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| Committee(s): | Date(s): |
| Port Health & Environmental Services Committee | 19 July 2016 |
| Subject: Food Standards Agency Audit 2015 | Public |
| Report of: Director of Markets & Consumer Protection | For Information |
| Report author: Peter Brett, Commercial Team (West) Manager | |

Summary

This report provides a summary of the response made to the findings of an audit of the City of London Corporation's Food Safety service by the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The Food Safety service was found to be:-

- a) delivering a range of food law enforcement activities in accordance with our statutory obligations; these were generally delivered according to prescribed timescales by experienced, professional staff; and
- b) demonstrating consistently high performance with regard to meeting planned inspection targets of food businesses; and

with only two key recommendations for improvement:-

- a) **Food premises interventions:** interventions and inspections needed to be recorded in sufficient and consistent detail to demonstrate businesses had been fully assessed to against legally prescribed standards; and
- b) **Internal Monitoring:** whilst some qualitative monitoring checks were being carried out, there was a need to further develop these across the full range of food related activities undertaken and to maintain fuller records of our internal monitoring.

Recommendations

I recommend that your Committee notes the content of this report, the FSA Audit and our Action Plan.

Main Report

Background

2. The FSA audit scheme is designed to maintain and improve consumer protection and confidence by ensuring that local authorities are providing an effective Food Safety service.

3. These arrangements recognise that the enforcement of UK food law relating to food safety, hygiene, composition, labelling, imported food and feeding stuffs is largely the responsibility of local authorities.
4. The City Corporation was included in the FSA's 2015-16 programme of audits because we had not had its City Food Safety service audited in the past by them.
5. At the time of the audit the Port Health & Public Protection Service had just reorganised its Public Protection Division and the team delivering official food controls following the Service-Based Review. Two Commercial Teams, West and East, had been created, responsible for enforcing legal requirements relating to:-
 - a) Food Safety (standards and hygiene);
 - b) Occupational Health & Safety;
 - c) Statutory Nuisances (other than noise); and
 - d) the investigation Infectious Diseases arising from commercial activities – e.g. suspected food poisoning cases.

Scope of the Audit

6. The audit took place over three days between 30 November and 2 December 2015 and examined the City Corporation's Food Law Service Delivery and Food Business Compliance.
7. The assessment involved:-
 - a) auditing the local arrangements in place for database management, inspections of food businesses and internal monitoring;
 - b) an onsite check at a food business accompanying an officer to assess the effectiveness of the official controls implemented by the City Corporation and, more specifically, the checks carried out by our officers to verify Food Business Operators' (FBO) compliance with legislative requirements; and
 - c) an assessment of the City Corporation's overall organisation and management and the internal monitoring of food law enforcement activities.

Audit Findings

8. The Service was found to be:
 - a) delivering a range of food law enforcement activities in accordance with our statutory obligations; these were generally delivered according to prescribed timescales by experienced, professional staff; and
 - b) demonstrating consistently high performance with regard to meeting planned inspection targets of food businesses.
9. Overall, the City Corporation ranks very well when the audit results are compared with those of undertaken at other local authorities.

The Audit Recommendations

10. Some improvements were required to enable the City Corporation to attain the full level of protection to consumers and in order to meet the statutory requirements of the Framework Agreement and the Food Law Code of Practice.
11. These key areas for improvement were
 - a) **Food premises interventions:** interventions and inspections needed to be recorded in sufficient and consistent detail to demonstrate businesses had been fully assessed to against legally prescribed standards; and
 - b) **Internal Monitoring:** whilst some qualitative monitoring checks were being carried out, there was a need to further develop these across the full range of food related activities undertaken and to maintain fuller records of our internal monitoring.
12. As part of the audit process, the City Corporation was required to draft an Action Plan in response to the audit findings. This Action Plan, which was approved by the FSA, is included in the Audit report (Appendix 1) that was subsequently published on the [FSA's website](#).

Current Position

13. Actions continue to be taken to manage the recommendations made in the Audit report and to complete the work in our Action Plan.
14. The FSA's position is to:-

"...contact your authority again in six months to review your progress against the action plan attached at the end of the audit".

as stated in their letter to the Town Clerk of 23 February 2016.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

15. If the City Corporation had 'failed' the Audit, depending upon the severity of the non-compliance, the FSA has the power to take over a local authority's Food Safety service with the subsequent reputational risk being realised.

Other Implications

16. There are no other implications that would result from approval of this report.

Proposals

17. It is recommended that your Committee notes the content of this report.

Conclusion

18. The City Corporation was found to be delivering a range of food law enforcement activities in accordance with our statutory obligations, within prescribed timescales, by experienced, professional staff and demonstrated consistently high performance with regard to meeting our planned inspection targets of food businesses.
19. Two areas were identified for improvement and these are being addressed through a published Action Plan.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Food Standards Agency Audit Report incorporating our Action Plan

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