

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY
27 FEBRUARY 2007**

**EXECUTIVE
13 MARCH 2007**

**FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2007/8
REVIEW OF FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2006/7**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to summarise any notable issues in the key activities forming the food safety service and highlights any variances from the previous Food Service Delivery Plan of 2006/7.
- 1.2 The Food Service Delivery Plan 2007/8 is submitted for approval and adoption.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Food Standards Agency Framework on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement requires the Council to produce an annual Food Service Plan. A review of our performance has to be carried out and appropriate action taken to deal with any variance in meeting the targets specified in the Food Service Delivery Plan.
- 2.2 The full Food Plan for 2007/8 is available on the intranet with a hard copy in the Members' Room. The delivery plan is contained in the Appendix of this report.

3. REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FOOD SAFETY SERVICE

Summary of the Key Activities of the Food Safety Service

- 3.1 Inspections
- The service is on schedule to meet this year's annual target of 515 food hygiene inspections by the end of March 2007. As of January 2007, 410 inspections have been completed.
 - The number of premises targeted for inspection in 2007/8 is 540.
 - The service utilises Self Inspection Questionnaires (SIQ's) as an alternative enforcement strategy for low risk businesses and to ensure resources are directed towards high-risk activities. Their use has also enabled the service to meet the increasing numbers of premises requiring an inspection as determined by the inspection rating systems overseen by the Food Standards Agency and the Health & Safety Executive. A total of 40 low risk food businesses have received an SIQ during 2006/7. This has proved to be a cost effective means of maintaining contact with this group as well as providing the business a useful means of keeping up to date with changes in law and other related issues affecting their business.
- 3.2 Service Requests/Complaints

- In the first eight months of the year from April 2006 the food service had received 284 service requests. This total represent 53% of the total number of service request handled by the officers in the Commercial Section who also provide a parallel health and safety inspection service, infectious disease control, health promotion and training service.

3.3 Food Sampling

- The authority participates in many national and local food-sampling initiatives to monitor the quality of food on sale in the City. Additional samples are taken in response to food complaints and where it is alleged a premise or foodstuff is implicated in a food poisoning incident. To date (end of December 2006), 127 samples have been taken. Our annual target is 250 samples. Approximately 15% of samples require a further intervention. This may include re-sampling or an advisory or investigatory revisit by an EHO for example. Such revisits are in addition to the scheduled inspections and do not contribute to the sections performance indicators.

3.4 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Diseases

- By the end of December 2006, 61 cases of food related infectious disease had been officially notified to the service requiring action by the section. No cases can be attributed to food establishments in the city or elsewhere.
- This figure is somewhat less than the underlying trend for notifications expected in the Exeter area. Interruptions in the reporting procedure coordinated by the Health Protection Agency may account for this variation.
- It is widely accepted that the number of people reporting their illness to a doctor is a gross under-estimation of the total number in the community who fall ill annually with symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea. National data over the past ten years clearly shows a downward trend in notifications with numbers levelling out during the last two years. Various studies report that at least 50% of food poisonings result from poor practices in the home. A recent initiative entitled Get Cookin' (see paragraph 3.2.3) has allowed the service to promote food safety in the home setting.

3.5 Enforcement Action

- A total of 91 formal written warnings and 299 informal written warnings were issued to secure satisfactory standards in food businesses in the city between April and December 2006. These figures are comparable to the number of written warnings issued in recent years.
- Inspection reports issued by the EHO's have been the subject of a considerable number of requests by investigatory journalist under the Freedom of Information Act since its introduction.
- An approach introduced two years ago to target businesses that have an unsatisfactory risk rating as determined by the officer during the previous inspection continued during 2006/7.

Initiatives/Special Activities

3.6 Certificated Food Hygiene Training

- The training service continues to attract a significant number of candidates, with 408 persons gaining a nationally recognised food safety qualification between April and December. The service achieves a pass rate of 97.4%.
- Although many local businesses source their food safety training through the City Council, further work is needed to determine the barriers of candidates progressing onto the higher level qualifications and in particular the Advanced (level 4) courses.
- Recognising the recent and significant movement of persons into the UK whose first language is not English, the service needs to develop and offer business a cost effective means of providing food hygiene training in a range of languages. The hospitality sector readily employs such persons and food law is such that there is no explicit requirement for them to have previous experience or qualifications in food safety before commencing employment.

3.7 Safer Food Better Business (SFBB)

- In 2005 the service was successful in gaining funding from the Food Standards Agency to roll out a series of measures between January 2006 and March 2007 to help food businesses implement a comprehensive food safety pack known as Safer Food Better Business. The specially designed pack will, if completed correctly, enable business to comply with changes in food law that came into force on 1 January 2006.
- The funding enabled the service to provide 32 free SFBB workshops between January and October 2006 attracting 356 food handlers. Further funding was awarded to the City Council in December to provide workshops between February and March 2007 to help Chinese, Turkish and Bengali businesses in the City. These workshops will be carried out using an interpreter and translated materials to ensure the requirements of SFBB are fully understood within these communities.
- In addition, up to 250 SFBB coaching visits are to be completed before the end of March 2007. Officers make a mutually convenient time to visit and help the business with the introduction of SFBB in to their food operation. Whilst this includes businesses that have attended the workshops a significant number of businesses that failed to respond to the offer of free training are being targeted.

3.8 Get Cookin'

- An application for a nutrition and food safety initiative also coordinated by the Food Standards Agency received funding during summer 2006. The six month initiative that commenced in October 2006 will target up to 80 disadvantaged teenagers or NEET's (not in education, employment or training) from the city. The course integrates food safety and nutrition information in a practical three hour cookery session provided one a day a week for six weeks.
- Referrals for the course are taken from organisations such as the Youth Offending Team, Link Education, Pupil Referral Units, Supportive Lodgings E2E (Education to Employment), the Youth Service, special schools and Sure Start for example.

- Whilst the course aims to equip teenagers with an essential life skill, namely the knowledge and ability to cook nutritious food safely, the funding allows the candidates to gain food safety and nutrition qualifications at the conclusion of the course. The first batch of six candidates sat the Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene just before Christmas with a 100% success rate. For some this is significant step forwards and will represent one of only a limited number of qualifications they possess.
- There will also be the opportunity for a limited number of candidates to gain work experience in city centre hotels following their successful completion of the course.
- Further cookery sessions are planned up until March 2007 after which the service hopes to seek additional funding from a variety of sources to provide courses until at least the summer.

3.9 Exeter Curry Chef Competition

- The Exeter Curry Chef Competition held in March 2006 and scheduled for March 2007 provides chefs working in Indian restaurants and takeaways an opportunity to display their culinary skills to the full, promote local produce, compete against their peers and for the winner to hold the title of Exeter Curry Chef. Last year's competition attracted 16 chefs and this year's competition looks like being equally as popular.
- In order for a chef to access the competition however, an EHO must visit the business and confirm that the business meets the requirements of food law and adopts good hygienic practices. Such initiatives allow the service to promote food safety in a positive manner strengthening the working relationship between the service and the Bengali community in Exeter.

3.10 Exeter Festival of Food and Drink

- A daily slot is now provided each year in the Food is Fun Marquee at Exeter Festival of Food and Drink for a joint initiative between Exeter College and the Food Safety Service. The initiative is based on the Ready Steady Cook format as seen on TV. After being presented with a bag of mystery ingredients a cooking competition plays out between two local schools. The competition being to cook safely and nutritiously and present an appetising meal to be judged by members of the audience. The hour long slot is filled with audience participation and food safety demonstrations such as use of the ultra violet light box which is a visual aide to demonstrate effective hand washing.

3.11 Junior Life Skills

- The service has for many years participated in this annual event organised by the Police that now attracts over 1000 children from the city during its eight days. The event provides an opportunity to deliver topical issues often in partnership with related organisations. This year's scenario delivered in partnership with Exeter Primary Care Trust involved an interactive exercise on healthy diets and exercise. In addition, each school was also provided with a comprehensive resource pack that included information and exercises on reducing childhood accidents, food safety and nutrition.

Review of the targets in the Food Service Delivery Plan 2006/7

- 3.12 There is little variance with the targets in the Food Service Delivery Plan 2006/7 with the exception of the following:
- Recommendation 14.2 - To provide four food hygiene focused English Literacy/Numeracy Courses in conjunction with Exeter College. The Learning and Skills Council withdrew funding for colleges to deliver such initiatives.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Service has continued to take full advantage of partnership working and funding opportunities to provide an enhanced service addressing local needs and achieving the national framework on food safety and the wider public health remit.
- 4.2 Periodic use is made of contract Environmental Health Officers and freelance tutors to provide the specialist level of training and consultancy necessary to fulfil our contractual obligations in respect of the funding initiatives rolled out this year and to complete the volume of work now undertaken by the service and meet relevant performance indicators.
- 4.3 The implications of the Hampton report and the inevitable changes in the delivery of the food service are likely to unfold as the forthcoming year progresses. Members will be appraised of any significant impact and hence deviations from the agreed Food Service Delivery Plan.
- 4.4 The implementation of smoke free legislation and fulfilling the authority's commitment to implementing the increasing profile on the FIT 3 agenda (Fit for Work, Fit for Life, Fit for Tomorrow) as directed by the Health and Safety Executive will need careful management of resources to ensure the authority meets the expectations of all concerned.
- 4.5 The service is in strong position to embrace change and will continue to work with partner organisations to find relevant and creative solutions to secure a healthy and prosperous community.

5. RECOMMENDED:

that Scrutiny Committee- Community supports and Executive approves:

- 1) the proposed Food Service Delivery Plan 2007/8;
- 2) that the Director Community and Environment be given powers to amend the service plans as necessary during the year in the light of operational experiences.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/206SCC13
2 February 2007

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- 1) Food Service Delivery Plan 2006/7