

REGENERATION COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 August 2014

FOOD SAFETY PRESENTATION

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Summary

This report updates Members on Food Safety and what Regeneration, Community and Culture's Commercial Services Team (which includes the Food and Safety Team and Trading Standards Team) is doing to help protect the public in Medway. The presentation was requested following various reports published in the media, including the Which? Food Hygiene Report in January 2014, which used data published by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to rank local authorities against each other. It also refers briefly to Food Standards due to reference to another report (19th March) that claims meat tests still show retailers are not passing local authority tests.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 This report is for information only and no recommendations are being made

2. Background

2.1 Medway Council is the responsible authority for the enforcement of food safety law within the majority of food premises in Medway. As a unitary authority, the Council is also responsible for the enforcement of food standards and animal feed legislation.

2.2 Enforcement responsibilities are split between two Teams within Commercial Services. Responsibility for food hygiene law enforcement lies with the Food and Safety Team. Responsibility for food standards and feed law enforcement lies with the Trading Standards Team.

2.3 This regulatory function is overseen by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Agency audits local authorities enforcement services to assess their conformance against the Food Law Enforcement Standard. The standard sets out the minimum standards of performance expected from local authorities.

- 2.4 The standard was published by the Agency as part of the Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities.
- 2.5 The FSA annual report, relating to food hygiene inspections undertaken in 2012/13, referred to the position Medway Council was in on 1 April 2013. At this point there were 522 (21.6 %) unrated premises on the database. This data was published in December 2014 by the FSA. The report was subsequently picked up by Which? who published an article on 21 January 2014. Using a performance indicator that combined a number of statutory indicators, including the number of unrated premises, Which? placed Medway amongst the worst performing authorities in the country.
- 2.6 At the time of the Which? publication, the team had reduced the number of unrated premises to 96 (5%). On 1 April 2014, the position from which the next FSA report will be based, Medway's number of unrated was 52 (2.5%). At the end of July 2014, this figure has been further reduced to under 2%.
- 2.7 The Food and Safety Team inspects new food premises, and rates the business according to risk, in accordance with the national Food Law Code of Practice. Inspection frequency is determined by this risk rating, with A being the highest risk (and most frequently inspected), and E being the lowest. Medway prioritises its inspection activity towards high-risk premises (A + B + non-complaint C) and all customer complaints are investigated, triggering inspections and/or revisits, as appropriate. Risk ratings are kept under review and may go up or down as a result of our intervention.
- 2.8 In addition, we aim to deliver enforcement-based interventions to increase overall compliance and improve public safety and confidence of food businesses in Medway.
- 2.9 Since February 2013 Medway has been participating in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) run by the FSA. This allows Medway residents to make a judgment about using a particular premises based on its hygiene rating.
- 2.10 **Species testing** (and wider analytical testing to determine compositional content) is undertaken by Trading Standards. This work is undertaken both proactively (planned, themed work, which includes topics such as Turkey Sampling at Christmas), reactively (whereby we respond to individual complaints) and by our participation in national and regional intelligence focused sampling projects (such as the testing of ham on pizza to ensure the labelling is correct and the product is as described).
- 2.11 The presentation that will be delivered on August 21 to the O&S Committee will primarily focus on food hygiene inspections in food businesses and explain further detail as to the strategy behind, and detail within, the inspection process in Medway.

3. Financial implications

3.1 There are no financial implications as this report is for information

4. Legal implications

4.1 There are no legal implications as this report is for information.

5. Recommendations

5.1 That the contents of this report and the presentation be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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