

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Monitoring Report on the Delivery of the Food Law Enforcement and Health and Safety Service Plans
Meeting/Date:	Licensing and Protection Committee – 9 th December 2020
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Leisure and Regulatory Services – Cllr K Prentice
Report by:	Acting Operational Manager (Business) – Myles Bebbington
Ward(s) affected:	All.

Executive Summary:

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan and Health and Safety Service Plan 2019-20 were approved by Committee on 11th March 2020.

This monitoring report covers the Q2 figures from 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020. In general terms the monitoring report accounts for work undertaken by the Business Team within the defined period and compares this to the service plan to ensure that the service is on target to deliver the programmed work.

Programmed work is delivered alongside reactive work, the volume of which by definition is impossible to predict, particularly this year with Covid 19. This work is carried out according to risk. Complaints and accident investigations are prioritised using risk-based selection criteria, and the volume of work is reported here to attempt to identify any emerging risks in terms of resource provision.

The period July to September has been, once again, totally dominated by the current Covid 19 outbreak, whilst businesses and hospitality sectors have re-opened inspections have taken longer than normal due to the need for officers to be Covid compliant and extra checks to ensure businesses are Covid compliant which has doubled the time to undertake a normal inspection. In addition due to members of the team shielding, we have only been able to allocate one part time officer for inspections, however this matter is now resolved with 2 new Full time officers being recruited in Q.3

Appendices 2 and 3 contain detailed information about the delivery of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan. Appendix 4 contains detailed information about the delivery of the Health and Safety Service Plan.

Government authorised the food safety inspections to start in July and a plan of action has been developed to address the backlog, however whilst higher risk food premises will be the priority, it is unlikely we will be able to meet the target set for the year 2020/21

Recommendation:

Note progress and provide any comments considered appropriate, on the delivery of the two Service Plans for the period 1 July to 30 September 2020.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The report provides information about the delivery of the two Service Plans for the cumulative figures for the year between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 2020.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

- 2.1 Members have asked to be kept informed about the delivery of the work in the approved plans.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES COVERED BY THE REPORT

- 3.1 Food Law Enforcement consists of the following areas of work:

- Planned activities such as routine inspections of food businesses, food and environmental sampling and the provision of food hygiene training courses;
- Unplanned (reactive) work such as the investigation of customer complaints, dealing with requests for compliance advice and following up notifications of food poisoning;
- Liaison with other departments in the interests of coordinated service delivery: in particular licensing and planning;
- Supporting national strategies and the wider public health agenda.
Text.

- 3.2 Health and Safety regulation consists of these areas of work:

- Planned activities such as unannounced inspections of high risk businesses and targeted interventions in line with the HSE's strategic aims;
- Unplanned (reactive) work such as the investigation of notifiable accidents, prescribed diseases, complaints and dealing with serious risks that are identified during other activities (Matters of Evident Concern);
- The provision of compliance advice to businesses.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Under normal circumstances the failure to monitor the delivery of the approved Service Plans could invite criticism from the Food Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive in their capacities as the national regulators.
- 4.2 Members have asked to be kept informed about the delivery of the approved Service Plans in order that they can comment on the way in which the service is provided as well as the available resources.

5. ACTIONS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE APPROVED PLANS

- 5.1 Appendices 1 and 2 relate to the delivery of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 compares the recorded activity in each of the programmed work service areas with the predicted activity in the approved Service Plan. The key activities of compliance visits, approved premises inspections and other proactive visits are all Red due to the suspension of all inspections earlier in the year. However, a programme of remote “virtual” inspections were rolled out so that when physical inspections resume we can re-assess the risk status of premises to identify better which premises need to be inspected most urgently. The FSA agreed to physical inspections to recommence in late July. The higher risk premises have been identified and are now being inspected, however inspection times have doubled due to Covid restrictions and the need to undertake a business Covid compliance check at every inspection as per Gov`t instruction.
- 5.3 A higher number of new food business registrations have been received since May 2020, which are being processed virtually to enable premises to take advantage of the relaxing and reopening of certain business types.
- 5.4 The alternative enforcement strategy is currently at red; this remains a lower priority, second to Food safety inspections and Covid compliance work as these are our very low risk premises that are assessed by means other than visits and will be followed up throughout the remainder of the year.
- 5.5 The focus in the last quarter has been to relaunch food safety inspections, Health and safety work as well as target new business registrations and interventions remotely which has been successful and is Green. Additional work directly related to Covid has meant that officers have been taken away at short notice to deal with Covid related matters.
- 5.6 Appendix 2 refers to the unplanned (reactive) work undertaken by the service. The number of customer complaints and service requests is driven by demand which has been reduced due to the current situation, these figures will prove volatile in 2020-21 as a result of Covid 19 due to

most reports of food poisoning traditionally being from food consumed at home. At present all indicators are green.

- 5.7 The food hygiene training programme remains suspended, likely for the rest of the financial year, but there is a commitment by the team to re-establish these as soon as possible.
- 5.6 The Health and Safety Service Plan would normally contain a mixture of programmed work, reactive work and the provision of compliance information and advice. However as planned inspections have also been suspended due to Covid 19 and work has only been reactive, which due to the number of business closures has been limited. The reopening of a range of businesses from June 2020 has led to queries around social distancing, PPE and staff safety which is expected to occupy most of our Health and Safety work for the foreseeable future. Health and safety work has increased significantly, which is to be expected and is forecast to remain high for the foreseeable future due to Covid 19
- 5.7 During Covid the main health and safety queries have been around social distancing in the workplace, which has resulted in a steady stream of advice and from July onwards regular visits by the team, at the time of writing the report the food and licensing teams have dealt with over 400 complaints and/or requests for advice.
- 5.8 The team have been heavily involved in producing guidance and information relating to reopening our town centres, providing guidance for Food business reopening, along with businesses such as Barbers, Tattooists, Nail bars etc
- 5.9 Further work has and continues to be done around track and trace work as required and is likely to need more office time in Q3 due to changing priorities and roles being placed on Local Authorities by Government.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 These reporting arrangements support the wider corporate objectives to
- Create, protect and enhance our safe built environment
 - Support people to improve their health and wellbeing
 - Accelerate business growth and remove barriers to growth

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 No consultations required as part of this report

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The failure to report the delivery of the approved Service Plans may prejudice the Council's ability to provide the necessary resources.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

11.1 To keep Members informed about the delivery of the approved Service Plans.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Food Safety Service Plan: programmed (proactive) Activity

Appendix 2 – Food Safety Service Plan: Reactive Activity

Appendix 3 - Health and Safety Activity

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