

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 28th May 2015

Lead Member: Lead Member Public Realm

Report Authors: Head of Planning and Public Protection/
Public Protection Manager

Title: Food Safety, Standards and Procurement – Update

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 Following the national horse meat scandal Denbighshire County Council instigated an investigation into current food procurement and regulatory practices. A politically balanced Task & Finish Group was established, comprising of officers and Members of the Council, to identify any key risks and to enable adequate procedures to be in place to protect residents, visitors and users of the Council's services. This includes schools and social services residential homes and other Council controlled outlets.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group met several times and last reported to Communities Scrutiny Committee in June 2014. Members asked officers to provide an update report in approximately 12 months to monitor progress against the recommendations agreed in that report.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members:

- 3.1 consider the content of the report and comment on the progress made against each of the recommendations; and
- 3.2 consider whether they require a further update report.

4. Report details.

- 4.1 For ease of reading and reference an update will be provided against each of the service areas that contribute to the issue of securing a safe food chain within the County.

Regulatory Functions:

- 4.2 Public Protection Officers within the Planning and Public Protection Service undertake a range of duties in relation to food safety and food standards. We have officers that are fully qualified and competent to undertake both food hygiene and food standards duties and meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA also undertake audits of the service, and other LA's across the UK to ensure that these standards are met.

- 4.3 Public Protection Officers undertake a significant amount of food standards (origin and labelling) inspections and sampling during the year which included the following:
- Full food standards inspections of all high risk premises due an inspection during 2014/15
 - Undertaking a range of food standards sampling surveys including meat species testing on behalf of our school meals service and social services, fish substitution, nut allergen testing in restaurant/take-away meals, testing for levels of colours in take-away meals and testing of spirits to ensure that they are not substituting with cheaper/imitation brands
 - Spirit samples taken from 30 pub premises to ensure that no substitution was taking place. All samples satisfactory.
 - Undertaking a regional project on Welsh Beef, including inspections of butchers shops and DNA testing of beef to check whether it is Welsh in origin
- 4.4 Some unsatisfactory results in relation to labelling and constitution of food were identified in some of the meat samples taken during the year, samples of take away meals containing nuts where it was not declared and high colouring levels in take away meals. A review of the work undertaken during 2014/15 highlights some areas that will be subject to further checks by our officers during this year namely meat speciation, nuts in take away meals, alcohol substitution in off licences rather than pubs and other agreed regional projects.
- 4.5 Enforcement action has been taken against some businesses that were found to be breaching food standards legislation including warning letters following inspections, seizing unlabelled food and food where the origins of the food could not be established and also a successful prosecution against a food business owner that served an Indian take away meal containing nuts to a customer with a nut allergy that had asked for a meal with no nuts.
- 4.6 Further work has also been undertaken on providing training to businesses within the county on food labelling. New legislation was introduced in December 2014 on providing clear information to the public on allergens in food. We provided training courses to businesses on these new regulations. Training has also been provided to our food safety officers and animal health officers on food standards and feed enforcement to develop a more coordinated food regulatory service. Food safety officers will now be undertaking food standards checks during routine food hygiene inspections.
- 4.7 The Council's food service was also the subject of a full audit by the Food Standards Agency in July 2013. The Council received the audit report some 13 months after the audit was undertaken and an action plan has been agreed. This action plan includes 39 recommendations which we are now working with the FSA to address.
- 4.8 A bid was successfully submitted and approved by the FSA for money to undertake sampling work across the County. This funding was used to fund sampling in our schools and care homes on meat speciation, cheese and fish substitution and nut allergens in food.

- 4.9 We successfully obtained FSA funding for other types of sampling i.e nut sampling and meat speciation in take-aways.

Procurement Functions:

- 4.10 Meetings have taken place between food standards officer, school catering officers and social services contracts officers to discuss sampling surveys, food procurement procedures and any results from the sampling undertaken.
- 4.11 Procurement audits were undertaken during the year, involving the food standards officers working with the school meals service to undertake on site audits of food being delivered to the premises. The outcomes of these audits were fed back to the school meals service.
- 4.12 The Corporate Procurement Unit are in ongoing discussions with The University Caterers Organisation (TUCO) to ensure that we get all of the required information to allow us to monitor the source of our food to schools and care homes. This will also involve including a 'right to audit' clause in the contract.
- 4.13 The creation of a central, single point of information for all food procurement contracts using the Proactis Contract Management System is now complete. A range of questionnaires that will be utilised by users and suppliers on the Proactis system have been create for performance monitoring. The Corporate Procurement Unit are now undertaking an exercise to get all current contract details on to the Proactis system and also to get the suppliers registered so that performance monitoring against contracts can be undertaken going forward. It is expected that the Proactis system will go live for users from September 2015.
- 4.14 The Corporate Procurement Unit staff have now been split to deal with specific spend categories which means that a dedicated Procurement Officer is now responsible for monitoring all catering expenditure across the Council. The new M-Power spend analysis system will be available mid-July which will allow the dedicated officer to monitor up to date catering spend.
- 4.15 Meat Framework exercise is now complete and there are 9 companies on the frame work, as a Catering Service we have decided to remain with Hughes Meats of Bangor. The Council has had no issues with this company in the past, they can provide us with Welsh Lamb and Beef and all product testing carried out by the food standards officer has come back clear and compliant. We are using Red Tractor Assured suppliers for chicken, turkey and pork fillets. The TUCO agreement is now being used for the supply of some fresh frozen meat into our care homes with the remaining supply being sourced from a local butcher from St Asaph which has a Food Hygiene Safety rating of 5. This involves the supply of meat from Hughes Meats in Bangor being supplied through Woodward's Foods. Going forward a formal procurement exercise will be undertaken in order to award a formal contract with local butchers.

4.15 The Corporate Procurement Unit is not aware of any current complaints/concerns about our food suppliers. However ongoing meetings will take place with catering officers to monitor this going forward.

4.16 As part of the catering spend analysis a collaborative contract for sandwich fillings is being undertaken with Wrexham and Flintshire Councils. Therefore the food safety requirements will be incorporated in to the contract going forward.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 Protecting the food chain is a key responsibility of the Council to ensure that residents are provided with reliable and traceable meat and meat products, as well as other consumer goods.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 There is no specific costs associated with the recommendations of this report. However the cost of the work that is currently and proposed to being undertaken during this year will be achieved within existing service budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

7.1 There are no equalities implications from the recommendations of this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 Consultations have taken place between the Corporate Procurement Unit, School Catering Service, Social Services and Planning and Public Protection Service in producing this report.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 The costs should be contained within the existing resources and grant funding for specific projects.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 The work undertaken by each service as part of this review and recommendations contained within this report are designed to minimise the risk of low quality food materials entering the food chain in Denbighshire.

11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Article 6.3.4(b) sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to scrutinising such matters.

Contact Officer:
Public Protection Manager

Tel: 01824 706350