

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	18 January 2007
Subject:	“Scores on the Doors” - A pan-London pilot Scheme to publicise the results of Food Safety Inspection results
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Executive Director, Urban Living
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Eileen Kinnear - Community Safety and Public Realm
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report proposes that Harrow Council participate in a London-Wide “Scores on the Doors” London Wide pilot scheme in partnership with the food Standards Agency. The scheme aims to publish food hygiene inspection information on the Internet and seeks Members agreement to the proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Agree that Harrow Council participation in a London-Wide “Scores on the Doors” pilot scheme as outlined in the body of the report.

REASON:

The project will be developed in line with national policy on publishing food hygiene information and improve consumer access to public information in accordance with Freedom of Information and Environmental Information legislation in a cost effective and efficient way.

SECTION 2 – REPORT

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 This report outlines the development of a London-Wide scheme for publishing food hygiene information developed in line with national policy on publishing food hygiene information. The Scheme is a national pilot supported by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), London Councils (LC), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM) (Partners)
- 2.1.2 The scope of the scheme covers food businesses within the retail and catering sectors. For reasons of confidentiality the scheme will exclude home-based child minders and nurseries; approved premises; premises that are inspected through alternative inspection programmes.
- 2.1.3 The scoring mechanism will be based on compliance with the FSA Code of Practice with three key areas being scored in accordance with the Code; Confidence in Management, Compliance- Hygiene and safety, Compliance – premises structure.
- 2.1.4 The scores will be taken from the last primary inspection, with each local authority being responsible for their data and quality assurance checks prior to information upload into the “My London” web site. Appeals will be fed through the normal customer complaints process within each local authority. If the local authority needs additional support a panel of independent representatives will be formed to provide further advice on a case-by-case basis, supported by ALEHM, CIEH and LC.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1 The scheme directly supports corporate priority A1, “Making Harrow Safe Sound and supportive” and B2 “A Real Partnership with Harrow Businesses” and has been developed, in part, to the increasing desire from the public to access food hygiene information. The information is public information and there is a legal obligation on the Council to provide this under the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations. Publishing the information will allow the council to legitimately signpost enquirers to the web site.
- 3.2 The benefits of the scheme are summarised as follows:
- Improving public access to Council Services and public information
 - Increasing the competitive edge between traders and caterers who seek increasing market share as a result of improved ratings.
 - Reducing the longer-term enforcement burden on the council as a result of increased self-regulation.
 - Increased progression towards the e-government agenda.
 - Saving Officer time responding to individual requests for information using modern IT

3.3 The Partner bodies have amassed technical and financial and IT resources to ensure that the project is managed and delivered on time, within budget and in a consistent and readily accessible format on the “My London “ web site.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no significant financial implications resulting from participation in the scheme. The year-on-year costs are £867 (equal for all LA’s) relating entirely to Internet web site charges for operation of the scheme through the ‘My London web site, and staffing costs associated with operating the scheme. There will also be approximately a day’s work for Capita to make the local IT interface changes. The direct cost and staffing resource can be accommodated within existing service budgets.

4.2 Majority of start-up costs will be funded by the FSA with the costs broken down as follows:

- IT development, tendering and implementation £30,000 (FSA/LA)
- Project management plus on costs £50,000 (FSA/LA)
- Business open days, information/advice support £30,000 (FSA/LA)
- Officer training costs, peer review £30,000 (FSA/LA)
- Publicity, consumer information £80,000 FSA/LA

Total Cost: £220,000

5.0 Implications if recommendations rejected

5.1 As all-33 London Boroughs are involved in the scheme including those that have previously attempted to pursue their own schemes. This enables Harrow to discharge risk and capitalise on benefits in an efficient, managed and consistent way across London. To pursue this independently, which we have to do at some point in the future, would involve increased costs and risk of failure.

6.0 Consultation

6.1 Initial contact with commercial and public sector professionals is broadly positive. The project steering group has consulted with the British Retail Consortium. The project board continues to work with “which” and representatives of the food industry. The experiences of the London boroughs that have experimented with similar schemes have also been considered.

6.2 Further consultation with commercial and industry stakeholders will take place as part of the development process. The board has also considered

research data from the FSA, USA and other European countries. London is also proposing to develop consumer and business consultation on a sub regional level to provide evidence for participating councils.

7.0 Equalities Impact

- 7.1 The scheme will be implemented across the borough and will apply equally to all relevant food premises. It will not target or exclude businesses on the basis of ethnicity or any other factor.
- 7.2 There is anecdotal evidence that the majority of relevant premises will fall into the pubs, restaurants and fast food takeaway categories, many of which will be owned, managed, or operated by members of minority groups. There is a possibility that members of these communities may appear to be disproportionately affected.
- 7.3 Training to support the implementation of the scheme will cover the importance of consistency during the inspection procedure to ensure business are not discriminated on the basis of ethnicity.

8.0 Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

- 8.1 Officers will incorporate the physical impact food businesses have on their environment by properly addressing waste storage and collection issues. Retail premises are increasingly subject to criminal activity, notability, shoplifting and robbery and Officers can provide advice and information to traders about crime reduction initiatives including "Ringmaster" and the "Retail Radio Link" and the use of CCTV

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name: Cleared by Myfanwy Barrett Date: 20 th December 2006
Monitoring Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name: Hugh Peart Date: 20 th December 2006

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact:

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Background Papers:

London food hygiene information publishing scheme (CIEH, October 2006)

London scheme for publishing food hygiene information (ALEHM, June 2006)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8736 6236

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	A1, A2, B2, D5