

ITEM 18 – APPENDIX M

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE– 7 JANUARY 2014

Title:

THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Donal O’Neill]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the findings of a Food Standards Agency audit, which took place on the 25-27 June 2013. Food hygiene law enforcement/inspection is the responsibility of the Food, Health and Safety Team of the Environmental Health Team within Environmental Services.

How this report relates to the Council’s Corporate Priorities:

Understanding our residents' needs. It is important to the Council that we understand our residents and that we focus on providing the services they want in relation to food safety to meet people's needs across the Borough. We are active in working with residents, service users and local food businesses.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications identified at this time.

Legal Implications:

The audit report confirms that the Council provided and continues to provide a food law enforcement/inspection service which meets the Council’s statutory duties. To ensure appropriate authorisation under current legislation, review of officer authorisations is taking place in accordance with the Action Plan (FSA Audit Annexe 2).

Introduction

1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has the responsibility, amongst other things for carrying out audits of local authority food enforcement/inspection services as part of its remit to improve consumer protection and confidence in relation to food. The audit is intended to ensure that The Council is providing an effective food law enforcement service.
2. The audit visit took place over two and a half days (25- 27 June) and consisted of an examination of relevant file and database records, interviews with food law enforcement staff and also included a visit to a food business. The Council was selected for this audit because it had not been audited in the past five years and

was considered to be representative of a geographical mix of five Councils selected across England.

3. The audit sought to establish whether key food law enforcement systems and arrangements were effective in supporting business compliance and that local enforcement was delivered and managed effectively.
4. The final report (received on 6 November) records the results of the audit at Waverley Borough Council with regard to food hygiene enforcement, under relevant headings of the Food Standards Agency Food Law Enforcement Standard. The audit focused on
 - the Authority's arrangements for the management of the food premises database
 - food premises interventions (including inspections)
 - internal monitoring.

The Food Standards Agency's report of this audit is attached as Annexe 1. The report has been made available on the Agency's website at: www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/auditandmonitoring/auditreports.

Summary of Audit Findings

5. The FSA does not operate an audit scoring system. The Agency considers the detailed audit report, which includes an Executive Summary and specific recommendations for improvement provides a more accurate indication of performance of the authority.
6. It is fair to say that the outcome of the audit was extremely positive, with the report highlighting the following **strengths**:

Organisation and management: Officers reported on performance to the Corporate Management Team and Portfolio Holder through monthly and quarterly performance reports. Environmental Health weekly risk reports detailing cases and issues of interest were reported to the Corporate Management Team and incorporated a helpful risk-based traffic lights monitoring system.

Third party and peer review: The Authority had participated in a robust inter-authority audit exercise in June 2011 which focused on certain paragraphs of the Standard in the Framework Agreement. An action plan which highlighted areas for improvement had been fully implemented by the Authority.

Reactive work: Record checks on food and food premises complaint investigations and follow-up on unsatisfactory sample results confirmed that appropriate follow-up action had been taken in all cases examined and comprehensive records of investigations had been maintained.

7. The auditors also highlighted two areas of 'Good Practice':

- **Food Premises Interventions – Good Practice - 'Prompt Boxes'**.

Aides-memoire for inspection included 'prompt boxes' for officers to record information such as activities in progress at the time of the inspection, changes/improvements since the last visit, follow-up action required and priorities for next programmed inspection.

- **Internal Monitoring – Good Practice – Weekly Risk Reports.** Each week the Corporate Management Team received Environmental Health Weekly Risk Reports which incorporated a traffic lights monitoring system. These included matters such as Primary Authority, food hygiene training courses, and food inspections.

8. The report gave one **Key Area for improvement and two recommendations:**

Officer authorisations: A procedure for the authorisation and competency of officers provided that authorisations were assigned on the basis of qualifications, experience and competence. Authorisations however required review to ensure officers are appropriately authorised under current legislation.

- **Strategic Framework, Policy and Service Planning**
'Ensure that future Food Service Plans include an accurate and clear comparison of the resources required to carry out the full range of statutory food law enforcement activities against a reasoned estimate of the resources available to the Service.'
- **Food Premises Database**
'Review the procedure for the maintenance of the database to ensure that all unrated premises and risk ratings are accurate'.

9. These areas for improvement/recommendations have been transposed into and action plan which has been agreed with the FSA. This has now been populated with the actions planned and is an Annexe 2 to this report.

Conclusion

10. This Audit Report is considered to be extremely positive and reflects well on the enforcement/inspection work being carried out by the Food, Health & Safety Team of Environmental Health, within Environmental Services. All actions identified in the plan will be completed by 31 March 2014. The FSA have advised that they will contact The Council again in six months (April) to review the progress against the action plan attached at the end of the audit report.

Recommendation

That the Executive:-

1. Endorses the content of the audit report and action plan; and
 2. Continues to monitor the Council's progress against the Audit Plan.
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Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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