

	Executive – 12 <sup>th</sup> October 2011	<b>Agenda Item No.</b> <b>11B</b>
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<b>MIGRATION TO THE NATIONAL FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME</b>	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Rob Chapleo ext 6707
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	n/a
<b>Background Papers</b>	n/a

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	No
<b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No (If No state why below)
Applies to all food businesses	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive		Chris Elliott
Head of Service		Richard Hall
CMT		Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		Andy Jones
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)		Michael Coker
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Local food business operators.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## 1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Support from elected Members is sought for Warwick District Council (WDC) to migrate from the local Scores on Doors project to the new national 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' (nFHRS).
- 1.2 This Report provides information about the nFHRS – it explains in brief what this national scheme is, why and how it was developed, progress on its rollout, why WDC should migrate to this, what support the Food Standards Agency (FSA) will provide, what the benefits are for local consumers and for local businesses, and the potential impact on Council resources.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the migration from the local to the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

## 3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The nFHRS, which is for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is a local authority/FSA partnership initiative - it is key to the FSA's strategic objective to improve food safety and to the Government's aspirations for hospitality during the Olympic Games.

Like Scores on Doors, it will help consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving them information about the hygiene standards in food premises. It will also encourage businesses to improve their standards.

The overarching aim is to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and the associated costs to the economy. Around one million people suffer from food poisoning every year at an estimated cost to the economy of £1.5 billion.

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 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.

Consumers can access ratings at [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) website and businesses will display stickers and certificates showing their rating at their premises.

## 4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 Overall the work contributes to the Health & Wellbeing priority of the Sustainable Community Strategy by helping to promote healthy eating and preventing illness. However, there are no fundamental changes in policy in this project, only a change in implementation.

## 5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The resource implications are –
  - Considerable time and effort was expended in instituting the current bespoke local scheme which to a certain extent will be 'wasted' in order to carry out the migration.
  - The scheme is based around the planned food hygiene intervention programme in order to minimise any burdens on the Food Safety Team.

- A grant of £4,500 has been made available by the FSA to cover the set up of the new scheme and no additional financial resources are being sought for this.
- The main impact on resources is likely to result from operation of the mechanism that allows businesses to request a new rating when improvements have been made (this safeguard is essential if the scheme is to be legally robust) as these can be outside the planned intervention programme – the mechanism has, however, been designed to minimise any impact and the FSA has given a commitment to keeping it under close review and to revising the procedure as necessary to ensure that it does not compromise public health protection.

## 6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Members may choose not to support the migration and instruct return of the grant and maintenance of the current scheme.

## 7. **BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 WDC has been operating a popular Scheme for a number of years. Like similar schemes operating in local authorities across the UK, our experience suggests that it has been successful in encouraging businesses to improve hygiene standards.

Our local scheme and those of other local authorities vary in a number of key respects and local authorities, consumers, and the food industry all told the FSA in a major public consultation in 2008 that they wanted a single national scheme.

The nFHRS 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 distinctive nFHRS branding is based on the findings of research with consumers about what they find easiest to understand and use.

The FSA has an on-going programme for developing the IT platform set up for publishing ratings to ensure that it has the functionality needed by local authorities and is as easy as possible for consumers to use.

The 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.

Increasing numbers of local authorities, including many that were running their own 'local' schemes, are committing to the nFHRS and, by the end of June some 170 authorities were operating it in their areas.

- 7.2 Although the local scheme has been successful, there are additional benefits of operating the national model.

Having a single scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will help to ensure consistency for businesses and clarity for consumers across local authority boundaries.

- 7.3 The scheme will be supported and promoted nationally by the FSA -

- providing a free IT platform (with helpdesk support) for publishing ratings.

- covering the cost of certificates and stickers for businesses.
- granting funding for local authorities adopting the scheme in 2011/12 to cover the costs of preparatory activities necessary prior to launch.
- organising and funding consistency training for local authority food safety officers.
- issuing the nFHRS 'Brand Standard' which provides advice and guidance to local authorities on implementation and operation of the scheme.
- producing a 'Communications Toolkit' that includes advice and guidance on promoting the scheme locally, including case studies and template press releases.
- providing template materials for use with businesses and consumers and leaflets to explain what the scheme is about.
- working with local authorities to promote the scheme locally to raise awareness among consumers and businesses and will promote the scheme on a national basis.

7.4 Benefits for consumers will be that the national promotional activities will raise awareness and understanding of food hygiene ratings and will help them to use the scheme, and they will be able to easily compare one business with another not just within their own area but also further afield.

Benefits for businesses will be that they will have reassurance that they are being treated fairly and consistently with their local competitors and with competitors more widely. All businesses, no matter the size or nature of their operation, should be able to achieve the top rating.