

<b>Name of decision maker:</b>	<b>Councillor Neil Harden</b>
<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Residents and Regulatory Services</b>
<b>Date of Portfolio Holder Decision:</b>	<b>13 October 2011</b>

<b>Title of Decision:</b>
To launch and implement the Food Standards Agency's national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Dacorum.

<b>Decision made and reasons:</b>	
To agree to the implementation of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Dacorum. The reasons for this decision are set out in detail in the Background Report. The main reason is that the Scheme will offer the same benefits as a local scheme (i.e. it will encourage businesses to improve food hygiene standards and raise levels of compliance) but by having a single scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, this will help to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries.	
<b>Reports considered: ( here reference can be made to specific documents)</b>	
<b>Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders Consulted:</b>	
Group Manager (Regulatory Services) Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic and Regulatory)	
<b>Monitoring Officer comments:</b>	The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been incorporated into the report.
<b>Deputy S151 Officer comments:</b>	No specific costs are set out in the report. The proposals should be accepted on the proviso that the £24,000 award for implementation of the scheme is sufficient to cover the set up costs.
<b>Implications:</b>	
Implementing the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Dacorum is likely to	

encourage food businesses to improve hygiene standards and raise levels of compliance. Food businesses will be given a 'hygiene score' following their inspection. This will be publicised via a website and within the premises, enabling customers to make more informed choices about where they eat. The overarching aim is to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and the associated costs of this.

**Risk:**

The Food Standards Agency, as the national regulator for food safety, launched the scheme in November 2010 with the aim of every local authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland signing up to it in time for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. It was supported by Local Government Regulation, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Better Regulation Executive and the Local Better Regulation Office. Implementation of the scheme in Dacorum would be in line with the national strategy and therefore, presents a very limited risk.

**Value for Money:**

Implementation of the scheme is likely to encourage food businesses to improve hygiene standards and to raise levels of compliance. Premises with a high level of compliance require less inspection and investigation resource from Environmental Health Officers.

The scheme is based on the existing 'statutory' food hygiene inspection programme, so will run alongside it, thereby enabling the inspections to serve both purposes at the same time – checking legal compliance and providing a hygiene score for the premises.

There is provision for businesses to request revisits following allocation of their score. However, based on the experience of other local authorities, this is unlikely to occur very often.

The Food Standards Agency has awarded Dacorum Borough Council a grant of approximately £24,000 to cover the cost of launching the scheme, so that resources will not be directed away from meeting the Council's food safety targets.

**Options Considered and reasons for rejection:**

The other option considered would be to decide not to introduce the national Food

Hygiene Rating Scheme in Dacorum. This option was rejected because, as explained in the Background Report, it is highly likely that the scheme will become mandatory within England in the near future. By adopting the scheme now, the Council will be awarded a £24,000 grant to cover set up costs. In addition, to choose not to introduce the scheme now would mean forgoing the opportunity of raising food hygiene standards in the Borough.

**Portfolio Holders Signature:**

**Date:**

**Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:**

**For Member Support Officer use only**

Date Decision Record Sheet received from portfolio holder: 04/10/11

Date Decision Published: 13/10/11

Decision No: PH/047/11

Date of Expiry of Call-In Period: 20/10/11

Date any Call-In received or decision implemented:

## BACKGROUND

- The national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (“the National Scheme”) was developed collaboratively through a Steering Group involving local authorities, Local Government Regulation, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, consumers, the food industry, the Better Regulation Executive and the Local Better Regulation Office.
- The National Scheme, which was launched formally in November 2010, is backed by the Government and the aim is that it will be up and running in all local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in time for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.
- Currently, there is a wide variation in the local schemes being offered by local authorities across the UK, with no consistent approach being taken until now. Increasing numbers of local authorities are committing to introducing the National Scheme.
- Local authorities operating ‘local’ food hygiene rating schemes (‘Scores on the Doors’), have found them to be successful in encouraging businesses in their areas to improve hygiene standards and raise levels of compliance. However, these schemes are often inconsistent and confusing for consumers.
- The National Scheme will offer the same benefits but by having a single scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, this will help to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries.
- Having a single National Scheme means that consumers will be able to compare like for like wherever they are and businesses will have the reassurance that they are being treated fairly and consistently with their local, regional and national competitors.
- Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, supermarkets and other retail food outlets, as well as other businesses where consumers can eat or buy food, will be given a hygiene rating as part of the National Scheme. It is estimated that over 1,000 businesses in Dacorum will be included in the scheme.
- There are six hygiene ratings on a simple numerical scale ranging from ‘0’ (urgent improvement necessary) at the bottom to ‘5’ (very good) at the top. After each food hygiene inspection, the premises will be rated on the level of food hygiene observed, the cleanliness and condition of the structure of the food rooms and the confidence in management to maintain good hygiene standards. This will generate a hygiene score which will determine the rating for the

premises. This is a simplified version of the existing scheme which is used to monitor legal compliance.

- During the inspections, businesses will be advised on the action required to achieve the higher ratings.
- Consumers will be able to access the premises ratings on the Council's website or at [food.gov.uk/ratings](http://food.gov.uk/ratings). These will be published 14 days after the inspection. Businesses will be encouraged by the Environmental Health Officers to display stickers and certificates showing their rating at their premises. Businesses will have an opportunity to appeal their rating and have a right of reply when the rating is published on the website. It is envisaged that the number of appeals will be limited, as issues will be addressed during the inspection and because officers are already very experienced at dealing with statutory risk rating schemes. The Food Standards Agency will monitor this.
- It is highly likely that the National Scheme will become mandatory within England in the near future. By adopting the scheme now, the Council will be awarded a £24,000 grant to cover set up costs. Running costs are likely to be equivalent to (up to) 3 hours of officer time per week. This time is expected to be offset by improved levels of compliance.
- The sooner all local authorities are running the National Scheme, the quicker its benefits to consumers and businesses and the longer term savings to the economy can be realised.
- Approximately one million people suffer from food poisoning every year at an estimated cost to the economy of £1.5 billion.