



Subject:	Food Safety Prosecution - Update
Date:	12th May 2015
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Lead Operations Officer, Health & Environmental Services
Contact Officer:	Damian Connolly, Environmental Health Manager (Food Safety and Port Health)

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	To update Members on the outcome of the Food Safety and Port Health Team's investigation of the largest ever E. coli O157 outbreak in Northern Ireland.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	A major E. coli O157 outbreak associated with Flicks Restaurant, Belfast occurred in October 2012. A detailed investigation by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) of Belfast City Council established a number of food safety offences which may have contributed to the outbreak. As a result the food business operator of Flicks Restaurant, Moviehouse Cinemas (Yorkgate) Limited, was prosecuted for 11 offences under food hygiene legislation. The limited company pleaded guilty to all 11 offences in Belfast Crown Court on Wednesday 25 th March 2015. Sentencing took place in the Crown Court on Wednesday 29 th April 2015 when HHJ Kerr Q.C. imposed a fine of £110,000 plus costs of £5,000. The Outbreak Control Team (OCT) Report, which contains details of the investigation, has now been released by the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Key Facts

- E. coli O157 is a highly infectious food poisoning bacterium that can cause serious life threatening illness in some patients.
- This was the largest ever reported E. coli O157 outbreak in Northern Ireland and one of the largest ever in the UK.
- Involved 141 confirmed E. coli O157 cases and 159 other symptomatic individuals
- 19 people were admitted to hospital.
- The outbreak was investigated by a multiagency Outbreak Control Team. It was chaired by the PHA with core members including senior Environmental Health Officers from Belfast City Council, consultant microbiologists and officers from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The scale of the outbreak was unprecedented and the PHA declared it a 'major public health crisis.' The investigation determined a link to Flicks Restaurant, Belfast.
- Following instructions from the Council's EHOs Flicks Restaurant closed voluntarily on 11th October 2012. EHOs visited the premises to confirm it was closed and to ensure all remaining foodstuffs were disposed of appropriately. This successfully controlled the outbreak and the restaurant has not re-opened to date.
- E. coli O157 is a very infectious agent and the large number of people infected within the community increased the risk of secondary spread. This resulted in the PHA activating a full public health response to the incident and EHOs were involved in a complex logistical operation and worked tirelessly in the early days of the investigation to proactively trace cases and contacts and to issue infection control advice. This aspect of the investigation was a major success as no secondary outbreak occurred and there were only a few individual secondary cases.
- Once the outbreak was controlled, officers within the food safety and legal services teams continued with complex investigations and evidence gathering which resulted in this successful prosecution.

3.2	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>A considerable amount of officer time was devoted specifically to the investigation and preparing for court, this work was absorbed within the revenue estimates. Members should note that the Food Standards Agency provided financial support for the investigations. given the national significance of the case</p>
3.3	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
4.1	<p>Appendix 1 - Press release issued on Wednesday 29th April 2015.</p>