

## Update on Agency proposals for the single IT platform

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### Issue

1. This paper provides an update on the work that the Agency has undertaken since the Steering Group's November 2009 meeting in relation to the national web-based IT platform that will support the national food hygiene rating – 'scores on the doors' (SotD) - scheme and the *Food Hygiene Information Scheme* (FHIS) in Scotland.

### Steering Group action

2. The Steering Group is asked to:
- **Consider and comment on** the Agency's proposals for the IT platform – see [Appendix 1](#);
  - **Note** that the IT platform is being developed in-house, and the timetable for delivery of this – see [Appendix 2](#); and
  - **Note** that a SotD IT Advisory Group is being set up and the Agency is developing a Q&A for local authorities on development of the IT platform and its proposed functionality.

### Background

3. At its meeting on 10 December 2008, the Agency's Board agreed that a national web-based IT platform should be put in place to support the national SotD scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the FHIS in Scotland. The aim is to provide a single access point for consumers for finding food hygiene scores for businesses across the UK. The Board also agreed that centrally-funded IT assistance should be made available to local authorities that adopt the schemes.

### Functional specification

4. A functional specification setting out the detailed requirements for the IT platform has been drawn up jointly by the Agency's SotD Project Team and IT Division. As previously reported to the Steering Group, this work was informed by discussions at internal and external stakeholder workshops and by research with consumers and small businesses. Although revisions of this specification may be necessary as the development work progresses, it is at a sufficiently advanced stage that delivery can proceed.

5. The specification details the requirements for the IT platform, and identifies the following key elements:

- a **data extraction mechanism** to allow participating local authorities to transfer data from their information management system in an automated manner to a central database;

- a **central database** that will store all of the data supplied by local authorities;
- a '**portal**' where participating local authorities will be able to validate data, configure the environment to meet local needs, *upload information not collected in the automated process and run reports*;
- a **public-facing website** that will allow multi-criteria searches by consumers and will present the information in a format that meets consumer needs.
- an **administrative interface** to allow the Agency to configure the functions of the systems and run reports on the data that it contains.

6. Further detail of what the functional specification provides is given at Appendix 1.

7. ***The Steering Group is asked to consider and comment on the elements that the functional specification includes.***

### **IT platform delivery**

8. Options for delivering the functional specification - in-house or external procurement - were considered by the Agency's internal SotD Project Board and its Information Strategy Portfolio Review Board (membership of which includes the Agency's Head of Procurement, Finance Director and Head of IT). These Boards decided that the specification should be delivered in-house rather than by external procurement as this would provide the Agency with the best means of control over the initial development work, over costs of on-going development work, and as regards opportunities to capitalise on future potential to make operation of the system cost-neutral for the Agency by working with other third parties.

9. A cross-Agency project has now been initiated to take the work forward. Governance will be provided by the internal SotD Project Board and by the Information Strategy Portfolio Review Board.

10. The timetable for the development, testing and implementation phases of the project is provided at Appendix 2. Development work is underway and it is currently planned that the system will be ready to go live in July/August.

11. The Agency is committed to funding both start-up and on-going IT support to local authorities.

### **SotD IT Advisory Group**

12. The Agency is currently setting up a SotD IT Advisory Group to provide advice and guidance during the development, testing and implementation phases. Membership will comprise local authority representatives from across the UK. The aim is to include a mix of representatives with experience of using different IT platforms for publishing SotD information as well a range of different information management system software.

13. A start-up meeting will be held as early in April as possible when terms of reference will be agreed but the Agency envisages that the remit will extend to the following areas;

- consideration of the different elements of the platform and the processes involved in using it;
- development of proposals for increased/improved functionality of the platform;
- provision of feedback on user experiences and consideration of solutions for resolving issues identified; and
- consideration of the support and training required by local authorities using the IT platform.

14. As regards working arrangements, it is envisaged that much of the work will be undertaken through correspondence and that meetings will be kept to a minimum.

### **IT Q&A**

15. The Agency is developing a Q&A document for local authorities to try and address the many questions that are being raised in relation to the development of the IT platform, its proposed functionality and plans for its testing and implementation. It will be published on the Agency's website and the intention is that it will be updated on an on-going basis.

**Steering Group Secretariat  
March, 2010**

## **Appendix 1**

### **National SotD IT platform – functionality**

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#### **Introduction**

1. A functional specification has been drawn up for the IT platform that will support the national SotD scheme and the *Food Hygiene information Scheme* in Scotland. The specification identifies the key elements of the platform. These are outlined below.

#### **Data extraction mechanism**

2. The system must include software to allow the automated extraction of data from Local Authority Information Management Systems (LA IMS) and automated uploading of this to a central SotD database (see below). It is proposed that this includes the facility for local authorities to configure the software to allow the mapping of fields on the LA IMS that relate to the data required for the SotD database (such that the necessity for changing the way data are recorded on the LA IMS is avoided).

#### **Central database**

3. This is simply the repository for data uploaded by local authorities, and which will be held on a secure server within the Agency.

#### **Local authority portal**

4. This is required to allow local authority users to interface with the central database. It is proposed that provide facilities to:

- to review data, withhold records from publication (if there is further investigation needed prior to publication) or limit the information to be published e.g. withhold address information;
- to produce reports based on the data held on the central database – both to assist with the review and validation of the data uploaded (e.g. a report to show the data to be published) and to provide management information (e.g. a report showing the number and/or details of establishments in each tier of the scheme);
- to enter/amend key contact details, the link to the local authority website etc., to be displayed on the individual local authority page on the website;
- to upload the local authority logo, to be displayed on records for establishments within the local authority region, when viewed by consumers etc.; and
- to release the data for publication to the public-facing website (only when this is undertaken will the appropriate SotD data be available to consumers).

5. It will also provide administrative functions e.g. the creation of local authority user accounts.

## **Administrative interface**

6. This is simply to allow the Agency to configure the functions of the systems and run reports on the data that it contains.

## **Public-facing website**

7. This will provide consumers with access means to SotD ratings for establishments covered by the national scheme and the FHIS. It will:

- display SotD ratings for each establishment within the scope of the scheme;
- provide a Welsh language option;
- provide search facilities – it is proposed that this will include searches based on specific establishment details, postcode, business type, local authority, country, SotD rating etc., or a combination of these (e.g. the number of supermarkets in a particular local authority with a third tier rating or better); and
- provide access to a webpage on the SotD site for each participating local authority that will include key contact details and website links.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Development of national SotD IT platform – timetable**

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The table below lists the key milestones in the development and delivery of the IT platform and specifies the target date for completing the necessary work.

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Target completion date</b>
Development of the IT platform	End April 2010
Testing of the system	Mid June 2010
Release of the system for local authority 'pilot' testing	End June 2010
System to go live	By end August 2010