

	
Decision Session – Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods	17 January 2012
Report from the Assistant Director – Housing and Public Protection	

Adopting the Food Standard Agency’s Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member is being asked to approve moving from the current Score on the Doors food hygiene rating scheme to the Food Standard Agency’s Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Background

2. In December 2007, members gave approval to implement the Scores on the Doors (SOTD) food hygiene scheme.
3. The SOTD scheme was launched in June 2008 and has been a great success.
4. A report to members in February 2010 gave an update on the scheme and the positive impact it was having.
5. In response to this report, members gave their continuing support for the SOTD scheme, and also acknowledged the possibility of moving to a national hygiene rating scheme.
6. Since City of York launched SOTD, the FSA have launched their own scheme - the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). This scheme has been developed following market testing and consultation with stakeholders.
7. FHRS is the flagship policy of the FSA and they are keen that every local authority adopts the scheme in time for the 2012 Olympics.

Differences between the schemes

8. A key difference between the two schemes is that SOTD uses star ratings, whilst FHRS uses a number rating scheme (see Annex A for examples). This approach was developed in response to consumer research.
9. Another key difference is how the premises hygiene rating is calculated. Under FHRS, businesses in York will receive an identical or better rating when compared to the current SOTD scheme.
10. A new feature of FHRS, is that businesses will be able to ask for a re-visit in order to have their premises re-assessed and re-rated. Clearly this is an attractive option for those businesses that are keen to rectify any problems found at an inspection and improve their hygiene rating.
11. The option of a re-visit was not offered when SOTD was launched, due to the potential resource implications. Under FHRS, the FSA have indicated that funding will be available where re-visits impact upon a local authority's ability to deliver their normal service.

Reasons to adopt the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

12. There are four key reasons to adopt FHRS:
 - (i) Across the UK there are currently several different food hygiene schemes in operation.

Having a single national scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will help to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries. This latter point is particularly important for a city such as York, which receives a large number of visitors each year.

The FSA will be running national publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the scheme.

- (ii) Until recently, the Food and Safety Unit paid to be a member of the SOTD scheme, which was run by a private company.

The FSA and the company behind SOTD have recently formed a partnership. One remit of this partnership is to help users of SOTD migrate to FHRS.

- (iii) The scheme is more business friendly, as there is the opportunity to request a revisit and improve the hygiene rating of a premises.
- (iv) A national scheme is also better for businesses with premises across the country and some national chains have pledged their support for FHRS.

Adopting the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

13. To assist local authorities adopt the scheme, the FSA have indicated they will fund for the work that is needed to migrate to FHRS. The grant offered to City of York Council is £16,748.
14. Assuming that agreement is given to adopt FHRS, the following will take place:
 - A letter will be sent to all businesses explaining FHRS and how the move over will take place.
 - The details we hold for businesses will be checked and updated where needed.
 - Near the launch date new certificates and window stickers will be issued.
 - If there are sufficient funds, a launch event will be held for premises with a rating of 5.
15. If migration to FHRS is approved, the intention is to launch the scheme in March 2012.

Consultation

16. No local consultations have been undertaken, as FHRS is considered to be better for consumers and businesses. We have also been running a successful scheme for a couple of

years, so the move to FHRS is not considered to be contentious.

Options

17. The two options are:

- (i) To agree to migrate to FHRS; or
- (ii) To stay with the SOTD scheme and consider moving to FHRS at a later date.

Analysis

18. Adopting FHRS now will have the following advantages:

- (i) York will be part of a national scheme (the FSA anticipate that 95% of local authorities will be using FHRS by the summer of 2012).
- (ii) There is grant funding available to do the work needed to transfer across to FHRS (this funding could be withdrawn at a later date).
- (iii) There is no annual fee for using FHRS.
- (iv) FHRS is more business friendly (eg it allows for re-visits)
- (v) FHRS is better for consumers if there is a single, consistent, national scheme.

19. Not adopting the scheme will have the following implications:

- (i) There is unlikely to be grant funding to cover the cost of migrating to FHRS in the future.
- (ii) We will be one of the few councils not using FHRS.

Council Plan

20. Adopting FHRS supports the council priority - Create Jobs and Improve the Economy.

Implications

(a) Financial

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no financial implications.

(b) Human Resources (HR)

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no HR implications.

(c) Equalities

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no equalities implications.

(d) Legal

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no legal implications.

(e) Crime and Disorder

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no crime and disorder implications.

(f) Information Technology (IT)

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no IT implications.

(g) Property

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no property implications.

(h) Other

If the recommendations of this report are accepted, there are no other implications.

Risk Management

21. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

22. That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods approves option 18(i).

Reason: To allow the food and safety unit to migrate to a food hygiene scheme that is cheaper to operate and better for businesses and consumers.

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Date <i>Insert Date</i> 6/01/2012
Wards Affected: <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>		All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Tick	
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers:

Annexes

Annex A – Examples of hygiene rating schemes branding