
Report To:	Safe , Sustainable Communities Committee	Date:	25 October 2011
Report By:	Corporate Director Education and Communities	Report No:	SCS/80/11/AH/MM
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	714246
Subject:	Food Standards Agency Audit of Inverclyde Council's Food Control Service August 2011		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the results of an Audit of the Council's Food Controls by the Food Standards Agency Scotland in August 2011.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Food Standards Agency as the UK's central competent authority for official controls on food carries out audits of local authorities' enforcement services.
- 2.1 An audit of Inverclyde's food enforcement service, part of Safer & Inclusive Communities, was carried out on 02 - 04 August 2011. The Audit focussed on officer training, competency and authorisation, inspections of food businesses and internal monitoring.
- 2.2 The audit and subsequent report attached at Appendix 1 was extremely positive, including the highlighting of areas of good practice. The audit included "reality checks" where the auditors accompanied officers on visits to food businesses. The conduct of these inspections and the procedures followed were found to be satisfactory.
- 2.3 The only recommendation arising from the audit was that an updated enforcement policy should be submitted for member approval. This was intended to be done in any case once the full implications of the Agency's cross contamination guidance referred to in Report no. SCS/63/11/AH/MM of 3 May 2011 was known.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee

1. Notes the findings of the FSA audit of the Council's food enforcement service; and
2. Receives an updated enforcement policy for approval in due course together with an update of the implications of the FSA's Cross Contamination Guidance as previously recommended in report SCS/63/11/AH/MM.

Albert Henderson
Corporate Director Education and Communities

4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Food Standards Agency audits local authorities as part of the Framework Agreement on Official Food and Feed Controls. The intention of the audits is to improve consumer protection and confidence in relation to food and feed. Food and feed control in Inverclyde is carried out by the Food & Health Team of Safer & Inclusive Communities.
- 4.2 The audit carried out in Inverclyde in August was the 6th in total including one full audit of the entire food control service and a further four partial or focused audits carried out since 2002. The scope of the 2011 audit is detailed in the audit report, the main aim of the audit being to assess the competencies of officers and the effectiveness of the Council's inspection process as recommended by the Public Inquiry Report into the 2005 E. coli outbreak at Bridgend, Wales. The Agency in Scotland is currently undertaking audits of all 32 local authorities against the same criteria.
- 4.3 Previous audits have tended to focus on systems and procedures in place in the Authority. This was the first audit in Inverclyde to include verification visits to food businesses with Council officers to assess how controls are applied in reality. Feedback to the two officers concerned and to the lead officer at the conclusion of the audit on the conduct of these inspections was extremely positive.
- 4.4 The audit highlighted two areas of good practice, including the focus of inspection reports to food businesses, and in general was very positive about the food enforcement service in Inverclyde.

5.0 Audit Recommendations

- 5.1 There was one recommendation arising from the audit, that "the Authority should: submit their updated Enforcement Policy for appropriate approval."
- 5.2 The Food Service Enforcement Policy is currently being updated, primarily to take into account the implications of the Food Standards Agency guidance on cross contamination. This was highlighted to members as being likely to have a significant impact on the Council's food control service, and on food businesses in Inverclyde, in a report on 3 May 2011.
- 5.3 There are still a number of unresolved issues around that guidance but it is our intention to meet with the Food Standards Agency in the near future to discuss our likely approach to enforcement taking the guidance into account. This meeting is a direct result of concerns raised with the auditors. Once this has been done a revised food law enforcement policy will be brought to committee for member approval, preferably by March 2012 but at the latest by the last committee meeting of the current cycle.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Personnel

There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

6.3 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.4 Equalities

There are no implications for equalities arising from this report.

7.0 Background Papers

- 7.1
1. Official Food and Feed Controls – SSCC, May 2011. SCS/63/11/AH/MM
 2. Food Standards Agency in Scotland: Report on the Audit of Local Authority Assessment of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs in Food Business Establishments – Inverclyde Council 02-04 August 2011