

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 A report to advise Members of current activities being undertaken within the Regulation Division to promote healthy eating.

2.0 NUTRITIONAL ASPECTS OF TAKE AWAY MEALS

2.1 Previous reports have advised Members of (5th March 2008 and 28th January 2009) the monitoring of the nutritional and health impacts of food supplied by take-away outlets. Excess salt, saturated fat, trans-fats and high calorific intake are all known to contribute to cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and obesity.

2.2 Research by the Food Standards Agency⁽¹⁾ has shown that, nationally, 1 in 6 meals are now eaten or prepared out of the home, with men deriving a quarter of their energy and women a fifth, from these sources. Consumption of foods prepared outside the home has been associated with increasing body weight and nearly a third of children under 3 eat a takeaway meal at least once a week.

2.3 In 2008, order to gain an understanding of the nutritional content of take away meals, 150 samples were taken from a representative sample of take-away providers throughout the Borough and submitted to the public analyst.

2.4 An analytical protocol was agreed to identify the nutritional impact of individual meals by reference to both per portion as served and per 100g unit:

- Portion size. The net weight of the sample to be determined both as a whole and as individual components i.e. kebab/chips, curry/rice.
- Energy content/calorific value;
- Total Fat content including fatty acid profile i.e. saturated fat, poly/mono unsaturated fat, trans fatty acids)
- Total Sodium (to be converted to salt content).

2.5 All analytical results were reviewed and examples of some of the more extreme results are as follows;

- Beef Green Pepper and Black Bean Sauce and Fried Rice - The highest salt content was 19g, approximately 3 heaped teaspoons of salt and 318% of an adults Guideline Daily Amount (GDA)

(1)Food Standards Agency May 2010 (2) Prentice, A.M., & Jebb, S.A. (2003) Fast foods, energy density and obesity; A possible mechanistic link Obesity Reviews, 4, 187-194 (3) Infant and Toddler Forum Website

- Sweet and Sour Chicken and Boiled Rice- The average portion contained approximately 1450 calories, 72.5% of a women's calorific GDA.
- Chicken Korma and Pilau Rice- Saturated fat content was high in all meals with the worst sample containing 250% of an adult's GDA.
- Only one Meat Pizza sampled was found to be less than the GDA for total fat content, all other similar products sampled exceeded the GDA with one sample being 150% of GDA.
- Fish and chips were found to have large portion sizes contributing to particularly high levels of saturated fat.

2.6 Overall the analytical results showed that the high levels of fat, salt and calorific content of take away meals could contribute to long term health risks.

3.0 **REDUCING LONG-TERM EFFECTS**

3.1 In order to minimise the risks at population level Trading Standards Officers have discussed the results with a sample of take-away traders and discussed potential changes to recipes and cooking techniques. As a result, trading standards officers designed a Food Standards Agency approved practical guide for take-away traders explaining how they can minimise the long term health risks associated with their product. The guidance is simple and focuses on the measures a small business can understand and implement with a minimum of effort.

3.2 Officers have since adapted and redesigned the guidance material so that it can be included as an insert to supplement the FSA Safer Food, Better Business pack. This pack is an innovative and practical approach to food safety management which was developed to help small businesses put in place food safety management procedures and comply with food hygiene regulations. Trading Standards and Environmental Health Officers are now distributing the packs to food premises as they are inspected.

3.3 A copy of the nutritional guidance insert is attached at schedule A.

4.0 **LIAISON WITH HEART OF MERSEY**

4.1 As one of the key risk factors associated with CVD is poor diet. The analytical results have been shared with the Heart of Mersey, a leading CVD prevention charity.

4.2 Heart of Mersey recognises;

- The importance of a population-based approach
- Tackling health inequalities
- Working in partnership and addressing local aims
- Advocating for appropriate local policies to support healthier lifestyles

4.3 The intention of a population based approach is to identify those factors which affect the whole population rather than focussing on advising the individual. For instance it is good advice to an individual to limit their salt intake to reduce the associated risk of a stroke but a population based approach would be to ensure a reduction in salt in prepared foods and meals.

4.4 Whilst the Food Standards Agency has been working at a national level to secure agreements from food manufacturers to engage in a gradual reduction of salt in some

brands (using a salt reduction toolkit) the only contact made with small local food manufacturers (which include take away premises as they generally make the meals from raw ingredients) are by the Council's Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers.

4.5 Since Council's officers have local knowledge and regularly visit take away premises they are in an ideal position to pass on practical advice about the nutritional quality of take away meals.

5.0 NICE GUIDANCE ON PREVENTION OF CARDIO VASCULAR DISEASE (PH 25)

5.1 In June 2010, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published guidance on preventing CVD. In relation to diet it made the following recommendations and national policy goals;

- Reduce population-level consumption of salt.
- Reduce population-level consumption of saturated fat.
- Ensure all groups in the population are protected from the harmful effects of Industrially Produced Trans Fatty Acids.
- Ensure children and young people under 16 are protected from all forms of marketing, advertising and promotions (including product placements) which encourage an unhealthy diet.
- Ensure dealings between government, government agencies and the commercial sector are conducted in a transparent manner that supports public health objectives and is in line with best practice.
- Empower local authorities to influence planning permission for food retail outlets in relation to preventing and reducing CVD.
- Ensure the Food Standards Agency's integrated front-of-pack labeling system is rapidly implemented.
- Ensure labelling regulations in England are not adversely influenced by European Union regulation
- Ensure promoting health and reducing disease is made an explicit part of the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) 'public goods' so that European money promotes the wellbeing of EU citizens.
- Ensure CAP spending takes adequate account of its potential impact on CVD risk factors and is used in a way that optimises the public health outcomes

5.2 Whilst the majority of the policy aims are a matter for national and/or European legislation Trading Standards Officers and Environmental Health Officers in Wirral are already putting into practice recommendations concerning the dietary content of take away meals.

6.0 HEALTHY EATING INITIATIVES

- 6.1 To supplement the existing work being undertaken by Trading Standards and Environmental Health Officers a student Environmental Health Officer has recently been designated to initiate a project on healthy eating.
- 6.2 The officer will carry out an additional programme of visits and give practical advice and guidance within food premises outside of but in support of scheduled routine enforcement visits. To help in further future campaigns the officer will also note which healthy eating messages are most readily received and evaluate if different messages are appropriate for different socio economic groups.
- 6.3 The healthy eating message is also currently being promoted as part of a holistic health improvement approach amongst childminders. Environmental Health Officers initially promoted key messages about safe food, healthy eating and smoking cessation during a general presentation arranged for prospective childminders. The key messages are then reiterated and reinforced by officers during food safety inspection visits to new and existing businesses.

7.0 THE NATIONAL FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

- 7.1 The Environmental Health Division are currently working in partnership with the FSA and undertaking preparatory work pending the introduce the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (Scores On the Doors) at premises within Wirral.
- 7.2 The Food Hygiene Rating scheme enables the Council to publicise hygiene scores for local food businesses on a dedicated web site. Certificates indicating scores will also be issued for display in the premises window allowing consumers to make an informed choice on where they eat.
- 7.3 As the scheme progresses towards an expected launch in June 2011 officers hope to enhance the facility in order to signpost people who enter the web pages to further healthy eating and healthy lifestyle information. In the longer term it is hoped that a Wirral healthy eating award will be introduced in conjunction with the scores on the doors scheme.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

9.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising out of this report.

10.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Provision will be made to ensure that healthy eating information is made available in formats that all food businesses can easily understand.

11.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Provision will be made to ensure that healthy eating information is made available in formats that all food businesses can easily understand.

12.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None.

13.0 **PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None.

14.0 **ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 Effective use of research provided about key messages on healthy eating and the nutritional impact of food will help to reduce the impact of poor diet on those most at risk in areas of poor health equality.

15.0 **SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 Ensuring consistently nutritionally viable and correctly described food across the Borough helps those on low incomes make healthy eating decisions,

16.0 **LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 This report affects all wards in the Borough.

17.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 Reports to Sustainable Communities Committee of 5th March 2008 and 28th January 2009

18.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

18.1 That Members note the report.

Bill Norman
Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

This report was prepared by John Malone (691 8640) and Phil Dickson (691 8474)