

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 24 June 2009

Subject: Scottish Food Hygiene Information Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To seek Committee approval for the participation in and implementation of the Scottish Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) within West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background

- 2.1** The FHIS is a means of providing information to consumers about the standards of hygiene in food businesses at point of sale and on the web. The demand for such a scheme was first recognised in Scotland by Consumer Focus Scotland in its paper 'Food Law Enforcement – A Study of the Views of Environmental Health and Food Safety Officers in Scotland' (February 2004) as an important mechanism for informing consumer choice.
- 2.2** The FHIS was established in 2006 as a pilot 'Scores on the Doors' project in Scotland in partnership with five volunteer local authorities and was overseen by a Steering Group that incorporated consumer, industry and enforcement representation.
- 2.3** In December 2008 the Food Standards Agency Board recommended continuation of the FHIS as the appropriate format for a national 'Scores on the Doors' scheme in Scotland. This recommendation acknowledged the prevailing views of stakeholders in Scotland received during the public consultation process.
- 2.4** The scheme is designed to provide 'at a glance' information about the outcome of food hygiene inspections and businesses are provided with a certificate for display at the premises following their inspection. A 'pass' certificate confirms that the business has been inspected and has met the required legal standards. An 'awaiting inspection' certificate is provided for new businesses that have not yet been inspected and an 'improvement required' certificate is issued to those businesses that fall short of the legal standard.
- 2.5** The display of the certificate by a business is voluntary but information about all businesses will be provided on the participating local authority and Food Standards Agency websites. To encourage participation within West Dunbartonshire Council it is hoped that all West Dunbartonshire Council operated food businesses will agree to display these certificates.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** There are currently 790 food businesses operating in West Dunbartonshire which are subject to statutory food hygiene inspections. Of these approximately 22 are outwith the scope of the scheme. Approximately 107 businesses could be eligible for possible exemption from the scheme although it is hoped that all businesses would appreciate the benefits of participation and choose to remain within it.
- 3.2** Food Hygiene inspections are governed by national standards and the Environmental Health Section manage these through a planned inspection programme. New businesses are added as they come to the attention of the Section.
- 3.3** There are currently 536 food hygiene inspections due during 2009/10 with the remainder of the businesses programmed to be inspected in the 2010/11 and 2011/12 work years.
- 3.4** The launch of the scheme requires all businesses to be inspected and classified in accordance with the scheme criteria. Given the inspection programme it is anticipated that this could be achieved during 2010 by bringing forward approximately 100 business inspections to give a proposed launch date of 1 October 2010.
- 3.5.** Safeguards aimed at being fair to all businesses exist within the scheme for those that are classified as 'improvement required' and a mandatory 7 day revisit and re-classification is provided for as is the right to a review of any decision by a senior officer. Experience during the pilot project established that the rights afforded by these safeguards should not lead to a significant burden.
- 3.6.** Planning for the proposed scheme has begun and an initial meeting with the Food Standards Agency took place on 28 April 2009.
- 3.7** The provision of food hygiene information is not new in West Dunbartonshire as we have been publishing Food Hygiene and Food Standards inspection reports on the Council's Community website since 1 April 2006.
- 3.8** It is proposed that the participation and implementation of the FHIS will be in addition to the inspection report publication scheme and will provide benefits in empowered consumers and an additional incentive to businesses to improve hygiene standards.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no Personnel issues associated with this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The only financial implication associated with the launch of the scheme will be in relation to start up IT and marketing costs which will be met from funding expected to be available from the Food Standards Agency.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There is a possibility that some Council run food establishments may not meet the standards required to obtain a Pass certificate..

7. Conclusions and Officers Recommendations

- 7.1** The proposal to adopt the FHIS in West Dunbartonshire will help to improve standards within local food businesses, improve public confidence and the perception of West Dunbartonshire as a place to visit and eat.

- 7.2** The committee is asked to agree the following recommendation:

- (i) to implement the Scottish FHIS within West Dunbartonshire during 2010.

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Background Papers: 'Food Law Enforcement - A Study of the Views of
Environmental Health and Food Safety Officers in
Scotland' (February 2004)

Wards Affected: All wards