



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME WITHIN THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Support from elected Members is being sought for NFDC to introduce the national 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme'.
- 1.2 The scheme provides consumers with information about hygiene standards in food premises at the time they are inspected by NFDC food safety officers. This information is found on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website and displayed voluntarily at the premises by the owner. The purpose is to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat out or shop for food and thereby encouraging businesses to improve their hygiene standards.
- 1.3 This report provides information about the scheme – it explains in brief what the scheme is, how it has been developed and when it will be rolled out, why it should be introduced in the New Forest District, what support the Food Standards Agency will provide, what the benefits are for local consumers and for local businesses, the views of local businesses and the potential impact on NFDC resources.

### 2 THE FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

- 2.1 The food hygiene rating scheme (FHRS) has been developed by the FSA and is operated by local authorities. Food premises are given a rating after receiving a food hygiene inspection. This rating is published on the FSA website at [food.gov.uk/ratings](http://food.gov.uk/ratings). It is designed to provide consumers with information about hygiene standards in food premises. The ratings directly reflect the findings of the inspection and compliance with legal requirements.
- 2.2 The purpose of the FHRS is to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat out or shop for food thereby encouraging businesses to improve their hygiene standards.
- 2.3 Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, supermarkets and other retail food outlets, as well as other business where consumers can eat or buy food, will be given a hygiene rating as part of the scheme.
- 2.4 There are six different hygiene ratings; 0 being the lowest and 5 is the best. The highest rating represents a very good level of compliance with legal requirements. This is achievable for all businesses as it does not require a standard that exceeds legal requirements but merely to be compliant with the law.
- 2.5 The rating for each business included in the scheme will be published on the FSA website and businesses will be encouraged to display stickers and certificates at their premises showing their ratings. A copy of the one of the sticker or certificate is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 The FSA have developed and published a 'Brand Standard' for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) and local authorities operating the FHRS are expected to follow it in full. The purpose is to ensure consistency in implementation and operation of the FHRS by local

authorities. The aim is to ensure that where food business establishments are rated under the FHRs and where consumers see FHRs branding, they can be confident that the local authority is operating the FHRs as the Food Standards Agency (FSA) intends.

- 2.7 In order to ensure that the scheme is fair to businesses, it has been designed to include a number of safeguards. These are: an appeal procedure; a 'right to reply' for publication (together with the food hygiene rating) at [food.gov.uk/ratings](http://food.gov.uk/ratings), and a mechanism for requesting a re-inspection/re-visit for the purposes of re-rating when improvements have been made. These safeguards are a mandatory part of the scheme.

### **3 EXTENT OF THE SCHEME**

- 3.1 Until recently there was an alternative scheme operated by a number of local authorities in England. This was named 'Scores on Doors'. This is no longer in operation as it has been absorbed into the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. All local authorities that were operating scores on doors have adopted the FHRs.
- 3.2 There is now only one scheme in operation throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 The FSA have made the introduction of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRs) a key element in their strategic aim to improve food safety. Currently only a few local authorities in England have not adopted the FHRs.

### **4 HOW THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY SUPPORTS THE SCHEME**

- 4.1 Grant funding is available to support local authorities in the 'start up' and pre-launch work required for implementing the scheme. This covers the additional costs involved in the following activities;
- 4.1.1 File and database checks;
  - 4.1.2 Scope checks, including identification of establishments that fall within the scope of the scheme; and
  - 4.1.3 Development and implementation of a strategy for communicating with local businesses including publicity and promotion.
- 4.2 The FSA provides ongoing support by managing the national database and website and providing the associated IT assistance/training required for local authorities to link to this so there will be no IT set-up or on-going subscription costs for participating authorities.
- 4.3 The FSA provides the certificates and window stickers for businesses to display at their premises. It promotes the scheme on a national basis to raise awareness among consumers and businesses.

### **5 BENEFITS TO LOCAL CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES**

- 5.1 For consumers, the scheme will help them make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food and they will be able to easily compare one business with another locally and throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- 5.2 For businesses, the scheme will provide an incentive to improve standards and do better than their competitors. Good food hygiene ratings will be good for business whilst poor food hygiene ratings may make their customers think twice before they buy. Any improvements made to get a higher rating is no more than is already required of them by law.
- 5.3 Experience of other local authorities suggests that the scheme is successful in encouraging businesses to improve hygiene standards. This contributes to reducing foodborne illness, and by having a single scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland helps to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries.

**6 NUMBERS OF PREMISES IN THE DISTRICT AND THEIR EQUIVALENT RATING**

6.1 The FHRS is a six-tier scheme ranging from '5 - very good' to '0 – urgent improvement necessary'. The following has been compiled from food hygiene records and shows the number of premises that would currently achieve a given rating and its descriptor.

RATING	DESCRIPTOR	PERCENTAGE OF PREMISES	NUMBER OF PREMISES
5	Very good	49	890
4	Good	21	390
3	Satisfactory	16	282
2	Improvement necessary	3	62
1	Major improvement necessary	10	180
0	Urgent improvement necessary	1	15

*Table 1*

**7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FOOD SAFETY SERVICE**

- 7.1 All food business establishments are subject to an inspection programme in line with the food law code of practice. The scheme is based around the planned food hygiene intervention programme in order to minimise any burdens on the Food Safety Team. At the conclusion of the inspection the business is assessed according to a number of criteria to establish their overall risk rating. It is this data which is used to generate an easily understandable descriptor of compliance and a rating from 0 to 5 for publication in the scheme.
- 7.2 After the inspection the rating will be communicated to the food business operator by letter enclosing the appropriate certificate and window sticker.
- 7.3 Implementation of the scheme will require communication with food business operators and changes to internal procedures as together with preparation of the existing database before it can be uploaded to the FSA website. A letter will be sent to all registered food businesses advising of the introduction of the FHRS scheme. This will include information about which businesses are to be included and explain that some types of business not selling to the general public are excluded. Each business is asked to check details of their trade name, address and business type held on NFDC database. Checks of the database will also be carried out to determine the businesses to be included and published under the scheme in accordance with FSA guidance. Existing internal procedures will require update, and forms and letters changed to reflect the introduction of the scheme. Officer training will also be a necessity as part of the implementation.

- 7.4 Given the support being provided by the Food Standards Agency explained above the set-up costs are minimised. The main impact on resources is likely to result from operation of the mechanism that allows businesses to request a new rating when improvements have been made as these will be in addition to the planned intervention programme. This is a mandatory part of the scheme as it is considered an essential safeguard if the scheme is to be legally robust. The FSA has given a commitment to keeping this under close review but experience of other local authorities has shown that the number of appeals and reinspection requests are a manageable number.

## **8 TASK AND FINISH GROUP FINDINGS**

- 8.1 A task and finish group was formed to review whether the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was suitable for introduction in the New Forest area. The results of their findings were presented to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 12 January 2012.
- 8.2 It was minuted that the rating was based solely on the standard of food hygiene at the premises, and was completely separate from other ratings systems that evaluated the quality of the cuisine. This system would give the public valuable information on the management of the food hygiene and therefore provide the customer with an informed choice. The task and finish group had been satisfied that the introduction of a food hygiene rating system would not impose additional levels of bureaucracy, or impose additional requirements on the work already being undertaken during food hygiene inspections. Experience elsewhere suggested that such schemes were well supported by local food businesses and promoted improvements in food hygiene standards.
- 8.3 In the light of the task and finish group's recommendations it was resolved that the Environment Portfolio Holder be advised that the Panel would commend the findings of the task and finish working group (as set out in the report to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel), when he determines whether or not to introduce a food hygiene rating system.

## **9 IMPLEMENTATION**

- 9.1 Businesses will be informed before receiving an inspection under the FHRS. It is proposed that all registered food businesses will receive a letter to inform them how the scheme will apply to them.
- 9.2 Inspections under the scheme will commence soon after the mailing.
- 9.3 It is planned that ratings of businesses inspected under the scheme will be published at [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) before the end of the financial year.

## **10 PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 10.1 I believe this initiative will give residents and visitors to the District, through the FSA website, Food Hygiene Standards App and displayed certificates, clear information about hygiene standards so they can make informed decisions about where to eat or shop. New Forest District Council wants to ensure that businesses trade fairly and safely. Food Hygiene Ratings will also offer those businesses that are already achieving high standards the recognition they deserve, while underperforming businesses will be given the incentive to improve.

## **11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There will be no cost involved in publishing the results. The FSA are committed to hosting the database and website at their cost.
- 11.2 Costs involved in the set up and implementation of the scheme can be grant funded as described above.
- 11.2 Staff time required to maintain the scheme will be met from existing resources. It is not fully possible to predict the level of additional work of processing appeals and requests for re-inspection. However experience of other Local Authorities is that it can be met within existing resources.

## **12 ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no environmental, crime and disorder or diversity implications as a result of this report.

## **13 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 It is recommended that Cabinet gives delegated authority to the Head of Public Health and Community Safety, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, to:
  - 13.1.1 Accept the FSA grant funding to carryout start-up and launch activities to support the introduction of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
  - 13.1.2 Sign an Agreement for New Forest District Council to become a partner with the FSA and other local authorities in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme for inspections undertaken after this decision.

### **Further information:**

Stephen Stone  
*Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)*  
Tel (023) 8028 5588

### **Background Papers:**

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme: Guidance for local authorities on implementation and operation – the 'Brand Standard' FSA January 2012

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/fhrsguidance.pdf>

## Appendix 1

### Certificate

Example for the rating of '3'

**FOOD HYGIENE RATING**

0 1 2 **3** 4 5

**GENERALLY SATISFACTORY**

The Café  
2 High Street  
Examptown AA2 BB2

<b>Date of hygiene rating</b> 7 October 2011	<b>Contact details</b> Environmental Health City of Local Authority 14 Street Examptown, AA1 BB2 Tel: 0111 222 333
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**Authorising signature**  
*John Smith*

For more information about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme visit [food.gov.uk/ratings](http://food.gov.uk/ratings)

The food hygiene rating shown above reflects the standards found on the date of inspection or visit by the local authority. Ratings are given on a scale from 0 (urgent improvement necessary) up to 5 (very good). The rating is not a guide to food quality.

CITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY COUNCIL

Food Standards Agency  
[food.gov.uk/ratings](http://food.gov.uk/ratings)

This certificate remains the property of the local authority which reserves the right to remove it at any time.

### Window Sticker

Example for the rating of '3'



Food  
Standards  
Agency  
food.gov.uk/ratings

This scheme is operated  
in partnership with your  
local authority

## FOOD HYGIENE RATING



GENERALLY  
SATISFACTORY