



North Devon Council

Report Date: 6th December 2022

Topic: Food Safety Service Plan 2023-24

Report by: Pamela Charles – Lead Officer, Food, Health & Safety/Health & Safety Advisor

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires all Food Authorities to have a Food Safety Service Plan to ensure that national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally.
- 1.2. The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities which provides guidance on Food Safety Service Plans advises that the plan should be submitted to the relevant member forum for approval to ensure local transparency and accountability. This report presents the Food Safety Service Plan for the remainder of 2023- 24.
- 1.3. There has been a gap in the Service Plans for the Food, Health & Safety Team due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when the team became Covid Regulation Enforcement Officers and food businesses came under various operating restrictions which meant Officers could not carry out their normal food safety enforcement duties.
- 1.4. The FSA recognised the interruption to the normal duties of the Officers and the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on food business operations and officer's workload. To this end the FSA implemented a Recovery Plan in 2021/23 to which the team have been working. For year 2023/24, it is expected that the team will return to working to the food hygiene inspection programme as prior to the pandemic, in line with the Food Law Code of Practice, until such time as the FSA reviews the Code of Practice and implements a new food hygiene intervention work programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Strategy and Resources Committee consider and approve the Food Safety Service Plan 2023 -24. A copy of the plan is attached as an annexe to this report. The plan follows a similar format and content to the previously agreed Food Safety Service Plan for 2019-21

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. By noting and approving the contents of the report, and the annexed Food Safety Service Plan 2023-24, the requirements of the FSA can be met.

4. REPORT

4.1 Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (still in place due to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018), sets out the approach that competent authorities of Member States must adopt for official feed and food controls. (Feed controls are enforced by Trading Standards South West, while food controls are enforced by North Devon Council). The FSA acts as the central UK food authority and they in turn have devised a Framework Agreement that sets out what they expect from local authorities (LAs) acting as “Food Authorities” who are charged with the delivery of official controls on feed and food legislation.

4.2 Each Food Authority must produce an up to date documented Food Service Plan that describes the activities, techniques and approaches that will ensure they deliver on their obligations. The plan must reflect the requirements of paragraph 6 of the Regulators’ Code which requires that Regulators should ensure that their approach to their regulatory activities is transparent. It is a requirement that these plans are approved by elected members.

4.3 The North Devon Council Food Safety Service Plan follows the Framework Agreement Standard template and accordingly the plan is a mix of enforcement, intelligence based work, investigation and education.

By completing the requirements of the FSA’s current Recovery Plan by 31st March 2023, the Food Safety Service will be in a good starting position for reverting back to the pre Covid model for the programme of food hygiene inspections, following the requirement of the Food Law Code of Practice. For year 2023/24. The FSA intends to introduce a new delivery model, but at what point is yet unknown.

4.4 Whilst the Service Plan does not differ greatly from the previous period (2019/21), the plan has been reviewed to reflect the FSA’s current Recovery Plan, following the pandemic and the current service demands and resources and the duties to promote economic growth and the opportunity to align the service priorities with the Corporate plan. The main points to note are on the following pages:

p. 3 Service Aims and Objectives

p. 4 Key Priorities

p.11 Scope of the Food Service - proactive and reactive workload.

p.16 Key Issues for 2023 –2024

p.25 Resources



5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no additional resource implications arising from this report, however the vacancy arising from the retirement on 31ST March 2023 of the current Lead Officer, will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Consideration should also be given to the funding of a contract EHO to help backfill the time permanent officers spend issuing Export Health Certificates.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. There are no equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. There is a Carbon cost to the Council as Officers need to travel in their own vehicles across the district to carry out premises inspections. Alternatives such as using public transport or active travel are not feasible. The team have split the North Devon area in to three districts and an Officer is allocated to each district. Officers try and minimise travel by inspecting businesses by area where possible. County wide meetings and any training opportunities are now carried out virtually to save on travel, time and Carbon cost.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda: The subject of the report has a positive impact on the commercialisation agenda, with charges being made for Export Health Certificates and introducing charging for Food Business Operator requested food re inspections.

8.1.2. Improving customer focus: The subject of the report has a positive impact on improving customer focus, with officers using hand held technology to record inspections and provide inspection reports to customers in a timely fashion, along with the provision of on-line food registration.

8.1.3. The subject of the report has a positive impact on the regeneration and economic development in that the Food Service supports new businesses and allows for a level playing field for the operations of all businesses within North Devon.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Part 3 Annexe 1(h) (Delegated)

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.



11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

- The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authority Food Law Enforcement –Amendment 5, April 2010, published by the Food Standards Agency
- FSA Recovery Plan

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers:

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