

FOOD HYGIENE INFORMATION SCHEME / SCORES ON THE DOORS – UPDATE

Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on the Agency's Scores on the Doors project with specific reference to the two-tier Food Hygiene Information Scheme in Scotland.

The Committee was updated verbally on this subject at its meeting on 4 February 2009. Since that time a UK Scores on the Doors Steering Group has been established and arrangements have been established in Scotland for local authority and wider stakeholder liaison.

In April 2009, East Lothian Council became the first Scottish local authority to implement the FHIS beyond the existing five pilot authorities. Nineteen further authorities have indicated an intention to implement the scheme by April 2012, subject to appropriate support from the Agency.

The Agency is working with stakeholders on a proposal to extend the scope of the EAT *safe* Award to catering and retail operations to align it with the scope of the FHIS and Scores on the Doors schemes across the UK.

The Committee is invited to:

- Note the progress on the Scores on the Doors project and the Food Hygiene Information Scheme.

LOCAL AUTHORITY FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT BRANCH

Contact: Peter Midgley Tel: 01224 285189

BACKGROUND

1. At its 10 December 2008 meeting, the Agency's Board decided that a six-tier national 'Scores on the Doors' (SotD) scheme should be established in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and that a two-tier scheme should continue in Scotland. The two-tier scheme known in Scotland as the *Food Hygiene Information Scheme* (FHIS) was piloted by five local authorities, over a two-year period, prior to the Board's decision. The Agency's consultation on SotD schemes established that this format was preferred by stakeholders responding to the consultation across Scotland.

DETAIL

Update on UK developments

2. A UK-wide Scores on the Doors Steering Group has been set up to provide advice and guidance to the Agency on the development of the national six-tier SotD scheme and the two-tier scheme in Scotland with a view to shared learning and commonality of approach, as far as possible. It is chaired by Steven Esom who has a background in the food industry, and its membership comprises of consumer, local authority (including the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee), food industry and Agency representatives.

3. The UK Steering Group has established two working groups, which, between them, are considering details relating to the scope of the scheme, exemptions, 'start-up' issues for local authorities, revisits, appeals and for the six-tier scheme, the mapping of risk rating scores to tiers of the scheme. Scope and exemptions have been agreed, guidance on 'start-up' issues has been agreed, and work is progressing on appeals and on re-inspections/re-visits for re-scoring. With regard to the 'mapping' of tiers from numerical scores derived from the intervention-rating scheme at Annex 5 of the *Food Law Code of Practice* and following debate by the Steering Group, the Agency has decided on a top broad band that eliminates potential gold-plating barriers, and has also defined the third tier of the scheme. Work on the other tiers is now progressing.

Projected uptake by local authorities in Scotland

4. Twenty five of the thirty two local authorities in Scotland have intimated their intention to implement the FHIS. Further information on the breakdown is as follows:

- Two of the five local authorities that piloted the scheme, Perth and Kinross and Fife, have extended the initial pilot areas to now fully cover both local authority areas and the remaining three have started work on similar extension, or indicated their intention to do so.
- East Lothian Council launched the scheme in North Berwick in April and plan to have launched in four areas by the end of October 2009.
- Nineteen further local authorities have indicated their intention to implement the FHIS, subject to appropriate Agency support. Of these, eleven have joined a Lead Officers' Working Group established as a forum for authorities that wish to begin preparing to implement the scheme. A further local authority is due to join this group at its next meeting on 2 December 2009.
- Indications from the remaining seven authorities suggest that five intend to implement during 2010 -11 and two during 2011-12.

5. Detailed planning is required prior to being in a position to launch and a number of the Scottish local authorities have intimated that they intend to launch across their whole local authority area at one time rather than via a staged roll-out. This approach can most efficiently be achieved through 'behind the scenes' work over a timescale of 12-18 months prior to launch.

Development of guidance

6. The Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) has endorsed the FHIS guidance document produced by the Pilot Project Steering Group. The document has proved very useful as a tool to allow early engagement with local authorities. However, the Agency will provide further guidance in due course to take account of stakeholder views as the Score on the Doors project continues.

Arrangements for stakeholder liaison in Scotland

7. The Pilot Project Steering Group concluded its work in January and stakeholder liaison in Scotland will continue through a SFELC Implementation Group. However, membership of the Implementation Group will be essentially the same as the former Pilot Steering Group, with Moyra Burns continuing as Chair.

8. One member of the Implementation Group has been established as the Scottish representative on the UK Steering Group and one member is established as Chair of a short-term local authority Lead Officers' Working Group, mentioned in section 2 above. The SFELC Implementation Group has also taken over stakeholder liaison on development of the EAT *safe* Award. The foregoing arrangements provide a single forum for stakeholder liaison in Scotland provided through SFELC that has formal links to local authority implementation and development of UK common policies. The first meeting of the Implementation Group was held on 8 September 2009. The main area of consideration at that meeting related to continued promotion of both the FHIS and the EAT *safe* Award to key stakeholders and to consumers. The next meeting of this Working Group is planned for 23 November.

9. The Lead Officers' Working Group has met three times and work on the practical implementation of the scheme by the constituent local authorities is underway. Standard letters for food businesses based on the pilot letters, certificates and stickers have been distributed. Discussions on interim IT measures have taken place and have already been introduced in a number of authorities in order to allow data collection to commence.

10. Twenty-seven Scottish local authorities were represented at a Scores on the Doors meeting organised by the Agency on 8 September 2009. This provided a forum to update on all UK developments and for Scottish authorities to discuss any issues they considered relevant. Central to the updates was a presentation from the Chair of the current Lead Officers' Group on the work of local authorities preparing to implement the scheme at present. The meeting was constructive and did not flag up any issues specifically related to UK developments or the work of the UK Steering Group.

11. Individual meetings have taken place between the Agency and local authorities at the request of the local authorities concerned and the Agency will continue to meet with local authorities individually on request. Understanding the individual circumstances and needs of local authorities appears to be a very important step in determining the nature of appropriate Agency support anticipated for successful local implementation.

SFAC ACTION

SFAC is invited to:

- Note the update on developments.