



Subject:	Consultation response to Food Standards Agency on the proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice in relation to a new Food Standards delivery model
Date:	10 th January 2023
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is seeking views and comments from stakeholders on the proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland) in relation to the introduction of the new Food Standards Delivery Model.
1.2	The proposals presented in the consultation are the introduction of a new method of determining the food standards risk posed by a food business, and a new frequency schedule for the delivery of food standards official controls. These changes will require significant changes to the Food Safety Unit's current information management system

1.3	<p>(CIVICA) for recording and reporting of food standards interventions and for the migration of existing premises to the new scheme.</p> <p>The Council’s Food Safety team have reviewed the FSA consultation questionnaire and have prepared a draft response for committee approval which indicates general support for the implementation of the new food standards delivery model. However the draft response comments on a number of technical points in relation to implementation, in particular the availability of financial assistance from the FSA for the necessary amendments to the IT systems used by the Food Safety Unit.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the draft consultation response.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>In Northern Ireland, district councils (DCs) are Competent Authorities responsible for verifying compliance with food law in the majority of food businesses. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for providing advice and guidance on the approach that DCs should take, and this is set out in the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). DCs have a duty to have regard to the provisions in the Code in relation to the delivery of Official Controls.</p>
3.2	<p>Food standards interventions focus on food matters such as food labelling, provision of allergen information to consumers, food composition and food fraud. Working in collaboration with Councils and other key stakeholders, the FSA have developed a new delivery model for food standards official controls and interventions. This updated model provides a more flexible approach for DCs to better target resources at food businesses presenting the greatest risk.</p>
3.3	<p>The main proposals involve fundamental changes to the current Food Standards Delivery Model, and associated content within the Code of Practice, namely the introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new Food Standards Intervention Rating Scheme that officers will use to evaluate the risk posed by a food business; and • a new Decision Matrix to determine the frequency at which food standards official controls should be delivered in line with the outcome of the risk assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes to sections of the Code relating to the delivery of food standards interventions.
3.4	<p>Food Safety Officers within Belfast City Council have expressed support for the new scheme within the draft response but have noted a number of concerns regarding the initial work required for migration from the current risk rating scheme, particularly with regard to the IT solutions and associated costs.</p>
3.5	<p>The proposed scheme was recently piloted by one council in NI however the proposed scoring element relating to control of allergens and provision of allergen information to consumers was not included in the pilot scheme. The Council involved in the pilot exercise has noted that this element would need to be further evaluated in order to determine the impact on the overall number of food standards inspections required each year in each Council area.</p>
3.6	<p>Allergen information provision continues to provide a challenge to food businesses and there is the potential for the revised scoring model to identify more premises into the priority category, thereby requiring revisits every month until compliance is secured. This may pose additional challenges for service planning within the Council's Food Safety service, due to the reactive nature of the new model. It will be difficult to estimate the numbers of planned interventions as a premises requiring a priority intervention may then require further multiple interventions within the same year.</p>
3.7	<p>Belfast City Council Food Safety Officers also anticipate that training will be required in excess of the FSA's estimations and have asked for specific training with regard to the application of scores to ensure consistency with other DC's, similar to that provided to the pilot council.</p> <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.8	<p>Financial support is being sought from the FSA to assist with the changes necessary to the Food Safety Unit's IT systems (Civica) to allow for the recording of food standards interventions under the new risk rating scheme and this is reflected in the consultation response.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p>
3.9	<p>None</p>

3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Draft consultation response