Annex 1

Using the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme: guidance for officers and Members

Introduction

Southend Borough Council is participating in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The scheme helps local people and visitors to our area to make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food by providing information about the standards of hygiene found at the time of inspection by officers from our Food Safety Team. The power of these choices gives recognition to businesses that meet the standards required and provides an incentive to improve to those that do not. The overarching aim is to protect public health. It is important that Southend Borough Council itself supports the scheme that it runs. This note provides information about the FHRS and Guidance for council officers and elected Members on using the schemes in relation to Council business.

About the FHRS

The scheme has been introduced by local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in partnership with the Food Standards Agency. Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels and other places people eat away from home, as well as supermarkets and other retail outlets, are given FHRS ratings.

These ratings are published on the Food Standards Agency’s website at www.food.gov.uk/ratings and there are mobile phone apps. Businesses are provided with stickers showing their rating and encouraged to display these at their premises.

There are six FHRS ratings on a numerical scale ranging from ‘0’ at the bottom to ‘5’ at the top. A rating of ‘3’ indicates a business is ‘generally satisfactory’ and immediate or significant follow-up action by Food Safety Team officers would not be expected.

Not all businesses listed on the website have a rating because some are ‘exempt’ from being given one (e.g. newsagents selling only wrapped confectionery); others are ‘awaiting inspection’ (new businesses or those that have not yet been brought into the scheme) or because the rating is being appealed and is ‘awaiting publication’.

Some businesses may not be listed at all as they are operating from private addresses. There are also a few local authorities that have not yet launched the scheme or are rolling
the scheme out gradually and will only upload data on a business once a rating has been given.

**Guidance for using FHRS in relation to Council business**

**When does this apply?**

FHRS ratings should be used by Council Officers and Members:
- Booking venues or conference facilities for events, where food will be provided;
- Buying in catering services for meetings/training etc.;
- Selecting contract caterers for council owned venues where food is provided;
- Council sponsored events where food businesses can apply for food provision concessions;
- Events likely to be associated with and affecting the reputation of Southend Borough Council
- Campaigns and initiatives to promote local businesses; and
- Where Members or Officers are entitled to claim subsistence allowance for a meal whilst engaged on council business, they are encouraged to check ratings and select places with the highest possible rating and avoid those that are less than a 3 (‘generally satisfactory’).

**What criteria apply for decisions being made on behalf of others?**

Selection of venues or choice of places to eat should be subject to:
- having an FHRS rating of 3 (generally satisfactory), 4 (good) or 5 (very good)
- ideally, the rating should be a 4 or a 5 but the decision should be weighed alongside other factors such as accessibility of the venue and cost
- venues that are not listed or are listed but without a rating should not necessarily be discounted (the Food Safety Team may be able to advise in these cases).

**Implementation**: Heads of Service (or whoever is responsible for budget sign off in relation to the decision) should ensure that this is adopted.

**What criteria apply for decisions officers or Members make for themselves?**

When on council business, officers and Members are encouraged to check ratings and select places with the highest possible rating and avoid those that are less than a 3 (‘generally satisfactory’).

**Implementation** – Directors, Heads of Service and Team Leaders should ensure officers are aware of this guidance and set good examples by actively using FHRS in making their own decisions.

**Further information**

More information on the FHRS and links for downloading the app can be found at [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings)

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