To: Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY REVIEW OF OFFICIAL CONTROLS DELIVERY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To inform Councillors of a review of official controls delivery that may change how official controls activities are delivered.

1.0 REVIEW OF OFFICIAL CONTROLS AND DELIVERY

1.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is reviewing how local authorities and port health authorities undertake activities to monitor and secure business compliance with food and feed law. These activities are collectively known as ‘official controls’.

1.2 The review will evaluate how effective the current delivery model is and consider the scope for making improvements. The FSA will gather evidence to assess the current system based on a set of defined principles and outcomes.

1.3 The principles provide direction for what the FSA are trying to achieve with the review, and set out the characteristics of a system for delivering official controls. The outcomes will provide a list of specific requirements, from a food safety perspective, for what a successful system of official controls delivery should include. These will form the basis of how the FSA will assess the current delivery model and any options that are considered.

1.4 This review will look at how effective the current system is at meeting what’s required, not about what these requirements are.
2.0 THE RATIONALE – WHY ARE THE FSA CARRYING OUT A REVIEW

2.1 The FSA is responsible for protecting public health from the risks that may be caused by food. This includes risks resulting from the way food is produced or supplied. To do this, the FSA need a system that ensures food businesses are able to fulfill their responsibility for safe food production.

2.2 The majority of the checks and activities needed to achieve this are delivered on the FSA behalf by local authorities and port health authorities – known as competent authorities.

2.3 Initial evidence suggests there may be some inconsistencies across the current UK official controls delivery model that needs investigation. In January 2011, the FSA Board decided it was time to review the current delivery structure to be sure the FSA are meeting their responsibilities to protect consumers' interests in relation to food. The decision to review was made for a number of reasons:

2.4 The effectiveness of the current delivery system has been questioned in a number of reports, including the public inquiry into the September 2005 outbreak of E.coli O157 in Wales, and Lord Young’s report ‘Common Sense, Common Safety’

2.5 The European Commission, through its Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), has expressed concern about the complexity of the UK delivery model.

2.6 There is a need to understand the impact of budgetary pressures and consider how best to secure efficiency, resilience and sustainability in this public health protection function.

3.0 SCOPE – WHAT THE FSA ARE REVIEWING

3.1 The review will look at all food safety and standards official controls undertaken by local authorities and port health authorities, which fall within the Agency’s remit. This will include:

- food hygiene in all UK countries
- food safety issues for food composition and labelling in all UK countries
- food traceability and imports in all UK countries
- feed hygiene, composition, labelling, traceability and imports in Great Britain
- the adequacy of laboratory and analytical support for delivering official controls
3.2 An outline of the proposed review process was presented to the FSA Board on 12 July 2011.

3.3 There are four key stages to the review:
- outlining the principles and outcomes and identifying, collating and analysing evidence, which will be completed by March 2013
- describing and comparing the different options, which will be completed by July 2013
- consultation on the recommendations from September 2013 to March 2014
- implementation from April 2014 onwards

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 A governance structure is in place to ensure the integrity of the review, as well as to provide a mechanism for independent challenge and to encourage engagement with stakeholders. A programme manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the review.

4.2 The FSA Board will decide between the options and recommendations to be put forward for public consultation. These decisions will be based on input from the FSA Executive Management Board. All Board discussions on the review will be held in open session.

4.3 The Executive Management Board will oversee the work of the programme manager, and ensure the work is delivered on time and within budget.

4.4 An external advisory group has been established to provide independent challenge to the review team.

4.5 A consultative group, made up of representatives of key stakeholder groups, has also been established to provide specialist knowledge and expertise.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications for the Council in respect of this report.

6.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Until the outcomes of the Review are known it has been identified that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required for the purpose of this report. Please contact the author for details of this decision.
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DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES