

TITLE OF REPORT: **Proposal to introduce Charges for Food Hygiene Re-rating Visits**

REPORT OF: **Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment**

Purpose of the Report

1. To ask Cabinet to recommend the Council to agree to the introduction of a new charge for undertaking Food Hygiene Rating Scheme re-rating visits carried out by the Environmental Health Team within the Development, Transport and Public Protection service.

Background

2. The Environmental Health Team undertakes inspections of food premises under the Food Safety Act 1990. As part of these inspections officers assess compliance with food safety requirements and from this they generate the premises rating within the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). FHRS is a scheme operated by the Food Standards Agency and provides food businesses with a score from 0 to 5 based on how well they comply with the food hygiene requirements. A score of 0 means that there are major concerns about hygiene at the premises and a score of 5 means the premises operates to a very high standard.
3. Since the commencement of the scheme in Gateshead there has been a steady improvement in the food hygiene standards within Gateshead businesses. There has also been an increase in public interest in the scores and initiatives undertaken by the Food Standards Agency continue to promote the scheme. A recent study showed that 80% of people check the ratings of restaurants before deciding where to eat.
4. Once they are given their rating businesses have an option to appeal and in such cases the inspection is reviewed by a manager and either confirmed or amended. If no appeal is lodged then the business is considered to have accepted their rating. No appeals have been lodged in Gateshead since commencing the scheme in April 2012.
5. Businesses given a score of less than 5 must maintain the score for a minimum of 3 months. They are then entitled to request a re-rating visit if they have undertaken the necessary works to improve their score.
6. While all FHRS ratings in the UK are available online, in Northern Ireland and Wales the display of the FHRS rating on the premises is mandatory and as such businesses there are more likely to request a re-rating visit if they are awarded a low score. Since mandatory display was introduced these local authorities have been able to charge for a re-rating visit and the average charge levied in Wales is £150. In England re-ratings are outside of the statutory duty to inspect food businesses, as such a local

authority is permitted to charge a fee for undertaking these visits under the Localism Act. A benchmarking exercise across the Tyne & Wear Authorities shows a charging range from £157 to £170, with the majority charging £160.

7. In Gateshead we undertake approximately 600 inspections per year and from these we are asked to undertake about 12 re-rating visits per year.
8. The Food Standards Agency are proposing legislation that will require the mandatory display of Food Hygiene Ratings in England. This will increase the demand for re-rating visits as businesses are more likely to want a high rating score.
9. Environmental Health have undertaken an exercise to evaluate the actual cost of undertaking a re-rating visit including administrative and travelling costs and the time to undertake the visit. This amount to £160.
10. The Council can recover the costs for a re-rating visit without imposing excessive costs to businesses. Payment of the fixed fee will be required prior to the re-rating visit being carried out, so there will be no cost recovery issues.

Proposal

11. It is proposed that the Council introduces a charge of £160 for FHRS re-rating.

Recommendation

12. It is recommended that Cabinet recommend the Council to approve the implementation of a charge of £160 for undertaking an FHRS re-rating.

For the following reason:

So that the full cost recovery can be made for this non-statutory work.

Policy Context

1. The work of the Environmental Health team is directly linked to Vision 2030, Gateshead Strategic Partnerships vision for Gateshead. In particular it contributes to the goal of Gateshead being a healthy, inclusive and nurturing place for all.
2. The work of the Environmental Health team also contributes directly to the Council Plan 2015 – 2020 and in particular the theme of Live Well Gateshead. The ambition of Live Well Gateshead is to encourage people to choose to lead healthy lifestyles. The work of the Environmental Health Team in particular ensures the safety, hygiene and standards of food produced, supplied and consumed in Gateshead and by controlling food and water-borne illness.

Consultation

3. The Cabinet Members for Health and Wellbeing have been consulted.

Alternative Options

4. The alternative to charging for FHRs re-rating is to carry this non-statutory work within the existing resources of the team.

Implications of Recommended Option

4. Resources

- a. **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, confirms that the introduction of a charge of £160 per FHRs re-rating will generate additional income, estimated at c.£5,000 per annum, to the existing revenue budget.
 - b. **Human Resources Implications** - There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report.
 - c. **Property Implications** - There are no property implications arising directly from this report
5. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report
 6. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – An Equality Impact and Needs Assessment of these plans has indicated a neutral impact.
 7. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.
 8. **Health Implications** – There are no health implications arising directly from this report

9. **Sustainability Implications** – There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.
10. **Human Rights Implications** – There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report.
11. **Area and Ward Implications** - This report affects all wards equally