

**Meeting of the Full Council
Meeting to be held on Thursday, 26 October 2017**

Report submitted by: Learning and Skills – Start Well

Part A

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Review of the County Council's Policy relating to the Supply of Halal Meat to Schools

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

democratic.services@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings (see Appendix 'A') of a review of the County Council's policy on providing Halal meat to schools.

The Council's current policy is to provide both stunned and un-stunned Halal meat and the report looks at the implications of changing this policy to stunned meat only.

The report builds on the findings of the Halal Meat Supplies Task Group from December 2013 (see Annex 1).

This report has been referred to Full Council following agreement at Cabinet on Thursday 14 September 2017.

Recommendation

Full Council is recommended to consider and review the findings in this report and determine if the current policy should be amended.

Background and Advice

In June 2017, the Leader of the County Council requested a review of the Council's current policy on supplying Halal meat to schools. The Council's current policy is to provide both stunned and un-stunned Halal meat and this report sets out the implications of changing this policy to stunned meat only.

On Thursday 14 September, Cabinet considered this report as a Part II item due to its commercially sensitive content. Cabinet resolved that the matter be referred to Full Council for determination.

The attached report (and supporting annexes) has been updated to remove any commercially sensitive information.

The provision of Halal meat (meat slaughtered and prepared in accordance with Islamic/Sharia law) within school meals is not without controversy. School meal providers have to tread a fine line between satisfying the dietary expectations of a significant section of the community whilst respecting both procurement law and food standards legislation.

Key points:

- No single defined standard for Halal exists in the UK.
- Currently, a local authority may specify that animals must be stunned before slaughter within the supply tender.
- To favour one accreditation body over another would breach EU procurement law.

The supply of Halal meat has been the subject of numerous reviews by various European, UK and local public bodies for many years and yet, there still is no defined law or regulation governing the definition of Halal. Instead, there are a range of Halal accreditation agencies who inspect and accredit firms involved in the production and handling of meat in order for that meat to be described as Halal.

The pivotal issue within this debate is around stunning: The Qur'an does not expressly forbid stunning (animals must be alive).

There are differences of opinion within Muslim communities on this issue and, consequently, there is no single authoritative body in the UK representing a single agreed definition/standard for Halal. This has led to divided opinions and competing 'regulatory' regimes.

In July 2013, Full Council considered a motion that "This Council confirms that it will not provide meat to any of its kitchens unless the animal was stunned before it was slaughtered".

It was resolved by Full Council that consideration of this motion be referred to the Scrutiny Committee with the request to set up a task and finish group to examine all the issues relating to the Council's supply of Halal meat.

The recommendations from the task and finish group can be found at Annex 1 where the first recommendation was to;

1. Recognise the importance of providing meat for Muslim children in Lancashire schools that is;
 - a. Produced and prepared in line with Halal requirements
 - b. Accredited by a recognised Halal accredited body
 - c. From a trusted source and traceable

The attached report (see Appendix 'A') builds on the Halal Meat Task Group's final report from 21 October 2014 and presents the findings of an updated review of the supply of Halal meat to schools. It also looks at the wider debate and implications around Halal meat, taking into consideration other religions and socio-economic factors which will be impacted upon.

Consultations

As this is a policy review, no formal consultation has taken place at this time. However, the following information/reports/views have been considered:

- Lancashire Education Act 1984 - The Asian Religions, Their Dietary Restrictions: March 1984;
- Report of the Halal Meat Supplies Task Group: December 2013.

In addition a desk top exercise has been conducted to research the current national and local intelligence relating to the supply of Halal meat, particularly to schools.

The main bodies referred to are:

- Food Standards Agency;
- Halal Monitoring Committee;
- Halal Food Authority;
- Humane Slaughter Association;
- The Farm and Animal Welfare Council;
- Muslim Council of Britain;
- Lancashire Council of Mosques.

Consideration has also been given to the demographics of the areas most affected by this policy and representatives from key service areas within the County Council have been consulted, including School Meals/Catering Service, Legal, Procurement, Adult and Older Peoples Services and Equality and Cohesion.

If Full Council resolves to amend the current policy, a further Equality Analysis will need to be completed. This would include an extensive consultation exercise.

Implications:

This item has a number of implications, as detailed in Appendix 'A'.

Risk management

This report has significant risk implications as detailed in Appendix 'A' and are summarised below:

- Legal – Animal Welfare vs. School Food Regulations/Requirements of Sharia Law
- Procurement – restrict/distort competition
- Finance – potential loss to LCC and individual schools
- Community – increase in community tensions

- Market place – not seen as a supplier of school meals to Muslim schools

The monitoring and review of these risks have been included in the Council's Risk Register.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Lancashire Education Act 1984 The Asian Religions – Their Dietary Restrictions (Ann 3)	12 March 1984	Ajay Sethi/(01257) 517100
Report of the Halal Meat Supplies Task Group (Ann 1)	6 December 2013	Josh Mynott/(01772) 534580
The Halal dilemma briefing – Association of Public Service Excellence	September 2011	Lynne Johnstone/(01772) 533414

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A