
Food Safety Service Plan 2005/06

Report by the Head of Environmental Health Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Member endorsement for the Food Safety Service Plan for 2005/06. It is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement that a Food Safety Service Plan be prepared in accordance with a format provided by the FSA. Under the Council's constitution this is part of the policy framework that has to be formally approved by the Council.
- 1.2 This is the fifth annual report which details the work that the service has planned for 2005/06, the staffing and financial resources required, the constraints that may prevent some of the tasks from being fulfilled and the priority of the tasks. It also includes a review of the previous year's performance and identifies where the Authority was at significant variance from the service plan and the reasons for that variance. The review is set out in Section 6 of the service plan on pages 33 to 41.

2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council is a Food Authority and as such it is responsible for enforcing specific food safety legislation, this work is carried out by the Environmental Health Services Division. The service is linked to the priority outcome of a healthy population.
- 2.2 The aim of the Service Plan is to -
- ◆ provide information about the Food Safety Service;
 - ◆ identify the means by which the service will be provided;
 - ◆ identify the means by which the service will meet any relevant performance targets or performance standards;
 - ◆ enable performance to be reviewed by examining any variances from the Service Plan; and
 - ◆ demonstrate a balanced enforcement approach.
- 2.3 The FSA sees this Service Plan as a mechanism for local authorities to ensure that national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally as well as -
- ◆ focussing debate on key delivery issues;
 - ◆ providing an essential link with financial planning;
 - ◆ setting objectives for the future and identifying major issues that cross service boundaries; and

- ◆ providing a means of managing performances and making performance comparisons.

3. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2004/05

- 3.1 The food section was fully staffed for seven months of the financial year and carried 2 full-time vacancies at various stages during the other five months. In addition to that a new Commercial Services Manager was appointed to the post in October to cover the secondment of the post-holder. The team still achieved 100% of all required inspections. Most of the pro-active work planned for the year was also completed.
- 3.2 There were two successful prosecutions this year for offences under the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995. These resulted from dirty and unhygienic conditions being found in two food premises. We achieved substantial fines and significant media coverage. In addition the proprietors of two food business were formally cautioned, for offences under the Food Safety Act 1990. Officer time and legal costs involved in bringing cases to court are significant.
- 3.3 In October last year the Foods Standards Agency consolidated the previous 20 separate Codes of Practice into one Code. Food authorities are required to have regard to this revised Code when discharging their duties.
- 3.4 There was a considerable amount of work required to implement the new provisions including revising all of the Standard Operating Procedures, amending the Enforcement Policy, changing the way data is recorded on the database and re-designing the various inspection forms. I am pleased to report that all of this work was completed without additional resource requirements.
- 3.5 There were no major food-borne illness outbreaks. All individual cases of notifiable food-borne illness were investigated.

4. SERVICE PLAN FOR 2005/06

- 4.1 The format of this document remains essentially unchanged from that of the previous year. (An executive summary is attached at Appendix A.) The resources provided by the Council are currently sufficient to enable this Authority to meet the requirements that the FSA requires of Food Authorities. In the event of difficulties arising that would prevent all the targets being met, priority would be given to the inspection of food premises. It is also possible that the FSA may redirect resources to meet the need of a major food safety concern.
- 4.2 The new FSA Code introduced a number of changes to the way food law may be enforced. In particular the Code allows an Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES) to be adopted in the service plan. The AES may include a change from inspecting low risk premises on a 5-year cycle to not inspecting them. It is open to us to decide how we would continue to monitor these premises without inspecting them.

Even if we are not inspecting, under the Code, these premises must be subject to some type of enforcement activity every 3 years. We are proposing in this year's service plan to continue to inspect, on a 3-yearly cycle, but also to pilot an AES. The AES could involve postal questionnaires being sent out to obtain the information necessary to re-assess risk and maintain the database. If this pilot is successful, we may be able to adopt this strategy for next year. The outcome of the pilot study will be reported to Members with the introduction of the 2006/07 service plan.

- 4.3 Amendments have been made to the 2004/05 service plan, to create the 2005/06 service plan. These have included updating performance data and introducing new elements to the education programme. (See Appendix B.)

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Last year the team successfully inspected all premises on their programme and delivered most of the initiatives outlined in the 2004/05 development plan. This year's plan includes a pilot scheme for any alternative enforcement strategy which may allow us to inspect fewer premises in future. The plan also includes new elements to the education programme.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 **Members are requested to endorse the Food Safety Service Plan.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Food Safety Service Plan 2005/06
FSA Framework Agreement
FSA Code of Practice

Contact Officers: **Susan Lammin, Head of Environmental Health Services**
☎ 01480 388280/
Andy Agass, Commercial Services Manager
☎ 01480 388290

A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2005/06 is available in the Members' Room. If you wish to have an individual copy, please contact the Environmental Health Admin Section on 01480 388302.