regard to the national Food Hygiene Rating System.

2. DETAIL

2.1 The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is a key public health measure which helps consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving them information about the hygiene standards in food premises at the time we inspect them to check compliance with legal requirements – this transparency drives improvement in business standards and the aim is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness (1 million cases annually in the UK with 20,000 hospitalisations and 500 deaths with an associated cost to the economy of £1.9 billion).

2.2 The scheme is already running or about to launch in 99% of local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.3 Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, hospitals, schools and other places people eat away from home, as well as supermarkets and other retail outlets, are given a hygiene rating of between '0' (urgent improvement necessary) at the bottom to '5' (very good) at the top. The hygiene ratings for Richmond, Merton and Wandsworth are listed in Appendix 1.

2.4 Consumers can access ratings at food.gov.uk/ratings or via phone apps, and businesses are encouraged to display stickers showing their rating at their premises.

2.5 How is the scheme integrated with our statutory food law regulatory service?

2.6 The FHRS is based around the planned food hygiene intervention programme we have in place to meet our statutory obligations so additional resources for running it are minimal. It provides information about our service to local people and meets our obligations to be open and transparent. This transparency also provides an effective and more sustainable alternative to formal and costly enforcement action for securing and maintaining compliance. Improved standards and sustained compliance, in turn, means fewer inspections for highly performing businesses and allows us to increase our focus on the poor performers.

2.7 The Food Standard Agency (FSA) is providing support for the FHRS so that on-going costs and the impact on local authority food safety team resources are minimised.

2.8 The scheme will drive market competition more quickly and maintain this more effectively over time such that our intervention programme will increasingly contribute to business growth locally.

2.9 What support does the FSA provide local authorities with to assist in running the scheme?

- It provides a free IT platform (and associated support) for publishing ratings and has a programme of continuous improvement so that it meets local authority needs.
- It provides a range of support materials for on-going operation of the scheme, such as the stickers, so that the impact (including costs) of participation is minimised.
- It has established a 'Priorities Fund' to cover costs if we face unexpectedly high levels of re-visit requests from businesses.
- It organises and funds consistency training for food safety officers and runs workshop events to share and gather information.
- It has developed the FHRS 'Brand Standard' to provide advice and guidance to local authorities on implementation and operation of the scheme.
- It is working with local authorities to promote the FHRS locally and regionally in order to raise public awareness and is promoting the scheme nationally and working with other organisations to find the best ways of making FHRS ratings as widespread as possible

2.10 What's in it for local people and visitors to Richmond?

- The FSA's public attitudes surveys show that food hygiene when eating out and food poisoning are the main concerns that people have about food safety, and the FHRS provides local residents and visitors with important information about hygiene standards in local businesses.
- Telling people about hygiene standards empowers them to make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food and is a very effective way of improving public health protection.

2.13 What's in it for local businesses?

- The FHRS is designed so that all businesses, no matter how small can achieve the top rating by meeting (not exceeding) the legal requirements - there is no gold-plating – and any improvements that businesses need to make to get a higher rating are no more than is already required of them by law.
- It includes safeguards (appeal process, reassessment opportunity when improvements have been made, ‘right to reply’) to ensure fair and equitable treatment.
- Good food hygiene is good for business - the scheme gives recognition and a useful marketing tool to those businesses that meet legal requirements.
- Good food hygiene is good for profits - studies of similar schemes in other countries indicate that businesses achieving the top ratings increase turnover.
- Feedback from businesses has been generally very positive.
- The FHRS will help improve consumer confidence in the market which, in turn, will drive business growth.

2.14 Does a food business have to display its rating?

2.15 Businesses in England and Northern Ireland do not have to display their rating. The situation is different in Wales. Businesses that get a new rating after 28 November 2013, must by law display a sticker showing their rating in a prominent place in all entrances to the premises.

2.16 Legislation would be required in England to make the display mandatory and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Food Standards Agency are currently lobbying parliament for a change in the law.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

None for the purpose of this report.

5. TIMETABLE

None for the purpose of this report.

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix 1 – List of food hygiene ratings for Richmond, Merton & Wandsworth

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None for the purposes of this report

Appendix 1

Authority	Number	Rating ¹	%
Richmond	709	5	53
	351	4	26.2
	157	3	11.7
	36	2	2.7
	81	1	6.1
	4	0	3
Merton	464	5	35.4
	439	4	33.5
	255	3	79.5
	86	2	6.6
	55	1	4.2
	10	0	0.8
Wandsworth	1002	5	51
	453	4	23
	316	3	16
	82	2	4
	99	1	5
	20	0	1

¹ 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = generally satisfactory, 2 = improvement necessary, 1 = major improvement necessary, 0 = urgent improvement necessary

