

Report on	Implementation of a new approach to food standards regulation by District Councils in Northern Ireland.
Date of Meeting	16 th January 2025
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Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on the implementation of a new approach to food standards regulation by District Councils in Northern Ireland.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for the statutory Food Law Code of Practice, which sets expectations for District Councils (DCs) responsibilities under food law and how these are delivered.</p> <p>The FSA has devised a new approach to how DCs will deliver their regulatory responsibilities on food standards. This approach is intended to be more risk-based and intelligence-driven.</p> <p>Introduction of this new approach to food standards regulation is a significant programme of work and represents the biggest change to the delivery model for food law official controls in over 30 years.</p>
2.2	The FSA has been working closely with DCs that have responsibility for food standards to ensure it is implemented successfully and as smoothly as possible. The Code has been updated to reflect the changes required to introduce a new Food Standards Delivery model (FSDM).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Ensuring food safety, including accurate labelling and composition of food, is a key aspect of protecting consumers.</p> <p>Implementation of the new approach will enable the risks to be identified more readily, (e.g.), those risks posed by lack of accurate or clear allergen information.</p> <p>The new approach also supports DCs in taking relevant follow-up action with a food business until any issues have been addressed, particularly where these pose a significant risk to consumers.</p> <p>The greater sharing and use of intelligence to inform food standards work by district councils recognises the resourcing pressures that authorities are facing and enables them to prioritise more effectively according to risk. This will in turn ensure a more targeted and responsive approach to food standards enforcement.</p>
3.2	The FSA undertook pilots with several district councils across England, Wales and one in Northern Ireland, in advance of finalising this new approach.

3.3	<p>The changes required for the new model will be implemented in a phased rollout to DCs. Each district council has been assigned to a specific cohort for implementation of the new approach, with each cohort onboarding at a different stage of the year up to March 2025.</p> <p>Cohort implementation dates align with the essential updates that are being made to district councils Management Information Systems (MIS) to allow for the recording of food standards official control activity. This is a critical first step to ensure that local authorities can continue to record accurate information about the food businesses in their area and to support effective, risk-based planning of interventions in line with the new model.</p> <p>The roll-out date for district councils in Northern Ireland, using the Tascomi information management system, is currently scheduled to take place from now until the end of March 2025.</p> <p>There has been regular engagement between the food team within the Environmental Health Service at Mid Ulster District Council and the FSA throughout this period of preparation. A single point of contact within the FSA and a dedicated mailbox have been established to assist Councils throughout the transition to the new model.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: In the 2024/25 financial year, the FSA provided core grant funding to District Councils in Northern Ireland. The implementation of the new Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) was stated in the core grant letter as one of the five key FSA priorities for the 2024/25 financial year.
	Human: Officer time.
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this report.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix A: Letter received from FSA