

Item 08 – Food & Safety Team – Gain or Retain a 5

The attached report was considered by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee on 10 October 2023. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee (10 October 2023, Minute 23)

The Chairman presented the report, which set out a proposed charging scheme for advice provided to food businesses before they receive food hygiene inspections. The Food & Safety Team inspected around 1000 food businesses each year, and scored them on a scale from 0 – 5. A score of 0 – 2 would invite further regulatory intervention to the business, and could have negative financial and reputational impacts. These ratings were fixed until the next full inspection.

The Team offered a chargeable “food hygiene rescore visit” service, through which a fresh inspection would be undertaken, without notice to the business, within three months. The demand for these visits had increased significantly. The Environmental Health Manager explained that the proposed scheme would allow the team to charge for advice in advance of inspections, to help businesses achieve higher hygiene ratings on their first attempt. The scheme would not guarantee an outcome but would give businesses the best chance at achieving higher standards of hygiene. The scheme would not be mandatory, and businesses would still be signposted to readily available information. The proposed charge for the service was £210.76, which would recover costs and align with the pricing for rescore visits, providing customers with differing options.

Members heard that the current provision of advice was limited by the volume of statutory work the team had at any given time. Placing the advice within a cost-recovery priced service would thus enable the team to serve customers better, as it could then be given as needed. Limited advice would still be provided for free; the paid service would give businesses bespoke information regarding their circumstances.

Members discussed the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) The contents of the report, including details of the proposed scheme and the suggested fees and charges, be noted; and
- b) That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Gain or Retain a 5 scheme be adopted within the Sevenoaks District.