These notes refer to the Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (c.3) which received Royal Assent on 29 January 2016

Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

- The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is designed to provide consumers with information about food hygiene standards (found at the time of inspection by district council food safety officers) in the places where they eat out or shop for food.
- 4. The objective is to enable consumers to make informed choices which in turn will provide a strong incentive for businesses to achieve and maintain compliance with existing food hygiene law. The overarching aim is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.
- 5. The information is provided to consumers through a simple numerical scale operating from 0 to 5 where 0 means that 'urgent improvement is necessary' and 5 means a food business fully complies with legal requirements and has 'very good' standards. The rating is made available on the Food Standards Agency website but businesses are also provided with a food hygiene rating sticker to place in the window or door at their premises so the information is available to consumers before they enter the establishment.
- 6. The scheme currently operates on a voluntary basis. This means that display of food hygiene ratings at food businesses is voluntary. Ongoing research shows that voluntary display remains low, with only 56% of establishments choosing to display their rating. Display is much lower among establishments with a rating of 0-2.
- 7. The Act's main objective is to make it mandatory for food businesses to display their food hygiene rating sticker, thus ensuring consumers have access to the information at the point of choice. It also enables the Department to make regulations which would require food businesses that supply consumers with food through an online facility, to provide their rating online in the manner to be specified
- 8. A number of safeguards are built into the scheme for businesses. These include a right for food business operators to appeal against their rating; to request to have their rating re-assessed where they have made necessary improvements and a right to reply to explain to consumers any mitigating circumstances.