

Food Safety Service Plan



Report to: Licensing Committee

Date: 5 September 2024

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Executive Summary

A This report sets out the updated Food Service Plan for the period 2024-2025. The Food Service Plan is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities who undertake official food controls and is detailed within the Food Law Code of Practice set by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Food Service Plan outlines the Local Authorities commitment to development of the food service.

Recommended that:

A The Committee approves the Food Safety Service Plan 2024/2025 attached as Appendix A to the report.

Reason for decision

A The Local Authority is required to deliver all official controls as detailed within the Food Law Code of Practice. During the year 2023/24 this was achieved, and the team is on track to maintain this status in 2024/25.

Other Options

A The Committee approves the Food Safety Act Service Plan 2024/2025 attached as Appendix A, but with amendments.

Background

1. The Council has a statutory duty to enforce the Food Safety Act and in doing so to have regard to the Framework Agreement on local authority food law enforcement which constitutes statutory guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Service Plan is produced in compliance with the Framework Agreement, and represents a team plan within the Council's own performance management framework.

Issues/Proposals

2. The Plan sets out:
 - a) Food safety objectives detailing the Council's responsibilities as set out in legislation, associated statutory codes of practice and national guidelines;
 - b) The current work programme within the service; and
 - c) The Council's policy on food safety, sampling, provision of information to business, investigation of complaints and allegations of Food Poisoning, response to Food Safety Alerts and infectious disease control.
3. The current Framework Agreement reflects an ongoing emphasis by the FSA on focusing interventions on high-risk situations. The Council has allocated its resources to reflect this.
4. Whilst there is discretion to increase activity above the requirements set by the Framework Agreement, the desirability of doing so is balanced by financial considerations and sensitivity to the additional burden on business which additional regulation might represent.
5. The plan as currently drafted is considered to represent the minimum practicable level of activity to fulfil the requirements of the Framework.
6. The FSA modified the expectations of Food Safety Authorities in recognition of the burdens imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This derogation was extended to March 2023. The team has fully recovered the food service delivery during 2023/24 in respect of programmed food inspections, inspections of new unrated businesses and food sampling work.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment form does not need to be completed following initial screening.

Climate Change

None.

Finance

There are no direct financial implications relating to this report.

Author: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Governance

The Food Service Plan is written in accordance with the nationally agreed Framework Agreement with the FSA. The Plan sets out how the authority will meet its statutory obligations.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Appendices

Appendix A – Harlow Council Environmental Health Food Service Plan 2024/25.

Background Papers

The Framework Agreement on official feed and food law controls by local authorities

– <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/local-authorities>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

FSA – Food Standards Agency