

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

3 March 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 FOOD AND SAFETY TEAM UPDATE

Summary

This report provides an update on the work of the Food and Safety Team.

1.1 Free food hygiene training for Indian cuisine businesses

- 1.1.1 Educating food handlers during the course of food hygiene inspections to help businesses improve hygiene standards is an extremely important element of a hygiene intervention. To help improve their food hygiene rating and ultimately consumer confidence, a free training session was offered to 19 Indian restaurant/takeaway businesses with a hygiene rating of between zero and three.
- 1.1.2 The session targeted three important areas, hand washing, separation and cleaning and disinfection and focused on the typical problems encountered in Indian kitchens. All three areas are vital to help prevent the spread of E.coli O157 and other types of food poisoning.
- 1.1.3 Officers worked in small groups using practical demonstrations to educate food handlers and it provided an opportunity for questions and discussion. The session was timed to be short but effective to minimise business interruption. Twenty seven food handlers from eleven businesses attended the free session.
- 1.1.4 A similar session is due to be held in the near future for Chinese food businesses.

1.2 Food Standards Agency publishes inspection data for 2012/13

- 1.2.1 In November 2013 the Food Standards Agency (FSA) published its Annual Report on UK Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, covering the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. This provides details, including official statistics, on local authority food law enforcement activity within food businesses in the UK and is based on the monitoring returns (LAEMS) that local authorities provide.

1.2.2 In summary, the 2012/13 LAEMS data show:

- **608,143 food establishments** were registered with LAs in the UK as at 31 March 2013, an **increase of 1.4%** on 2011/12 (599,880). Of these, 35,743 (**5.9%**) of registered UK food establishments were **not yet rated** (i.e. not inspected) for food hygiene risk, a **decrease from 6.2%** in 2011/12. Locally 1,116 businesses were registered of these 19 were not yet rated.
- LAs reported that a total of **525,588 interventions** were carried out in 2012/13 (415,299 of these were food hygiene) a **decrease of 5.4%** on the reported number carried out in 2011/12 (555,350). 98% of interventions were achieved by the Food and Safety Team.
- 83,566 **formal enforcement actions** were carried out in 2012/13, an **overall increase of 1.9%** from 2011/12 (180,177). 452 formal enforcement actions were carried out by the Team, 442 of these were written warnings, 9 improvement notices were served and 1 prosecution was undertaken.
- 73,321 **official samples** of food were taken by LAs in 2012/13, a **reduction of 6.8%** (from 78,653) on 2011/12 and continuing the downward trend in LA sampling activity in recent years. 148 samples were taken by the Team in 2012/13.
- LAs dealt with a total **68,639 consumer complaints** about the safety and quality of food and the hygiene standards of food establishments in 2012/13, an **increase of 1.5%** (from 67,650) on complaints reported in 2011/12.
- LA returns show a total of **2,531 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)** professional LA staff (1,835 food hygiene and 696 food standards) were engaged in UK food law enforcement as at 31st March 2013, a **6.6% reduction** on numbers reported in 2011/12 (2,709).
- The UK level of **Broad Compliance** and above (equivalent to Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating 3 to 5) was **91.2%** of rated establishments, a **slight increase** on the 2011/12 level (**90.2%**). 92.2% of premises were broadly compliant locally.
- The trend for LAs to target higher risk category establishments, at the expense of interventions carried out at lower risk establishments, has continued. For **food hygiene, 98.9% Category A** (15,349 of 15,516), **98.5% Category B** (64,225 of 65,217) and **89.7% Category C** (191,877 of 213,914) due interventions were achieved. Locally officers carried out 100% of category A and B interventions and 98.5% of category C interventions ..

1.2.3 Full details of the Food and Safety Team's performance for 2012/13 was reported to the Board in May.

1.3 Pilot project to improve display of food hygiene ratings

- 1.3.1 The Food and Safety Team have been selected as one of eight local authorities in the south east to participate in a pilot project aimed at increasing the display of food hygiene ratings in local businesses, to promote the scheme and increase consumer awareness. In Wales it is now mandatory for a business to display a food hygiene rating in the window. In England no such legislation is planned and so the FSA are looking to provide grant funding for local authorities to promote display of hygiene ratings amongst their businesses.
- 1.3.2 Businesses with a hygiene rating of between three and five will be randomly selected by the FSA. Approximately half will receive a targeted mailshot, a replacement window sticker and certificate explaining the benefits of display and promotion of their rating.
- 1.3.3 The other half will receive face to face advisory visits by officers to explain the benefits of display and using their rating to promote their business and encouraging businesses to put their stickers up at the time of the visit.
- 1.3.4 The FSA will then return to see which, if any, of the interventions have been successful. If the project is successful it will be offered to other local authorities.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to monitor food safety and health and safety of commercial premises within the borough.
- 1.4.2 By supporting businesses through sector specific training the Team is demonstrating a commitment to support business in achieving compliance quickly and easily, in line with the Regulators' Compliance Code.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The pilot project will be grant funded by the FSA and will be cost neutral.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The pilot project will be delivered in line with the FSA agreement.

Background papers:

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Nil

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