



Committee and date  
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Item  
  
**10**

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## **THE INTRODUCTION OF A PUBLIC FOOD HYGIENE RATING SYSTEM IN SHROPSHIRE**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A scores on the doors scheme for Shropshire that is well organised and is well managed provides the Council with a powerful tool to drive up standards in food businesses, reduce incidences of food poisoning and enables the public to make informed choices on where to eat.
- 1.2 Such a scheme will not place any extra demands on resources on the Public Protection service but will help prioritise resources to those businesses where priority demands.
- 1.3 Such a scheme raises the profile of both Shropshire Council and the Public Protection Service amongst stakeholders and customers.
- 1.4 The launch of such a scheme supports the Council's corporate aims and objectives to improving the health and wellbeing of Shropshire's residents, to build sustainable communities for local people to live and work in Shropshire and promotes economic prosperity.

### **RECOMMENDATION.**

That Cabinet supports the implementation a public food hygiene rating system based on the Scores on the Doors approach for Shropshire to be launched during Food Safety Week in June 2010.

## 2.0 REPORT

- 2.1 A public food hygiene rating system provides members of the public with information to enable them to make informed choices about the places from which they purchase food in the County.
- 2.2 Such a scheme is known as Scores on the Doors and allows the Council to publish food hygiene compliance ratings for each food premises in the County following the results of routine food hygiene inspections.
- 2.3 It is proposed that Shropshire Council launches a scheme to publish hygiene scores based on a scores on the doors approach where, primarily the scoring will be accessible through the Shropshire Council website and scores will also be displayed at the food premises.
- 2.4 Since the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Local Authorities have been obliged to release food hygiene inspection reports to members of the public, the press and corporate bodies on request.
- 2.5 In recent months, there has been a national drive to implement a scores on the doors scheme. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has set up a working group into the proposal to implement a national six tier scheme throughout England and Wales. The timescales upon the introduction of the national scheme are still unknown but are believed to be a long way off.
- 2.6 Currently, 174 local authorities in England and Wales publish food hygiene ratings through a Scores on the Doors system.
- 2.7 Telford & Wrekin Council introduced a scores on the doors system in June 2008 and by account has noticed an improvement in food hygiene standards across the borough.
- 2.8 Following publicity about the recent *E.Coli* 0157 outbreaks in South Wales and Wrexham, the council is often asked by members of the public when a scores on the doors scheme will be implemented in Shropshire.
- 2.9 Shropshire Council's Public Protection service is committed to improving the hygiene of businesses selling distributing and manufacturing food in the County. By implementing such a scheme incentive is given to businesses to improve hygiene standards through better consumer awareness.
- 2.10 Such a scheme will contribute to Shropshire Council's Corporate Aims and Priorities by:
- Improving the health and wellbeing of Shropshire's residents.
  - To build sustainable communities for local people to live and work in Shropshire.
  - Support increased economic prosperity

### 3.0 THE PROPOSED SYSTEM

- 3.1 The scheme proposed for Shropshire Council provides a six-tier system in line with the proposed national guidance. A five star rating system will therefore be used ranging from no stars for premises with very poor standards to five stars awarded to premises with excellent hygiene standards.
- 3.2 The score rating will only be generated following a primary inspection of food business, not after re-inspections or visits to investigate complaints.
- 3.3 Following a primary inspection the officer will risk rate the food business in accordance with Annex V of the Food Law Code of Practice.
- 3.4 Three elements of the risk rating criteria will be used to determine the star rating of the food business as these are directly controlled by the food business:
- The current level of compliance with food hygiene practices, procedures, including cleaning practices, temperature control and potential contamination of raw and cooked foods.
  - The current level of compliance relating to the structure of the premises including the state of repair, the floors, walls, ceilings, lighting, ventilation and washing facilities.
  - Confidence in Management of the business including the implementation of a Food Safety Management system and adequate training and supervision of staff.
- 3.5 The following table outlines the scoring in the risk rating for each of the three risk rating categories:

Risk Rating Category	Excellent ↔ Poor					
	0	5	10	15	20	25
Food Hygiene & Safety	0	5	10	15	20	25
Structure & Cleaning	0	5	10	15	20	25
Management and Control	0	5	10	20	30	30

3.6 The total score from the three categories is then used to determine the star rating set out in the table below:

Star Rating	Overall Score	Performance Level
5 Stars	0 to 5	Excellent
4 Stars	10 to 15	Very Good
3 Stars	20 to 25	Good
2 Stars	30	Adequate
1 Star	35 to 45	Inadequate
No Stars	50 or more	Very Poor

3.7 In addition to the above criteria, officers will also take account of the following criteria to determine the final risk rating for primary inspections of food business:

- Type of food and method of handling
- Method of processing
- Consumers at risk
- Risk of contamination of food.

3.8 The overall score (from the seven criteria above) is then used to determine the next primary inspection in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.

3.9 The star rating given to premises will not be altered until the next primary inspection, even if re-visits are carried out by the Public Protection service in the interim.

3.10 An appeals procedure will be set up where a business can formally lodge an appeal against their star rating system. The Commercial Team Leader will carry out a review of the rating process using both an account from the food business and the documentation completed by the inspecting officer at the time of inspection.

3.11 The results of the star rating for individual premises will be published on the Council's website using a direct application from the Public Protection database.

3.12 Food businesses will be allowed to add comments to their star rating for the public to view.

- 3.13 An application has already been purchased by the Council with the Public Protection CIVICA system to take the information from the risk rating of a premises and to upload this onto the Council website.
- 3.14 Certificates will also be printed which will allow food businesses to display their star rating in a prominent position. The certificates will remain the property of the Council and could be removed by an authorised officer at any time.
- 3.15 There will be no legal requirement for businesses to display their star rating.
- 3.16 The rating system will not apply to premises that are subject to approval under EC Regulation 853/2004.
- 3.17 Premises, which are subject to alternative enforcement strategies due to the low risk level of the food sold or prepared, will not be included in the scheme either.
- 3.18 The circumstances below may be deemed necessary to bring forward a primary inspection. Such circumstances could therefore result in the risk rating of a premises being changed.
- A consumer complaint that warrants a full inspection.
  - A new registration application is received.
  - Investigation of a possible food poisoning outbreak.
  - Referral from a home or primary authority.
  - The business may become closed due to seasonal opening.
  - A request to visit from another Agency.
- 3.19 Officers will not respond to businesses requests to ask for re-rating unless the operation of the premises changes.

#### **4.0 SYSTEM LAUNCH**

- 4.1 Following agreement a start date for going live with historic data will be widely published to all food businesses in advance.
- 4.2 The proposed launched date of the system going live could coincide with Food Safety Week 2010 where a major publicity campaign could be launched, such as radio interviews, press releases and stands in local shopping centres and town centres.
- 4.3 It is proposed that data will be collected from a nominated date in advance and then the public access system will go live on a further date after this. This will ensure that businesses are fully aware that their primary inspections will count towards the scores on the doors scheme before the inspection.

- 4.4 Food businesses will be made aware in advance that the scoring from inspections will be used to generate future star ratings on the official launch of the system. This will be achieved by writing to all food businesses and a publicity campaign.
- 4.5 Data from primary inspections before this start point will not be used in the scores on the doors scheme.
- 4.6 A Communications strategy will be set up detailing how the information on scores on the doors will be disseminated to both food businesses and to members of the public to raise awareness by various means.
- 4.7 It is anticipated that open forums are set up across the County whereby food businesses will be invited to attend to obtain full information on the proposed system.
- 4.8 Similarly, correspondence will be sent to all food businesses to inform them of the decision as to whether such a scheme will be implemented by the Council and will include details of the scheme and the dates from which data will be collected and will go live.
- 4.9 Advertising will also be used to raise the public awareness of the system in order that it is successful.
- 4.10 Inspecting officers will have to be fully trained in the system and further consistency exercises will have to be held so as to ensure that similar premises are given the same scores by each officer.
- 4.11 Annex A sets out some proposed timescales for launching the scheme.

## **5.0 BENEFITS OF SCORES ON THE DOORS**

- 5.1 The benefit of Shropshire Council adopting a Scores on the Doors scheme is that it will provide an incentive to business to improve hygiene as consumers will be able to make an informed choice as to where to eat.
- 5.2 This will allow an element of self-regulation by businesses to improve the standards of hygiene in their businesses accordingly, to achieve a higher star rating.
- 5.3 The effect on this could be a broader impact on the public health of the residents of Shropshire where incidents of food poisoning could be reduced and the number of complaints received by the Council could be reduced.
- 5.4 As the hygiene of foods businesses improve, this could result in the Council visiting premises less often, thereby reducing the burden on business.

- 5.5 This would allow the council to prioritise its resources into those businesses that require more formal regulation, rather than routinely inspecting all premises.
- 5.6 This would also result in the number of premises deemed broadly compliant (under National Indicator 184) increasing.
- 5.7 Such a scheme would raise the profile of both Shropshire Council and the Public Protection Service within the council especially with a greater number of hits to the Council website.
- 5.8 The scheme should also encourage economic prosperity in Shropshire whereby food businesses are given incentive to improve as consumers are given the information to use those businesses with a higher star rating. Such businesses should see more trade.

## **6.0 CONSTRAINTS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

- 6.1 The biggest constraint on the implementation of such a scheme would be on the resources needed to set up and maintain such a system:
- 6.2 A large amount of time have to be set aside to implement such a system through the final configuration and advertising before the system goes live.
- 6.3 Staff will have to be fully trained in the scoring system and there may be potential consistency issues where similar issues in different premises result in different star ratings.
- 6.4 Such a scheme may result in a greater amount of time being spent completing paperwork by officers to generate scoring.
- 6.5 The system may have to have regular uploads of information to update the website rather than data automatically being sent and becoming live.
- 6.6 Some businesses may note a negative impact on business if they achieve a low score.
- 6.7 The Council will have to become more accountable for its actions in dealing with premises with no stars.
- 6.8 The number of appeals from food premises may be high and may create additional workload. Food business operators may also try and get their food business re-risk rated by any means.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The configuration of the system by CIVICA will entail an overall cost of around £1000.
- 7.2 Costs will have to be considered for the advertisement and publication of leaflets for the scheme, before it goes live.

7.3 The Council will also incur the cost of production of certificates, in a format that cannot be torn.

7.4 There may be other specific costs for the development of the Shropshire Council website and ongoing costs for the maintenance of the site.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

1.

**Human Rights Act Appraisal.**

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998.

**Environmental Appraisal.**

Should Scores on the doors reduce the inspection burden this would reduce the mileage travelled by Environmental Health Staff in undertaking their duties with positive environmental implications.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

Scores on the Doors is not new and has been adopted by 174 Local Authorities. Introducing a scheme compliant with the Food Safety Act and Codes of Practice and Guidance will ensure the risks from Judicial Review or other legal action is minimised.

Individual food hygiene inspection reports are currently disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. There is currently no legal requirement to adopt a Scores on the Doors scheme.

There will be no legal requirement for businesses to display their hygiene rating certificate.

Premises that are subject to proceedings will still have their risk ratings displayed as the decision to prosecute is not affected by the star rating and these are deemed to be separate matters.

**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

Proposals will be broadly publicised and views sought from food establishments.

**Cabinet Member:**

Councillor David Roberts

**Local Member**

N/A

**Annex A \_ SCORES ON THE DOORS – DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**ANNEX A**



**SCORES ON THE DOORS – DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Action	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09	Jan 10	Feb 10	Mar10	Apr 10	May 10	Jun 10
Submit Report to Senior Managers	■								
Submit Report to Council Members		■							
Organise Consultancy for system set up with CIVICA			■						
Draft Communication Strategy		■							
Agree final format of star rating system			■						
Agree data cut dates and go live dates		■	■						
Design leaflets, logos and publicity		■	■						
Liaise with IT for creation of webpage			■						
Define appeals procedure			■						
Organise staff briefings			■						
Begin publicising scheme				■					
Write to food businesses informing them inspection data will generate star ratings from the agreed date.				■					
Organise briefings for food businesses on system in numerous locations				■	■				
Organise staff consistency exercises			■						
Start recording data from inspections					■	■	■	■	
Test uploading data to blind area of website					■	■	■	■	
Verification exercise on scoring					■				
Increase publicity campaign							■	■	■

