

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 12 July 2018

Report of the Leader

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Policy position on the future provision of Halal Meat

(Appendices 'A' to 'C' refer)

Contact for further information:

democratic.services@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The county council is considering its current policy for the supply of Halal meat to schools. The council currently provides both stunned and un-stunned halal meat in a small number of schools (27) across multiple districts, providing this service for the provision of school meals where there is the demand for it from the Muslim community and where the Headteacher and Governing Body request this for a proportion of their children. The county council is considering the proposal that, where halal meat is supplied, this must be stunned.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to consider and review the findings in this report to aid formal decision making on this issue. Particularly, Cabinet is requested to:

- (i) Note Appendix 'A' and associated annexes together with background papers demonstrating the history of this policy area;
- (ii) Note the findings from the public consultation and the updated Equality Analysis (Appendices 'B' & 'C' refer); and
- (iii) Make a decision and in coming to that decision review and consider any relevant mitigation and agree next steps.

Background and Advice

In June 2017, with the current contract for the supply of Halal meat coming to an end the council is reviewing its 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.

At its meeting in September 2017, Cabinet considered this report and resolved that the matter be referred to Full Council for determination.

The attached report (and supporting appendices) has been updated since that time, including the removal of commercially sensitive information.

The attached appendices are:

Appendix 'A'	Review of the County Council's Policy relating to the Supply of Halal Meat to Schools
Annex 1	Report of the Halal Meat Supplies Task Group
Annex 2	Free school meal take-up
Annex 3	The Halal dilemma briefing – Association of Public Service Excellence)
Appendix 'B'	Consultation report
Appendix 'C'	Updated Equality Analysis

At the meeting in October 2017, Full Council resolved to cease the supply of un-stunned halal meat with the exception of poultry. This resolution was not implemented and a decision made to consider the matter afresh due to the significance of the issues raised and moved to a wider public consultation.

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.

Considerations to note:

- 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. Public Contract Regulations
- To favour one accreditation body over another would breach European Union 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, but as 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

The following information/reports/views have been considered:

- 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.

A 4-week public consultation exercise was launched during which, the council continues to supply halal meat under the terms of the contract that supports current policy.

The consultation was carried out between 7 February and 7 March 2018.

The consultation asked for views on the proposal to only provide stunned halal meat to schools and is asking what the impact of this would be on respondents.

The consultation was placed on the county council's "Have Your Say" area of its website. A range of stakeholders were given prior notice of the consultation's location and timescale.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal to provide only stunned halal meat to schools?	Strongly agree	33%	2802
	Tend to agree	1%	68
	Neither agree nor disagree	1%	69
	Tend to disagree	0%	38
	Strongly disagree	65%	5485
	Unsure/don't know	0%	37
	Total	100%	8499*

* 8,545 total responses received. 46 respondents chose not to answer this first question but responded to at least some of the others.

Processing of consultation responses has been undertaken by an external provider, Feedback Market Research, and is contained in Appendix 'B'.

This analysis has also contributed to the updated Equality Analysis which can be found at Appendix 'C'.

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 the county council 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
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A