

Report To: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23 May 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member for Public Realm &
Corporate Director: Customers

Report Author: Corporate Director: Customers

Title: Food Review Task & Finish Group

1. WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

Following the recent national reports on horsemeat DNA discovered in meat products, Denbighshire County Council has instigated an investigation into current food procurement and regulatory practices. A politically balanced Task & Finish Group has been 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 THE REPORT?

The Task & Finish Group has met on at least 4 occasions, to discuss specific matters and it is important that the work of the Task & Finish Group and the recommendations that it has made are considered by a Scrutiny Committee. Some of the recommendations listed below have resource implications, which require scrutiny before this report is considered by Cabinet.

3. WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS?

Regulatory Functions

That:

- 3.1** Consideration be given to the employment of an additional food standards officer for a period of 12/18 months until an existing officer becomes fully qualified. This will cover the need to better regulate food businesses enabling the Council to carry out additional inspections, sampling and monitoring regimes. A brief role description is included in Appendix 5 and the cost implications are outlined in paragraph 6 of this report.
- 3.2** The Council fully supports the Food Standards Agency (FSA) audits of Local Authority food law enforcement delivery during 2013/14. These audits will cover food hygiene, food standards and food delivery, and will possibly lead to a rating for all Authorities. This audit will now take place in July 2013.

- 3.3** The Council submits a bid to the FSA for funding to undertake sampling of meat products, especially for schools and DCC run care homes. This funding will support a sampling programme concentrating on meat species and another programme on salt/fat content of food. The Council currently is awaiting a decision on this bid from the FSA.
- 3.4** The Council supports a regional approach to other aspects of the FSA programme across North Wales in relation to cheese substitution, nut allergies, lamb and other meat species and mycotoxins in cereals, a programme concentrating mainly on retail premises.

Procurement Functions

That:

- 3.5** There is better co-ordination of management information and activity between relevant departments in order to improve contract management arrangements and avoid duplication of effort.
- 3.6** Unannounced audit to be carried out more regularly to establish traceability, hygiene, and the meeting of contract specifications. The capacity for doing this work will be carried by the additional post referred to in 3.1.
- 3.7** The Corporate Procurement Unit ensures that TUCO (The University Caterers Organisation) share all complaints, issues supplier updates, Support Training Services (STS) reports and management information with a nominated contracts manager. This will also include the need for tighter monitoring of the sourcing of food within the TUCO framework food chain in order to ensure compliance by sub-contractors as well as the main contractors.
- 3.8** A central, single point of information be created for all food procurement contracts using the Proactis Contract Management System.
- 3.9** A quarterly review of all catering expenditure is carried out to check compliance with contract procedure rules and e-procurement regulations to ensure that procedures and checks are in place. Senior managers to ensure that any instances of non-compliance are addressed.
- 3.10** All food procurement contracts with TUCO have a Right to Audit Clause included.
- 3.11** The Council formally tenders for the butcher contract within Social Services.

General

- 3.12** Providers are formally asked for a list of food providers when contract monitoring visits are carried out. As this is not an area of expertise for

Contract Officers within Social Services, that information is forwarded to Environmental Health Officers to assess and make any necessary recommendations.

- 3.13** The established Food Review Task and Finish Group membership be maintained for 6-9 months (then to be reviewed) in order to monitor the delivery of the recommendations in this report, and that future monitoring of activity in this area is planned into the annual service challenge process and the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

4. REPORT DETAILS

Following the discovery of horsemeat DNA in meat products, the Corporate Executive Team decided to set up a small Member/Officer Task & Finish Group to review our current policies and procedures and to provide Members and the public with as much reassurance as possible that the right policies and procedures are in place in Denbighshire, and to gauge whether there are any lessons to be learned in order to make further improvements for the future. The Terms of Reference and membership of the Food Review Task & Finish Group are included as Appendix 1.

The Group decided to look at 3 key elements of the Council's business, namely:

- The procurement of meat and meat products – an activity that has been led by the Corporate Procurement Unit
- The Council's role as an enforcing and regulatory body – this activity has been led by officers from Public Protection
- The sufficiency of contractual arrangements with commissioned services, particularly within Social Services

The Task & Finish Group met on 3 occasions to discuss specific issues around these three key areas of work. Following the scrutiny of these areas, relevant officers were tasked with producing a Position Statement and recommendations for service improvement. These Position Statements were considered at the following meeting, and were agreed before this report was produced. The Position Statements are included in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

The recommendations included in Section 3 above have stemmed from the Position Statements produced by the relevant officers. Members of the Task & Finish Group have agreed the content of this report. Minutes of all the meetings held have been taken, which capture the more detailed points considered during these meetings. The minutes of these meetings can be made available to elected members who wish to have sight of them.

5. HOW DOES THE DECISION CONTRIBUTE TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES?

Whilst the work of the Food Review Task & Finish Group does not directly relate to one or more of the 7 priorities within the Corporate Plan 2012-2017, it 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?

With the exception of recommendation 3.1 the cost of the other recommendations will be covered within current budgets. The £41k per annum cost of the Food Standards Officer for 12/18 months will be met from the Capacity for Change Fund and this has been agreed by CET as per requirements.

7. WHAT CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT?

There have been no consultations carried out to date on the content and recommendations of this report. The Corporate Procurement Unit has, however, contacted all the organisations involved in supplying the Council with meat and meat products in order to seek assurances about provenance and any testing that has been carried out by the supplier.

The Public Protection Department have contacted the Foods Standards Agency (FSA) to better understand the activities that this organisation intends to undertake in the future, and to receive any immediate advice that the FSA was making available.

8. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER STATEMENT

The additional costs for the temporary post can be funded, but any other costs will need to be contained within existing budgets.

9. WHAT RISKS ARE THERE AND IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO REDUCE THEM?

The Task & Finish Group ascertained early on that there were no immediate health related risks associated with the horsemeat DNA issue, however, there is a need to better understand our procurement processes and our sourcing policy so that the food that is purchased by the Council is of high quality and traceable to its origination. The review and recommendations contained within this report are designed to minimise the risk of low quality food materials entering the food chain in Denbighshire.

10. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the power for the Council to make decisions on this matter.

Articles 6.3.2 (b) and 6.3.4 (ch) of the Council's Constitution.

Contact Officer:

Corporate Director: Customers

Tel: 01824 712501