

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Cabinet

Date of Committee 23 February 2006

Report Title Food Standards Agency Audit Report

Summary The Food Standards Agency has recently conducted an audit of the Food Standards work conducted by the Trading Standards Service. The report was complimentary about the broadly based work in Warwickshire that involved stakeholders at many stages. No improvement plan was necessary.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not applicable
- Other Elected Members Councillor J Haynes – “Noted.”
Councillor D Shilton, Councillor M Doody
- Cabinet Member Councillor R Hobbs – “I approve the report and also congratulate the Trading Standards staff.”
- Chief Executive
- Legal Ian Marriott – comments noted
- Finance Paul Walsh, Financial Services Manager - approved
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils

Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by
this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Agenda No

Cabinet - 23 February 2006.

Food Standards Agency Audit Report

Report of the Director, Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards

Recommendation

- 1 That the Cabinet agree the Trading Standards Service aims and objectives for Food Standards remain current and appropriate.
- 2 That the Trading Standards Service and in particular those who have contributed to the Food Standards work are congratulated on the FSA audit result.

1 Aims and Objectives

The Trading Standards Service has a statutory duty to enforce The Food Safety Act 1990 and associated Statutory Instruments.

The aims and objectives of the Service in relation to Food and Health include:

- Delivering the activities set out in the statutory food plan recommended by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in partnership with the Public Analyst, taking into account the Food Standards Agency Strategic Plan 2005-2010 'Putting Consumers First'
- Participating in the Warwickshire Food for Health Group and supporting the strategy to improve the health of Warwickshire people particularly the most vulnerable.
- Controlling food standards and labelling in accordance with the ideals set out in 'Food – the local vision', the joint statement produced by the Local Government Association, LACORS and the Food Standards Agency.
- Meeting the challenge of providing advice services for consumers and businesses, which meet the ideals of the Community Legal Service, Consumer Support Network and Business Link by improving access and awareness.

2 The Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The FSA audits local authorities' food law enforcement services as part of their arrangements to improve consumer protection and confidence in relation to food.

These arrangements recognise that the enforcement of UK food law relating to food safety, composition, labelling, imported food and feeding stuffs is the responsibility of local authorities, delivered through their regulatory functions of the Trading Standards Service.

The main aim of the audit scheme is to maintain and improve consumer protection and confidence by ensuring that local authorities are providing an effective food law enforcement service. The scheme also provides the opportunity to identify and disseminate good practise and to provide information to inform Agency policy on food safety standards and feeding stuffs.

The audit was carried out on September 9th 2005, focusing on local authority Home Authority Principle arrangements, advice to business, food and feeding stuffs safety and standards promotion activities.

The full FSA audit report is available at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards

3 Conclusions of the Audit

The main conclusions of the report are:

- 3.1 The Authority was proactively supporting the Home Authority Principle (HAP), based on the identified individual needs of different businesses, and taking realistic account of the Authority's resource constraints. The Service was developing its existing relationships with major food businesses to establish more formalised arrangements.
- 3.2 The Authority's documented policies and procedures for specific enforcement activities made appropriate references to home authority considerations. An examination of the Service's records indicated that its officers were implementing the HAP in practice when carrying out enforcement work.
- 3.3 The Authority was able to provide comprehensive and detailed information that demonstrated a strong proactive commitment to assisting businesses and the promotion of food standards. This included piloting current national priorities to better co-ordinate regulatory functions and the provision of advice to businesses, and local projects that were impressive in terms of their range, diversity and value.

Evidence supporting the Audit conclusions included:

- 3.4 In relation to local authority Home Authority Principle arrangements:
 - i. the Authority had undertaken a survey of home authority businesses in order to gain a better understanding of their needs and expectations. Further consultations were underway to ensure that the businesses' expressed wishes were being met.
 - ii. the Service's records of 5 home authority premises were examined. It was clear that officers were diligent in applying the HAP, where appropriate, during complaint investigations and in the follow-up actions on unsatisfactory sampling results.
- 3.5 In relation to advice to business:
 - i. businesses seeking advice could access information made available by the Authority through a range of media.
 - ii. an extensive range of information leaflets were available both in hard copy and in electronic format from the 'Business Zone' website.
 - iii. the Authority was also proactive in notifying relevant businesses of food alerts and topical food related issues, through direct contact, information leaflets and wider publicity in the media.
 - iv. the Service was an active participant in the Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CEnTSA) liaison group; and
 - v. the authority was attuned to the national agenda and actively supported current central government priorities. New methods of business support were being developed and pioneered by the Service, including participation in the DTI Retail Pilot Project and development of the electronic business 'self-assessment' as part of the e-Trading Standards National project.
- 3.6 In relation to food and feeding stuffs safety and standards promotion activities:
 - i. Compliance Projects for 2004/2005 set out a range of initiatives, based on defined sampling exercises, that included the following examples: *Agricultural sampling; Butchers; and School meals and nutrition.*
 - ii. Promotional work recently undertaken, included:
 - Warwickshire County Council's launch and support of FSA 'Food Vision';
 - 'TalkingShop' inter-active consumer information project;
 - 'Food Matters' and 'It's all in the Label' articles for 'Trading Standards Matters' and CEnTSA Business Newsletter publications;
 - 'Cyril the Seal' materials promoting healthy eating for children & parents.
 - 'Crucial Crew' young persons quiz materials
 - Food law related presentations to various groups, including Members, local businesses and consumers;

- Trader information leaflets, press releases and Council website resource;
- Trading Standards Open Day, exhibitions and displays at various local venues and shows.

The FSA ask that this audit report is presented to elected members.

No improvement plan was required by the agency, an indication of their satisfaction with the Council's performance.

NOEL HUNTER
Director, Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards

Shire Hall
Warwick

24 January 2006