

## LICENSING COMMITTEE

26 June 2017

Present: Councillor J Fahmy (Chair)  
Councillors K Crout, S Bolton, J Connal, K Hastrick, M Hofman,  
P Jeffree, Ahsan Khan, B Mauthoor, M Mills, M Parker, D Scudder  
and R Smith

Officers: Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head  
Environmental Health Manager (Business)  
Senior Solicitor  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

### 1 **Apologies for absence/ committee membership**

Apologies were received from Councillors Dychton and Saffery.

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Bell replaced Councillor Smith.

### 2 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 March 2017 were submitted and signed.

### 4 **Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2017-18**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Community and Environmental Services asking them to approve the Food Safety Law Enforcement Plan.

The Environmental Health Manager introduced the report. He advised that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) audit in 2015 had recommended that the council review its Food Safety Law Enforcement Service Plans annually, rather than every two years as had been the case previously. This allowed for flexibility, particularly in response to changes in the rules and regulations.

The Service Plan provided the basis on which local authorities were monitored and audited by the FSA to ensure consistency and effectiveness. The framework agreement provided a template, encapsulating the wide range of work undertaken by the council, including inspections, complaints, providing advice to businesses and food sampling. The Environmental Health Manager emphasised the importance of maintaining high food safety standards, since this would encourage people and businesses into Watford.

The Environmental Health Manager reported that the restructuring of the council's Environmental Health and Licensing Sections had enabled a more joined up, business focussed approach to the officers' work. This included a greater emphasis on the council's advisory role to businesses, such as the in-house food hygiene training courses which had attracted wide interest and participation. There had been an overall improvement in ratings in the town.

Questioned about the impact of Brexit on current standards and legislation, the Environmental Health Manager advised that the UK had generally led the way in this area within the EU. The current standards and structure were therefore expected to continue.

The Environmental Health Manager reported that there were now some 852 food premises registered in Watford. This represented an increase of around 200 in the last two years, largely as a result of legislation requiring child minders to register as well as the growing popularity of home caterers and market stalls.

Members considered the projected enforcement figures for 2017/18. It was explained that written warnings to a premises could cover a range of requirements, most of which would be resolved quickly. Relatively few notices were likely to be served as a result of the strict controls maintained by inspectors.

In response to a question about the number of unrated premises, the Environmental Health Manager clarified that this referred to new establishments which had been registered on the council's database in the middle of March but had not been inspected by the end of March, when the figures were compiled. He further advised that officers would be considering changes introduced by the FSA to enable local authorities to charge for food hygiene reassessment visits.

In a discussion about the sharing of officers between authorities, the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing outlined the collaborative working between Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. This sought to utilise available resources between authorities, however was only used for lower risk work by the council. It was not anticipated that any contractors would be utilised during the first six months of 2017/18.

Following a question about food complaints, the Environmental Health Manager explained that the council prioritised premises complaints, and foreign body, unfit and mouldy food complaints posing a risk to public health. Complaints mainly arose from members of the general public. Quality issues and trading standards, which could encompass Fair Trade considerations, were dealt with by Hertfordshire County Council's Trading Standards Section.

There was some consideration of the Primary Authority Scheme for TJX Europe, which covered the company's food hygiene and health and safety across multiple sites. The Environmental Health Manager reported that the agreement had been positive and beneficial for both parties and had enabled the council to instruct other authorities to focus on particular issues. Further primary authority opportunities with companies of high standard would be welcomed by the council.

In the absence of further questions, the Chair moved the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED –

that the Food Safety Law Enforcement Plan be approved.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.45 pm  
and finished at 8.11 pm