

FOOD SAFETY IN THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Report of a presentation by ORCC on 19 March 2015

From 13 December 2014, the Food Information Regulations 2014 (known as FIR) became law in the EU.

These regulations not only lay down certain criteria on food safety and preparation, but also apply to 14 named allergens.

The Oxfordshire Rural Community Council arranged a seminar on the subject for village hall committees on the 19 March, which I (Ken Howard) and three other Piddington villagers attended.

Neil Bacon, Enforcement Liaison Officer (31 years in this post) for South Oxfordshire Council, gave the presentation.

The main questions for village halls were: do we need to register as a food business, and is our (i.e. Piddington) village hall a food business operator? The answer to both questions is NO. Therefore the legislation would not apply to Piddington village hall, nor would the legislation that covers that part which refers to allergens (see further info in this report).

Should Piddington village hall committee decide in the future to run a luncheon club, or some other food function on a regular basis (deemed to be at least once a month), then possibly the hall would have to register as a food business operator to comply with the law.

The Pop-Up Pub nights, The Pantry and any other similar functions that mainly supply bought-in products, which are already labelled, do not require registration.

Piddington Village Hall Management Committee (PVHMC) keeps the kitchen clean, but is not responsible for any other organisation which hires the hall for a function. Should the hirer supply food for children's parties, weddings or any other similar events, the onus is on the hirer to follow hygienic practices when preparing and handling food. The PVHMC is NOT liable should anyone fall ill at one of these functions. In fact, it is the responsibility of the hirer to make sure

the kitchen is clean and fit for purpose at the start of the hire period, and is left in the same condition at the end of the hire period.

In relation to allergens in food (there are 14 listed in the regulations), as Piddington Village Hall is not a food business operator, these regulations do not apply to us. However, it was considered that we have a moral obligation to be aware of allergens in food, and so information on these 14 allergens should be publically available. The relevant information is therefore now displayed on the village hall notice board. The PVHMC should also encourage other users– i.e. all stallholders at The Pantry – to be allergen aware, although this is not required by law. All food bought from a food business operator should have this allergen information labelled by law.

For PVHMC and the users of our hall the emphasis is ‘better safe than sorry’.

Useful websites on these issues are:

<http://food.gov.uk/science/allergy:intolerance/label/>

<http://www.allergyuk.org>

www.food.gov.uk

Ken Howard

PVHMC