

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

Date of Meeting: 1 October 2024

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

Date of Meeting: 15 October 2024

Report of: Interim Joint Director – Environment, Waste and Operations

Title: Food Law and Health and Safety Enforcement Service Plan 2024 - 2025

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 To seek approval for the adoption of the Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024-25. This statutory plan sets out the Council's regulatory function in respect of food safety and health and safety over the forthcoming year.

### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That Executive supports the Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024-25

2.2 That Council approves:

a) the Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024/25; and

b) the Head of Environment and Waste is authorised to change the plan in the light of national guidance and/or to meet operational needs.

### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 The Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement requires the Council to produce a Food Law Enforcement Plan (referred to as the Enforcement Plan). The key aim of the plan is to demonstrate how the Council will fulfil its regulatory obligations in respect of its food safety service.

3.2 Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 places a duty on the Council to make adequate arrangements for enforcement of health and safety. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), requires the Council to produce an annual Health and Safety Service Plan. Responsibility for Health and Safety at Work enforcement lies with the HSE and Local Authorities (LAs). Councils are generally responsible for enforcement at premises in which non-industrial activities are undertaken (e.g. retail premises, warehouses, offices etc.) whilst HSE is responsible for industrial activities.

3.3 The Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan Statutory Service Plan incorporates:

- the service aims and objectives;
- the Action Plan for 2024/25; and
- the financial arrangement for providing the service.

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources**

4.1 The Action Plan will be carried out within the existing resource allocation as detailed in both the Statutory Service Plan and Revenues and Estimates for 2024/25.

4.2 There are no reductions, restructuring and/or redundancy implications as the key changes identified in this report do not give rise to any additional resource requirements as changes are to existing processes. However, in delivering to the changed requirements there may be some training implications for existing staff.

4.3 To aid succession planning of the service and to bring people into a career in local government and environmental health, the Business Regulation Team has turned a part time Environmental Health Officer role into a 4-year apprenticeship. This has been funded from existing budgets, with training aspects paid for by the apprenticeship levy. This positive move will allow the experienced staff within the service help develop a new Environmental Health Officer into the profession.

#### **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider.

#### **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 The Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement requires the Council to produce a Food Law Enforcement Plan (referred to as the Enforcement Plan). The key aim of the plan is to demonstrate how the Council will fulfil its regulatory obligations in respect of its food safety service. In the current Framework Agreement and Code of Practice, the Food Standards Agency indicates that full compliance with all inspection frequencies will be expected.

6.2 Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 places a duty on the Council to make adequate arrangements for enforcement of health and safety. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), requires the Council to produce an annual Health and Safety Service Plan. Responsibility for Health and Safety at Work enforcement lies with the HSE and Local Authorities (LAs). Councils are generally responsible for enforcement at premises in which non-industrial activities are undertaken, whilst HSE is responsible for industrial activities.

#### **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 Members will note that the Food Law Enforcement Plan is required as a matter of law. The proposals for provision of the plan are set out in this report.

#### **8. Report details:**

##### **Key Achievements in 2023/24:**

##### **8.1 Programmed Interventions**

The service inspected 399 food businesses during the year, prioritising those which were either considered high risk or that were new businesses that had not received a previous inspection by the service.

99% of food premises within the city were found to be broadly compliant with food hygiene law.

During the year 179 new food businesses were received by the service

102 proactive health and safety inspections were undertaken

## **8.2 Service Requests / other interventions**

The service is responsible for investigating complaints relating to food safety, health and safety regulation, infectious disease control and also for providing health promotion and training activities for businesses. 280 such requests were received by the service during 2023/24.

105 other visits and interventions were made to businesses.

117 accident reports from businesses have been received and looked into

The service also responded to 451 service requests received that related to noise nuisance, light pollution, business related Anti-Social Behaviour and other public health issues that have an impact on the delivery of the service plan.

## **8.3 Sampling**

The authority participates in national and local food-sampling initiatives to monitor the quality of food on sale in the City, which is classified as satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or unacceptable. Additional samples are taken in response to food complaints and where it is alleged a premises or foodstuff is implicated in a food poisoning incident.

126 food samples were conducted along with 6 monthly sampling of all swimming pools within the city.

## **8.4 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Diseases**

The service is responsible for the investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious diseases in the City.

Whilst the service has adequate resources to deal with its workload on a day-to-day basis large scale outbreak requiring an extensive investigation put pressures on the service which can have an impact on the completion of the annual service plan.

96 infectious disease notifications were received by the service in 2023/24, Campylobacter remains the most common cause of bacterial foodborne illness in the UK.

## **8.5 Primary Authority**

Primary Authority Partnerships enables businesses and local authorities to enter into a legally recognised partnership on a cost recovery basis. The advice provided by the local

authority has to be taken into account by other councils before enforcement action can be taken against the business concerned.

The service currently has 7 active Primary Authority Partnerships which are based in and around the city. In these partnerships, Environmental Health plays the role of a 'critical friend' rather than the traditional role of regulator, identifying, develops and delivers services that help the business to successfully grow and improve. We work closely with the business to fully understand how the business operates and to understand its individual needs.

A full list of the current partnerships can be found at section 5.5 of the Service Plan

## **8.6 Proposed key activities for 2024/25**

### 8.6.1 Maintain high standards in food safety by:

- Following the FSA's post Recovery Plan guidance by applying a risk-based and intelligence led approach to the prioritisation of food interventions. Interventions for higher risk businesses or those that are likely to be high-risk will always take priority over interventions for lower risk businesses.
- Continuing to maintain high level (>97%) of broadly complaint food businesses in the city.
- Enhanced coaching/sampling/training for non-complaint businesses, with caution/prosecution as final action for those who continually flout the law.
- Continuing with an intelligence-led food sampling programme.
- Building our customer base for taught Level 2 food hygiene courses whilst promoting e-learning to those who prefer to learn that way.
- Recognising food business trends such as the growth of home/mobile catering and internet sales and offering hygiene guidance and advice in an appropriately accessible format.

### 8.6.2 Promote safer workplaces by

- Focussing on the duty to manage asbestos, commercial gas safety and outdoor electrical safety during routine food hygiene inspections whenever appropriate.
- Continuing to conduct water quality sampling of swimming pools and private water supplies.
- Co-ordinate multi-agency visits where migrant worker/modern slavery issues are suspected or identified.
- Review and refresh the means of business engagement and training using innovative means to help business grow and thrive.
- To investigate further Primary Authority Partnership opportunities for the service.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 The Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024-25 contributes to all aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan.

## **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 The Service Plan specifies targets and priorities to manage risk and establishes staffing levels to achieve the necessary outcomes. The main risk of not achieving the areas outlined in the service plan will be that of public safety, which could lead to serious injury, ill health, or death.

## **11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies, and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage, and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

## **12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

12.1 There are no carbon footprint implications identified in this report.

## **13. Are there any other options?**

13.1 The Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan must be reviewed on an annual basis as there is a legal duty for the food safety and health and safety elements to be reviewed annually.

**Interim Joint Director – Environment, Waste and Operations, Simon Lane**

Author: Simon Lane – Head of Environment and Waste

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- 1) Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006

- 2) Food Law Code of Practice
- 3) Standard for Health and Safety Enforcing Authorities
- 4) HSC Enforcement Policy Statement
- 5) The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008
- 6) Regulator's Compliance Code

Contact for enquires:  
Democratic Services (Committees)  
Room 4.36  
01392 265275