

# Report

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Report to:	<b>Community Services Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>19 March 2013</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS)</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ advise the Committee of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme; and
- ♦ ask the Committee to approve the adoption of the national scheme for informing consumers on the food hygiene compliance of food businesses by South Lanarkshire Council

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to:-

- (1) approve the proposal to implement the national Food Hygiene Information Scheme; and
- (2) note how the Food Hygiene Information Scheme operates and timescale for implementation.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. South Lanarkshire Council has been operating a similar scheme since April 2007. This has been an extremely successful initiative which generates a lot of traffic on the Council's internet site and has been popular with food business operators. The current scheme has 4 tiers, three stars to zero stars and is based on the level of compliance with certain elements of the risk rating system used for food businesses nationally.
- 3.2. The Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) is an initiative developed by the Food Standards Agency (Scotland) in conjunction with consumer organisations, local authorities and organisations representing food businesses. The aim of the Food Standards Agency (Scotland) is to encourage all local authorities in 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 South Lanarkshire by the end of March 2014.
- 3.3. Subject to committee approval it is proposed to proceed and adopt the FHIS format but retain some key features of South Lanarkshire's current scheme such as publishing all inspection reports via the internet. This effectively provides a "hybrid" option which combines the best features of both systems.

#### **4. Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS)**

- 4.1. It is designed to give straightforward, easily understood information about how each food business fared at its last inspection by officers from Environmental Services. 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. Examples of the 'Pass' and 'Improvement Required' certificates are appended to the report.
- 4.2 There are three ratings for food businesses 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. Significantly, the 'Pass' level requires the food businesses to have remedied all items found at the previous inspection. This will provide food businesses with an incentive to remedy even minor defects and should improve overall levels of compliance.

A food business will be rated "Improvement Required" where it has failed to meet the 'Pass' standard.

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

- 4.3 Relevant ratings will all be published on the FHIS web site and this site will be linked to the South Lanarkshire Council web site. It is not currently a statutory requirement to display the certificates 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 display the certificate. Members of the public will doubtless draw their own conclusions in regard to food premises not displaying a certificate.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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.

- 4.6 Subject to approval it is intended to proceed with work necessary to implement the scheme within the deadline of March 2014. A key part of this work will include keeping local businesses and the public fully informed about the scheme. The Food Standards Agency (Scotland) has been promoting the national FHIS initiative and South Lanarkshire Council will benefit from this ongoing advertising campaign.
- 4.7 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 these outcomes will ensure that the scheme receives a positive response from the public and responsible food businesses.

## **5. Employee Implications**

- 5.1. There are no employee implications relative to this report.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. The Food Standards Agency have agreed to provide funding of up to £13,000 to meet 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.

## **7. Other Implications**

- 7.1. South Lanarkshire Council would be the only local authority in Scotland not to adopt FHIS and would miss out on the benefits of participating in a national consumer information initiative and the associated advertising campaign.

## **8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 8.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no impact assessment is required.
- 8.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report. Subject to approval all food businesses will be advised of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme and officers will be able to discuss the scheme with food business operators during routine inspections.

**Colin McDowall**

**Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)**

19 February 2013

## **Link(s) to Council Values/Objectives**

- Council Value: Accountable, effective and efficient
- Council Priority Objective: Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for growth, improving skills and employability

## **Previous References**

- None.

**List of Background Papers**

- None.

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:- Craig Brown, Environmental Services Manager

Ext: 4403 (01698 454403)

E-mail: [Craig.M.Brown@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:Craig.M.Brown@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)