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# **Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11**

## **Report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Member's endorsement for the Food Safety Service Plan for 2010/11. 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 tenth annual report that has been submitted to Members. It details the work that the service has planned for 2010/11, 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.

### **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 and Community Health Services Division. It is a front line service integral to supporting the national food industry and keeping food safe for consumers.
- 2.2 The service is linked to the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' and the Community Aim of Healthy Living and the service objective to protect the health of individuals. Many of the service's actions contribute to the achievement of Growing Success, the Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Growing our Community', Cambridgeshire's Vision/Local Area Agreement and National Indicators. The service provides a positive opportunity for the council to interact with local businesses and protect the health of the community.
- 2.3 There are over 1400 food businesses in the district and the service helps the changing local food economy to remain vibrant and enables the Council to provide practical support to businesses in a difficult economic times. The work of the service helps to maintain public confidence in the standards of our local food industry, helps businesses comply with food legislation which helps ensure fair

competition and allows well run food businesses to flourish and contribute to the local economy.

2.4 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.

2.5 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 2009/10**

3.1 The Food Service was fully staffed for the whole of the financial year although there was a higher level of sick leave than expected. However, re-prioritising work ensured that 99.6% of high-risk and 83.3% of low-risk premises requiring an inspection were inspected. In total 1526 inspections and visits were carried out to food premises as part of programmed activity and in response to complaints and food alerts. The support we provide on such visits can be vital to businesses that are under pressure in the current financial climate. Our officers make sure food businesses are aware of their legal obligations and help them ensure that the food they supply is safe. A range of alternative approaches to engage low risk businesses have been carried out, which are aimed at minimising burdens on the businesses while still ensuring that they have support from the Council.

3.2 Huntingdonshire Scores on the Doors Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (SOTD which was launched in October 2008 has proven to be very popular with businesses and consumers. The scheme, which applies to all caterers and takeaway businesses, involves food hygiene scores, assessed during a routine inspection, being published on the Council's website in a star rating format which is easy for the public to understand and enables them to make an informed choice about where to eat out. Businesses can be awarded up to five stars, the higher the standard of compliance, the more stars are awarded. Very poor standards are rated as zero. To date there have been over 82,000 searches on the website since it went live. There is evidence that this scheme has encouraged food businesses to improve

standards with a significant improvement in the number of 3 to 5 star ratings and a decrease in the number 0 to 2 stars issued. This in turn has meant that associated efficiency savings have enabled resources to be directed into dealing with higher risk premises and those presenting a risk to public health.

- 3.3 The Pennington Report following the fatal E.Coli enquiry in Wales in 2005 was finally released in April 2009 and resulted in significant work for the service. All butchers premises were sent a summary version of the report and provided with guidance and were visited over a short time frame. Their food safety management systems were audited and required data collected. Where appropriate food and environmental samples were taken and submitted for analysis. One butcher had Improvement Notices served on his businesses to ensure compliance. As a result of this intervention and discussions with local butchers a comprehensive butchers training package is currently being developed by the Food team and will be implemented in the early part of this year.
- 3.4 A licensed annual music and arts festival attracting over 15,000 visitors required significant resources and food officer involvement. A total of 60 food vendors were inspected, and food and water samples taken. Formal action was taken where appropriate. This was in addition to inspection of site infrastructure, displays, event areas, water and lake based activities, car parking and camping areas for health and safety issues. Other large scale events, fairs, shows and heritage attractions place an unplanned demand on the service and have resulted in increased proactive and reactive work often at weekends and unsociable hours. These activities have been absorbed within existing budgets and resources but their impact should be noted.
- 3.5 The service has a clearly laid down enforcement policy which focuses on providing advice and guidance for businesses to secure compliance. This process is successful in the vast majority of cases. However, where businesses consistently fail to comply with the law or present a serious threat to public health it is important that the Council takes action to protect consumers. In 2009/10 there was one successful prosecution instigated for unhygienic premises and practices identified at a mobile caterer. A total of 42 Improvement Notices were served on 6 premises, all of which were complied with within the specified timescale. 2 premises were subject to voluntary closure and a quantity of unfit food was voluntarily surrendered from a market trader and 2 restaurants following routine inspections.
- 3.6 The service responded to 178 complaints from local residents about unfit food or unhygienic food premises and 94 food alerts from the FSA. These were all dealt with efficiently and effectively and provided a vital opportunity to demonstrate that the service responds to the needs and concerns of our community. Responding to complaints is a key way in which the service can gain intelligence about food businesses and helps to maintain consumer confidence in local food businesses. 175 food and 25 water samples were taken

for analysis of which 23 were found to be unsatisfactory. Appropriate action was taken to resolve any problems.

- 3.7 Officers from the service provided specialist training and guidance for Public Health Registrars and Nurses from the Health Protection Agency in food safety and infectious disease control. Officers have also run 6 CIEH level 2 food hygiene training courses for local businesses and volunteer groups and have delivered a number of training sessions in schools and at local venues.
- 3.8 EU and UK food legislation has continued to have a significant impact on food business operators as they have to ensure that a fully documented food safety management system is in place and maintained. To meet the needs of the food business sector the service has had to provide considerable guidance and advice. This has increased the time spent at each premises during an inspection. This year the service was part of a successful county wide bid to the FSA for funding to support the implementation of food safety management training and coaching in catering businesses. This is the third successful year that funding has been achieved. So far over 400 food businesses have benefited from this initiative and has resulted in an improvement in standards.
- 3.9 Joint working with other agencies including Cambridgeshire Police, Trading Standards and the Fire Officer targeting specific licensed premises proved a successful operation. Other joint initiatives were implemented to address illegally imported foods and work with Primary food producers
- 3.10 The preventative activity did not eradicate all food-borne illness and 234 cases were notified to the Council. Some food poisoning organisms can cause serious illness and permanent disability and some types can kill. The number of food poisoning cases shows no significant change compared to last year and continues to marginally exceed national averages. The dominant pathogen is Campylobacter. All individual cases were promptly investigated and analysis of the investigation findings show that the majority of food-borne illnesses reported by residents of the district were contracted abroad, outside Huntingdonshire or in a domestic setting and none of the cases investigated identified local food premises as being the likely source. One viral outbreak did occur at a local restaurant and was associated with the consumption of oysters which affected 15 diners and 3 staff. A full investigation with the Health Protection Agency was carried out which necessitated the establishment of an Incident Management Team. This involved a number of officers from the food team, the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, The Regional Epidemiologist, Microbiologists and Communications staff. The investigation was resource intensive and involved the co operation of a number of organisations, businesses and other local authorities. The outbreak resulted in the associated oyster bed in Ireland being formally closed by the Irish FSA until the contamination issue has been resolved.

3.11 The delivery of the service plan has resulted in an improvement in National Indicator 184 (the number of food premises that are broadly compliant) from 87% the previous year to 88% this year. (This excludes those that are not yet inspected or rated.) This is above the national average and is seen as a critical area of our work by the FSA and central government. National Indicator 182, which measures business satisfaction was also high with the Food service achieving 86% (2% higher than the previous year and against a Government target of 80%.) [Note this result is for the service and is for the second year higher than the corporate average.]

3.12 Full details of the review are set out in Section 6 of the Service Plan.

#### **4. SERVICE PLAN FOR 2010/11**

4.1 The format of this document remains essentially unchanged from that of the previous year. (An executive summary is attached as Appendix.) The resources provided by the Council for this year should be sufficient to enable this Authority to meet the requirements of the FSA although one 0.5FTE post within the commercial team will be on maternity leave for the whole year. The service will continue to explore the use of alternative enforcement strategies and interventions for low-risk businesses and any time saved will be invested in inspecting high-risk premises and providing education and guidance.

4.2 In the event of unforeseen issues arising during the year that would hinder the achievement of all targets within the service plan, priority would be given to the inspection of high-risk food premises and delivery of key projects which will help to protect the health of individuals as outlined in Growing Success and the Sustainable Community Strategy. It is also possible that the FSA may redirect resources, at any time, to meet the need of a nationally significant food safety concern or the Health Protection Agency in the event of a significant outbreak or public health emergency (eg pandemic flu).

4.3 The food service has always adopted a risk-based approach to inspections and a graduated approach to enforcement. However the Pennington report (published April 2009) following the 2006 E.Coli outbreak in Wales in which a young schoolboy died and several hundred people became seriously ill, severely criticised the Local Authorities concerned for implementing a 'light touch' approach to their enforcement duties. The report called for robust and in-depth audits of high-risk food businesses and a move away from self regulation. It will therefore be necessary to maintain the adoption of a 'right touch' approach to regulatory duties and the delivery of this service plan will ensure this.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 Last year the team successfully inspected 99% of high-risk and 83% of low-risk premises on its programme and delivered on the majority of the initiatives outlined in the 2009/10 Development Plan. This year's plan includes further development of the alternative

enforcement strategy, implementation of a training initiative for butchers, maintenance and promotion of the Scores on the Doors scheme and development of healthy eating initiatives for businesses and the community. We will progress with our joint working with Trading Standards and the Health Protection Agency and continue to provide guidance and information to businesses on the implementation of food safety legislation. The plan also includes new elements to the education programme to provide a joined-up approach to initiatives aimed at keeping the population healthy and reducing inequalities.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 Council is requested to note the contents of the report and approve the Food Safety Service Plan.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11  
FSA Framework Agreement  
FSA Code of Practice

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*A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11 is available in the Members' Room. If you wish to have an individual copy, please contact the Environmental Health Admin Section on 01480 388302.*

## APPENDIX

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2010/11

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Food Safety Service is to work with businesses and consumers to endeavour to ensure that food intended for sale for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or purchased within Huntingdonshire is without risk to public health or the safety of the consumer.

The service is linked to the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' and the Community Aim of Healthy Living and the service objective is 'reducing the risk of food poisoning. Many of the services actions contribute to the achievement of Growing Success, the Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Growing our Community', Cambridgeshire's Vision/Local Area Agreement and National Indicators. There are also close links with the council's Environment Strategy and the National Health Improvement Agenda.

The following key activities are identified within the performance management system and will be measured to determine the effectiveness of the listed activities and actions.

- ◆ Planned and reactive inspections of registered food premises
- ◆ Provision of training, advice to businesses and food hygiene promotion
- ◆ Taking food, water and environmental samples
- ◆ Investigation of food poisoning and cases/outbreaks of food-borne disease

The service will seek to achieve this through a number of key actions that are identified within this service plan.

#### CHANGES IN RESOURCES FROM 2009/10 TO 2010/11

STAFF	2009/10	2010/11
Environmental Health Officers	3.6	3.6
Environmental Health Protection Officers	1.1	1.1
Lifestyle Manager	0.3	0.3
	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Admin Support Staff	1.75	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>6.6</b>

<b>FINANCIAL</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Direct Costs (Employees)	£300,810	£323,300
Overheads	£191,340	£148,770
Other Direct costs (specialist equipment legal fees and sampling)	£12,530	£13,990
Total	<u>£504,680</u>	<u>£486,068</u>
Income	<u>-£700</u>	<u>-£1000</u>
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b><u>£503,980</u></b>	<b><u>£485,068</u></b>

### **ACTIONS AND TIME ALLOCATIONS**

*All calculations assume 1 x FTE = 1290 hours per year (215 working days x 6 productive hours per working day). All estimates include revisit activity. Time does not include administrative support.*

<b>Proactive Tasks</b>	<b>Level of activity</b>		<b>Hours</b>	<b>FTE</b>
	<b>Actual 2009/10</b>	<b>Estimated 2010/11</b>	<b>Estimated 2010/11</b>	<b>Estimated 2010/11</b>
Planned Food Hygiene inspections	633	600	3287	2.55
Alternative Enforcement Strategy Interventions	105	126		
Revisits	153	150		
Inspection of new, mobile and temporary premises	206	210		
EC approved manufacturing plants	4	4		
Food safety and public health promotion	Project work linked to delivery of Corporate objectives, Sustainable Community Strategy, LAA, NI's, Statutory duties and the delivery of the Service Development Plan (e.g. Provision of targeted interventions, food hygiene training courses, scores on the doors, development of newsletters, leaflets, website, promoting food safety, healthy eating initiatives and reduction in infectious diseases.)		1183	0.92
Liaison with other organisations	Maintenance and development of existing links and initiatives both internal and external.		100	0.08



Reactive Tasks	Level of activity		Hours	FTE
	Actual 2009/10	Estimated 2010/11	Estimated 2010/11	Estimated 2010/11
Food related complaints – estimate complaints re premises and food	178	175	500	0.39
Food inspection and sampling - estimate food, water and environmental samples to be taken	178	180	100	0.08
Infectious disease control - estimate notifications of food poisoning	234	240	150	0.12
Food Safety Incidents - estimate receipt	94	80	30	0.02
Advice to business enquiries	Provision of guidance on the implementation of relevant and new legislation. Alternative Interventions to specific business groups with seminars and newsletters. Promotion of the FSA Safer Food Better Business toolkit to all relevant food business. Advice given at the time of each inspection plus an estimated further 300 enquiries from the public and businesses on food safety matters, including Home Authority/Primary Authority Principle.		400	0.30
Staff development and training	Internal and external training courses, peer review exercise, research		200	0.15
Service management	Overall supervision and management of service, policy and procedural development. Responding to central government consultations and audits.		500	0.40
<b>Total</b>			6450	5.0

The budget for 2010/11 represents a decrease of 3.75% on the previous financial year. This decrease is primarily as a result of a technical adjustment to pension liabilities. (The estimate of the present value of the future pensions of employees is less than the employer's pension contributions during 2009/10. The service accounts receive this credit although it is reversed out as a lump sum, so there is no impact on the budget for HDC as a whole). There may be some savings on the Employees' budget as one 0.5FTE post within the commercial team will be on maternity leave for the whole of the year although this will have an impact on service delivery. It is anticipated that the budget will be sufficient to meet the demands of the service but in the event of a complex legal case or the introduction of sampling charges then additional funds will have to be sought.

The administrative support workload includes the production of detailed post-inspection letters, data entry to Flare, taking and recording of enquiries, service requests and collating data on infectious diseases, collation of information for FSA, CIEH returns, internal PI monitoring and EU directive compliance.

A balanced workload has been proposed for the 2010/11 year which incorporates a full range of enforcement actions including food safety education. The plan has been based upon the service being fully staffed. If staffing levels are not maintained due to staff leaving or long-term sickness or as a consequence of staff being seconded to other Local Authorities as part of a Local Agreement, then the service will be under-resourced to meet the requirements of this service plan. This will have an impact on completion of inspections targets (particularly lower risk ones) and the delivery of the Development plan as outlined below.

The impact of large scale events such as the Secret Garden Party (SGP) and Heritage events also needs to be recognised. In 2009 the SGP resulted in an additional 60 food hygiene inspections, enforcement activity, use of sampling resources, and considerable staff involvement.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010/11**

During 2010/11, the following areas of project development and service improvement are planned. This work is in addition to existing food enforcement work being undertaken as identified in this service plan and is linked to the objectives and outcomes identified in Growing Success, The Sustainable Community Strategy, The LAA, National Indicators and Regional and National Strategies.

- ◆ Review the service against the new FSA audit criteria for LA's on the enforcement and application of HACCP legislation and its validation and verification
- ◆ Develop and deliver an appropriate training intervention for butchers to address concerns highlighted in the 2009 Pennington report on the *E. coli* outbreak in Wales and the services own audit of butchers premises
- ◆ Develop a project aimed at reviewing the risk of cross contamination and the effectiveness of cleaning and disinfection in high risk food businesses,

- ◆ Review the delivery of food hygiene training to businesses to maximise uptake
- ◆ Deliver targeted educational and enforcement interventions for high risk business which consistently demonstrate poor compliance. ( 0-2 star )
- ◆ Review existing and identify new private water supplies and private distribution networks within the district and carry out a risk assessment as required by new legislation
- ◆ Review all Standard operating procedures in the light of the new legislation and regional and national policy changes
- ◆ Formally launch the healthy eating project 'tips for chips' and promote to caterers and the local community
- ◆ Review and develop in partnership with other services and agencies healthy eating projects and campaigns to support healthy communities
- ◆ Develop an educational initiative focusing on Eastern European food Businesses
- ◆ Work in partnership with the Cambridgeshire Business Partnership to promote the role of the Food Safety service in supporting businesses with compliance
- ◆ Continue to identify and develop opportunities for joint working with Trading Standards Officers
- ◆ Continue to develop and promote the Scores on the Doors Scheme
- ◆ Review of website content and customer information access
- ◆ Develop and initiate internal training to ensure staff are competent under the FSA COP in terms of formal food sampling