

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report To: Audit Committee – 19 November 2015

Subject: Update on Food Standards Agency Audit (FSA) on “Service Delivery and Food Business Compliance”

Report Of: Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods

Summary

This report provides a summary of the response made to the findings of an audit of the Council’s food safety service by the Food Standards Agency.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report.

Wards Affected:

All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the outcome of the Food Health Enforcement review by the Food Standards Agency, FSA and actions being taken to manage risks.

2.0 Scope of the Audit

- 2.1 The audit examined the Council's arrangements for food premises database management, food premises interventions and food hygiene law enforcement. This included a reality check at a food business to assess the effectiveness of the checks carried out by one of our officers, to verify food business operator compliance with legislative requirements. The scope of the audit also included an assessment of the Authority's overall organisation and management and the internal monitoring of food hygiene law enforcement activities. The audit took place between 3-5 March 2015.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 From 2007 due to reduced resources a risk based approach to food safety inspection which focussed on higher risk premises was taken. This approach was combined with robust enforcement to drive up awareness and standards across the food sector. A rapid response public protection service was created supported by a specialist food team and this, combined with rigorous performance management, saw an increase in the level of enforcement action taken by the team. In 2011 the Council agreed a Neighbourhood Focus Strategy which created Neighbourhood Delivery Teams, (NDTs), with specialist services provided by Citywide Support Services, (CWS) which included food safety. This change enabled services to become more neighbourhood focussed, and during this time CWS expanded their support of local businesses, and improved productivity.
- 3.2 The creation of NDTs was a radical change in how a wide range of enforcement and neighbourhood management services were delivered. Over the last 6 months the strengths and weaknesses of this model have been reviewed which has resulted in the redesign of neighbourhood services which has included increased resources in the area of food safety. The review of NDTs has also considered demographic and economic changes. With the accelerating growth in the leisure sector in Manchester both the profile and number of restaurants, takeaways and other food establishments is increasing. Manchester's role as a major transport hub, particularly around the Airport, has also seen an increase in food importation which requires input from the Food Safety Team. Taking all these factors into consideration it is clear that there needs to be further investment in food safety compliance to improve our capacity in this important area.

4.0 Audit Findings

- 4.1 The FSA stated that due to the high number of caterers, takeaways and restaurants and associated high levels of business churn, that the Council

faced significant challenges in maintaining an accurate and up to date food premises database and in monitoring and maintaining satisfactory levels of business compliance in all our food establishments. The import controls at Manchester Airport placed further demands on the service.

- 4.2 Whilst the FSA acknowledged that some comprehensive and essential enforcement activity was being carried out by the Council at a limited number of higher risk establishments, they were unable to gain sufficient assurance that the Council was delivering controls effectively in relation to food safety and hygiene at all relevant establishments in the area. Their main conclusion was that sufficient resources should be made available to the service to ensure that current duties are maintained on a risk basis.

5.0 Key areas for improvement

- 5.1 There were a number of recommendations made by the FSA these can be summarised as follows, actions taken are listed below:-

Recommendation 1

Take action to increase the resource available for food safety inspections.

- Action – Additional resource has been secured to undertake more inspections, resourcing needs will be reviewed at the end of this year. Three additional FTE will be employed to undertake food inspections.

Recommendation 2

Ensure we have an accurate and up to date database and implement a procedure to ensure we maintain an accurate database.

- Action – Additional administrative support has commenced cleansing the database and removed a number of closed premises from the database. As part of the newly designed Neighbourhood Service we will have officers focussed on compliance activity they will be tasked with ensuring that food premises in their area are registered.

Recommendation 3

Use the full range of enforcement options available to us including serving more notices and taking more prosecutions.

- Action – Officers have been given more managerial support to carry out the full range of enforcement options and we have introduced more active case management to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.

Recommendation 4

Introduce more monitoring of cases and keep records of the monitoring.

- Action – Case management supervision has been increased and a full procedure has been implemented.

Recommendation 5

Review our policies and procedures against the Code of Practice (CoP) standards

- Action – Existing practises have been reviewed and new procedures adopted to ensure we are fully compliant with the CoP.
- 5.2 Following the audit a draft action plan was submitted for review by the FSA in June. FSA senior managers visited the local authority to discuss this plan with senior officers. The FSA stated that the meeting provided the Agency with confidence that the agreed corrective actions were appropriate and would be delivered.
- 5.3 The new managerial arrangements for Neighbourhoods with a Strategic Lead for Compliance should enable better focus in this important area of public protection.