



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

29 JANUARY 2018

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

REVIEW OF KEY FRONTLINE SERVICES: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Report of Director (Environment and Planning)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Pest Control services of the Environmental Health Service.

2. RECOMMENDATION

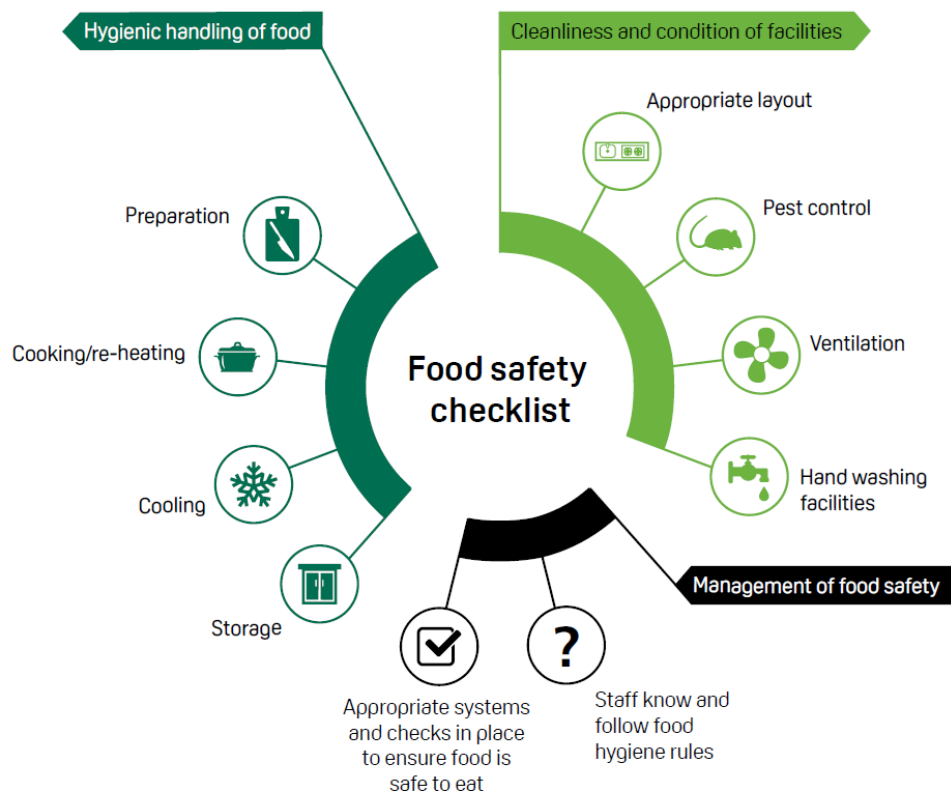
- 2.1 Note the report.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

3.1 What is the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme?

Officers from the Council's Environmental Health Commercial Service are responsible for inspecting food businesses to ensure that they comply with legal requirements on food hygiene. As part of the inspection process, an assessment is made of the business's level of compliance with legal requirements and the adequacy of food safety control measures in place at the time in three areas, hygienic handling of food, cleanliness and condition of facilities and management of food safety. The business is given a numerical score to reflect these aspects.



The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is a partnership initiative with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which converts these numerical scores into a simplified rating for each business. The FHRS is a key public health measure which provides the power of consumer choice as to where to eat out or shop for food by giving them information about the hygiene standards in food premises at the time they are inspected to check compliance with legal requirements – this transparency drives food businesses to improve and maintain hygiene standards.

Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, hospitals, schools and other places where people eat away from home, as well as supermarkets and other retail outlets, such as delicatessens and bakeries are given a hygiene rating of between '0' (urgent improvement necessary) at the bottom to '5' (very good) at the top.



Consumers knowing about and using the ratings is key to success so they are all published on the FSA's website. Consumers can access ratings at food.gov.uk/ratings, and businesses are encouraged to display stickers showing their rating at their premises.

There is open and free access to the data and consumers can also find out about ratings when they are on the move via free smartphone apps.

3.2 Why did we introduce the scheme?

The fact is that food poisoning remains a serious problem - it affects one million people in the UK every year, 20,000 people end up in hospital and 500 people die.

As well as the human suffering that results, this costs the UK economy £1.9 billion annually.

For food businesses, there's the potential loss of reputation if people are ill after eating at their premises and now more than ever, businesses simply can't afford to run the risk of that happening.

Tackling food poisoning remains a priority for the Food Standards Agency and for local authorities and the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is a key element in this and in reducing the public health burden that results.

3.3 How is the scheme integrated with our statutory food law regulatory service?

The FHRS is based around the planned food hygiene intervention programme that is approved by the Executive each and every year and to meet our statutory obligations to deliver a service that enforces food safety legislation, so additional resources for running it are minimal.

It provides information about our service to local people and meets our obligations to be open and transparent.

This transparency provides a powerful incentive for businesses to improve and maintain the hygiene standards required by law so provides an effective and more sustainable alternative to formal and costly enforcement action for securing and maintaining compliance.

Improved standards and sustained compliance, in turn, means fewer inspections for highly performing businesses and allows us to increase our focus on the poor performers.

The FSA is providing support for the FHRS so that on-going costs and the impact on the Commercial Team in Environmental Health are minimised.

The scheme will drive market competition more quickly and maintain this more effectively over time such that our intervention programme will increasingly contribute to business growth locally.

3.4 What support does the Food Standards Agency provide?

The FSA provides a free IT platform (and associated support) for publishing ratings and has a programme of continuous improvement so that it meets local authority needs.

It provides a range of materials to assist us in running the FHRS, such as the stickers that businesses are given to display at their premises. It has also developed a range of template letters and forms to support the operation of the scheme. We can easily tailor these to meet our local needs and to incorporate our own logo.

In addition, the FSA has put in place an on-going programme of consistency training for local authority food safety officers and runs workshop events to share and gather information. The aim is to ensure that there is a level playing field for businesses and that consumers can compare like-for-like ratings with confidence.

It has developed the FHRS 'Brand Standard' to provide advice and guidance to local authorities on implementation and operation of the scheme and is committed to reviewing this on an ongoing basis to help ensure that no unnecessary burdens are placed on local authorities.

A Communications Toolkit has been provided with advice and tips on key messages, ideas for communicating with business and consumers, template press releases etc. There are also occasional supplements to coincide with national campaigns or seasonal events.

The FSA is working with local authorities to promote the FHRS locally and regionally in order to raise public awareness and is promoting the scheme nationally and working with other organisations to find the best ways of making FHRS ratings as widespread as possible.

National promotion of the scheme often occurs around significant dates for instance around Valentine's Day or Mothers' Day, occasions when lots of people are considering eating out. Often the strap line 'Where are you really eating out?' or themes challenging people's assumptions that they can use appearance alone as a way of judging hygiene are used in the promotions. Advertising in national press or advertorials appearing in national consumer and food magazines as well as free papers are used for these promotions and a resultant significant increase in traffic to the FSA website at this time is seen.

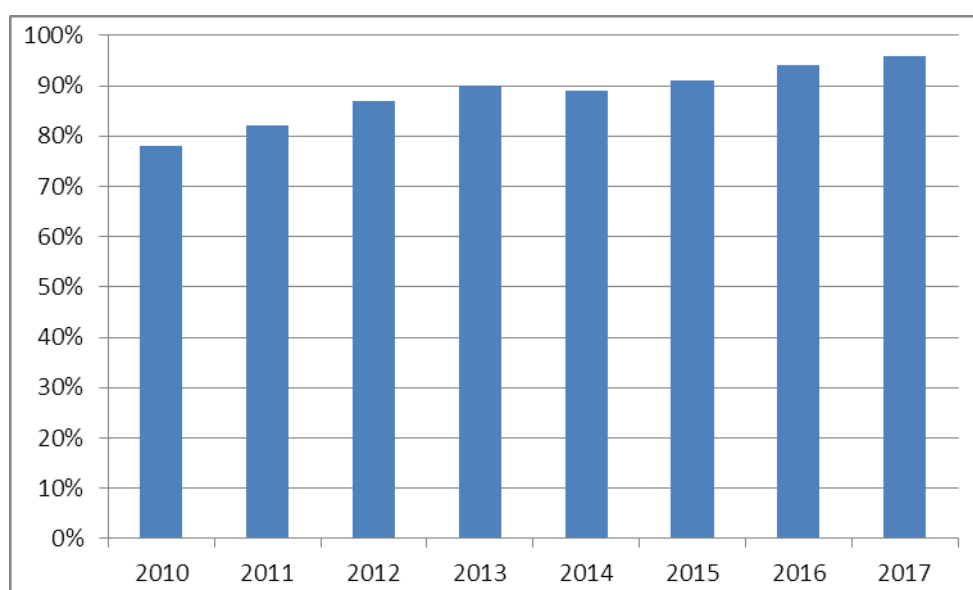
3.5 What's in it for residents and visitors to the borough?

The FSA's public attitudes surveys show that food hygiene when eating out and food poisoning are the main concerns that people have about food safety, and the FHRS provides local residents and visitors with important information about hygiene standards in local businesses.

Telling people about hygiene standards empowers them to make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food and is a very effective way of improving public health protection.

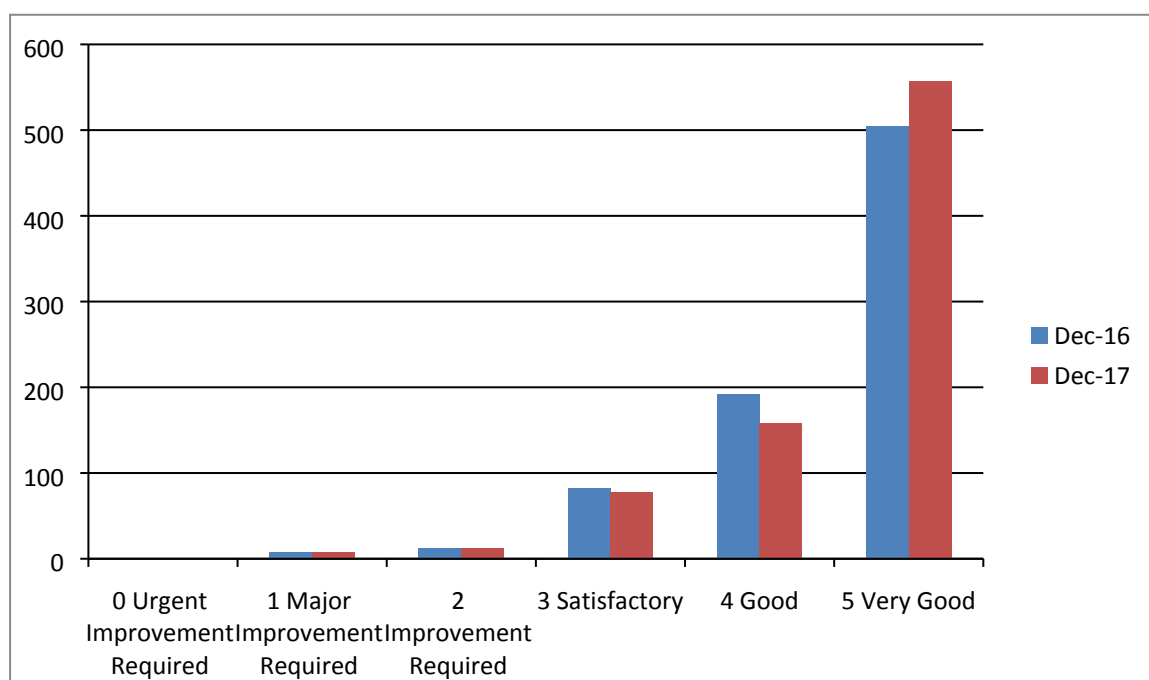
In previous years a measure of the councils performance with respect to food hygiene has been through a National Performance Indicator NI 184, 'The number of broadly compliant food premises'. The service has seen a substantial rise in the borough of broadly compliant premises from 78% in April 2010 to 94% in March 2016 as demonstrated in Chart 1 below.

Chart1: Yearly percentage of food premises broadly compliant



Additionally by use of tools available to local authorities on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme IT system, it is possible to have an overview of the movement of ratings across the borough over time. Chart 2 below shows the shift in the past year December 2016 to December 2017 in premises overall from lower ratings to a 5.

Chart 2: Distribution of Food Hygiene Ratings December 2016 to December 2017.



The same tools also allows a monitoring overview of the historic ratings of premises with their current rating as shown in Chart 3 below. This demonstrates an overall improvement shift in standards in food premises with 35 of 38 premises previously rated low with ratings of 0, 1 and 2 to higher ratings improving to a broadly compliant rating of 3, 4 or 5. Unfortunaely, 12 premises previously rated broadly compliant fell

in standards resulting in a low rating, but overall a net increase of 23 premises became broadly compliant .

Chart 3: Movement of food premises ratings

Previous Rating	Total	Latest Rating					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
1	12	0	1	0	5	4	2
2	24	0	1	1	7	8	6
3	82	0	3	6	15	28	25
4	157	0	1	1	22	74	56
5	326	0	0	1	5	17	295
Total	603	0	6	9	56	131	384

This significant increase in the overall standards of food hygiene in the boroughs food premises has been brought about with a combination of officers promoting Safer Food Better Business and the council's introduction of its hygiene rating schemes. Whilst, the performance indicator is no longer required to be reported to national government, it is seen by the Food Standards Agency as a useful measurement as to the continuing performance of local authorities and also to this council as to a useful guide as to the overall indicator of food hygiene levels in businesses in the borough. As such it is intended to continually monitor this indicator with the aim of improving further the number of food businesses in the Borough who are broadly compliant with legislation. Clearly though as the indicator approaches its maximum value it will be harder to continue to achieve further improvement and therefore it is pleasing to note this year saw an additional 2% rise in broadly compliant premises to 96% as at 31 March 2017, achieving our target of maintaining a level of 93% or higher. This year therefore a target for March 2018 has therefore been set to maintaining a level of 96% or higher.

3.6 What's in it for local businesses?

The FHRS is designed so that all businesses, no matter how small can achieve the top rating by meeting (not exceeding) the legal requirements - there is no gold-plating – and any improvements that businesses need to make to get a higher rating are no more than is already required of them by law.

It includes safeguards (appeal process, reassessment opportunity when improvements have been made, 'right to reply') to ensure fair and equitable treatment.

Good food hygiene is good for business - the scheme gives recognition and a useful marketing tool to those businesses that meet legal requirements.

Good food hygiene is good for profits - studies of similar schemes in other countries indicate that businesses achieving the top ratings increase turnover.

Feedback from businesses has been generally very positive.

The FHRS helps improve consumer confidence in the market which, in turn, will drive business growth.

Pest Control Service

- 3.7 The Pest Control Service is within Environmental Health (Pollution). Demand for the pest control service remains strong with excellent customer satisfaction. The value of the service to the customers of the Borough can be seen by the number of treatments undertaken in the last 7 years.

YEAR	RATS	MICE	BED BUGS	FLEAS	WASPS	OTHER INSECTS
2010/11	706	33	14	18	310	11
2011/12	595	36	14	29	382	15
2012/13	595	35	13	41	106	6
2013/14	498	33	6	34	281	11
2014/15	924	59	24	52	225	5
2015/16	710	47	7	45	269	6
2016/17	419	47	13	54	459	3

- 3.8 The service is provided through a 0.2FTE in house pest control officer and the remaining service requests are passed to a private contractor, SDK, who undertake treatments for the customer at HBBC rates and then charge HBBC their fees as per the contract. It is ensured that the in house pest control officer's appointments are full before engaging the contractor; but it is also ensured that the customer does not wait an unreasonably long time before treatment. Where possible, the aim is to treat within 3 working days of customer contact (it is understood that a customer may request an appointment to suit them that is outside of the 3 day period). However, this can be difficult during periods of high demand e.g. a busy wasp season. As required, SDK take on additional temporary staff to cover such busy periods making it easier to meet demand.

- 3.9 The table below shows the current charges to HBBC from SDK and the current HBBC charges to customers. SDK take all payments from customers that HBBC refer to them. In 2017 SDK were required to take additional payments rather than the contact centre taking them the net charge to HBBC includes an administration fee for taking certain payments.

Treatment Type	SDK Contracted Rate to HBBC	HBBC Charge to Customers (to be collected by contractor)	SDK Net Charge to HBBC
Domestic treatment of rats per course of treatment	£44.17	Rats: £20 Rats (Benefit Reduced Charge) : £0	Rats: £27.50 Rats (Benefit Reduced Charge): £44.17
Additional cost or rebate per treatment charged under the benefit reduced charge.	1. Insects - £22.09 2. Mice - £22.09	Insects (Benefit Reduced Charge) : £26.50 Mice (Benefit Reduced Charge): £26.50	Insects (Benefit Reduced Charge): £22.09 Mice (Benefit Reduced Charge): £22.09

Additional cost or rebate per course of chargeable treatment.	1. Insects - £0	Insects: £53	Insects: £0.00
	2. Mice - £0	Mice: £53	Mice: £0.00

- 3.10 The fees and charges set by HBBC are determined by periodic benchmarking with both the private sector and other Leicestershire authorities to ensure competitive charges to residents of the Borough.
- 3.11 In 2017 the in-house pest control officer (who is also the dog warden) applied to become part time. This was agreed and the savings were used in part to fund the additional services required of SDK.
- 3.12 SDK do provide an excellent service and have done for us since the contract began in 2014. The SDK Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016/17 was completed by 17% of their customers; all customers were left with a questionnaire at the time of treatment. 100% of recipients rated the Service Good or Excellent.
- 3.13 In 2016/17 SDK carried out 1598 timed appointments for HBBC which were associated with 683 service requests. 99.08% appointment times were kept and there were no justified service complaints. If a complaint is received by HBBC regarding the service of SDK, contact is made with their client support team to request an investigation. The investigation report is reviewed by HBBC prior to providing an update to the customer.
- 3.14 The contract is retendered annually to ensure that HBBC get best value from the appointed contractor.
- 3.15 On 1 April 2016 a charge was introduced of £20 for rat service requests; rat treatments are still free for those in receipt of certain benefits. As a result of the charge it was anticipated that the number of service requests for rats would reduce.
- 3.16 The figures below show the service requests for rat treatments in 2016/17 (post charge) that can be compared to previous years.

YEAR	RAT SERVICE REQUESTS
2010-11	706
2011-12	595
2012-13	595
2013-14	498
2014-15	924
2015-16	710
2016-17	419

When comparing rat figures, it needs to be noted that the variation in requests for rat treatments can be seasonal and vary greatly from one season to the next. Rat treatments are always at their peak during late autumn, winter and early spring and rat populations can be significantly affected by mild/harsh winters and also by the amount of rain.

- 3.17 By looking at the figures above, you can see that and 2010-11, 2014-15 and 2015-16 were boom years for rat population. This could have been associated with the warmer wetter weather we have experienced over winter in the last few years. Such winters do not result in long, hard frosts that can reduce rat population as discussed

above. The reduction in numbers in 2016-17 may not be solely attributed to the introduction of a charge as numbers are comparable with previous years, notably 2013-14.

- 3.18 It needs to be remembered that members of the public do not have to use HBBC pest control and they may seek a private pest control company once they realise they have to pay HBBC for the service. However, the £20 fee (free to benefits) at HBBC is significantly less than the average private pest control fee. In addition, once the customer is made aware of the charge, they may question the need to have a treatment. Customers may not actually have a live infestation but may have just seen a roaming rat once.
- 3.19 In August and September 2017 the contact centre carried out an exercise to record the number of requests for rat treatment that the customer terminated when they became aware of the cost. 4 requests for service were terminated owing to cost of service; 56 requests were progressed.
- 3.20 Below are the number of service requests received by the pollution team that may be associated with rats e.g. accumulations. It was always a concern that the introduction of a charge for rats would reduce the amount of rat treatments and therefore result in an increase in rat related service requests e.g. 'rat seen in garden associated with neighbours overgrown garden, or 'rats seen in area owing to accumulation of waste'. Previously, officers could always refer such customers to the free service for their property to ensure that any rats there were controlled while the officer investigated the alleged source of complaint. Now, officers are more likely to be met with the response of 'why should I pay when I am not causing the problem?'

YEAR	NO. SERVICE REQUESTS	% DIFFERENCE
2010-11	106	
2011-12	89	16% decrease
2012-13	92	3% increase
2013-14	144	57% increase
2014-15	125	13% decrease
2015-16	171	37% increase
2016-17	200	17% increase

- 3.21 From the above it can be seen that in the year of the charge introduction - 2016/17 - there was only a 17% increase from the previous year. Other years have shown much greater increases and so it is probable that the increase in 2016/17 is not solely caused by the charge. As can be seen, there has generally been a steady increase of service requests between 2011/12 and 2016/17 this is a 125% increase.
- 3.22 It is important that the service keeps some form of in-house expertise in pest control as it is used invaluablely during investigations by the officers of the pollution team into rodent infestations; many of which are extremely difficult to determine the cause and necessary action to remedy. Having specialist knowledge of pest control in-house is also used when residents have found pests that they are concerned about and want identifying prior to treatment. In addition, the pest control officer advises other services e.g. housing and estates on pest control issues. To strengthen this internal expertise our technical assistant has recently qualified as a pest control officer; she can also provide service continuity should the pest control officer be absent, this is most important for annual pest control contracts.

- 3.23 The service provides annual pest control contracts to both domestic and commercial premises. Currently we have 24 contracts which produce around £12,000 income per financial year. 4 routine visits are made per year to our customers and between those visits they are entitled to unlimited callouts. Any infestation is treated until it is under control. This service is for both rodents and insects.
- 3.24 In addition, we provide a sewer baiting service to Severn Trent Water which generates an income of £3200 per year. 6 days per year are spent laying rodenticide into the sewers; areas for treatment are determined by recent pest activity that could be linked to the drainage system.
- 3.25 The HBBC pest control officer and technical assistant have both attained the Royal Society for Public Health Level 2 Certificate in Pest Control. This is the industry recognised qualification that proves competence to operate as a pest control officer. Continuous professional development is attained through seminars etc., as required. It is a contract requirement that SDK technicians are also similarly qualified.

4. EXEMPTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES

- 4.1 This report is to be taken in open session

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [AG]

- 5.1 None arising from this report

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [AR]

- 6.1 Contained within the body of the report

7. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Both the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Pest Control Service will help contribute towards the Councils priority ambitions of helping people to stay healthy, active and protected from harm along with encouraging growth, attracting business, improving skills and supporting regeneration.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 None

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) Risks		
Risk Description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Reputation with partners if do not work with them	Ensure partnerships entered into and resourced effectively	Steven Merry / Simon Smith
Reputation from negative press coverage of local campaigns	Ensure positive messages emphasised in campaigns	Steven Merry / Simon Smith
Reputation from negative press coverage from enforcement	Ensure enforcement carried out competently and proportionately and in accordance with Enforcement Policies	Steven Merry / Simon Smith
Knowledge and skills of staff	Ensure adequate training given to enforcement staff	Steven Merry / Simon Smith
Adequate staff to deal with enquiries/enforcement activities	Ensure appropriate staff resources available to deal with demands of service	Steven Merry / Simon Smith
Legal compliance	Ensure actions in compliance with Central Government Policy	Steven Merry / Simon Smith

10. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 No implications as food safety and pest control enforcement and activity is carried out consistently for all premises across the whole Borough. Literature is provided to those with “English not as a first language” to assist understanding and compliance with legislation. Training has also been provided in a relevant language again to aid understanding and compliance.

11. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human Resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data Protection implications
- Voluntary Sector

Background papers: None
Contact Officer: Steven Merry, Ext 5735 and Simon Smith, Ext 5769
Executive Member: Cllr K Morrell