

**CABINET MEETING - 22 JUNE 2011**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET - PART 1**

**Title of Report:**

FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2011/12

**Author(s):**

Executive Director of City Services

**Purpose of Report:**

To advise Cabinet of the Service's Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2011/12 and the comments of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee and seek approval of the plan.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is recommended to refer the matter to Council with the recommendation that the Food Law Service Plan for 2011/12 be approved.

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework      \*Yes/No**

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

The Foods Standards Agency which monitors and audits Local Authority activities requires Food Law Service Plans to be approved by Members to ensure local transparency and accountability. The plan forms part of the Council's policy and budgetary framework as defined in the Constitution.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

There are no practical alternative options.

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in  
The Constitution?**

**Yes**

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?**

**Yes**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

Community and Safer City Scrutiny



**Report of Executive Director of City Services**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To advise the Cabinet of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2011/12 and the comments of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee and seek approval of the plan.

**2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

Cabinet is recommended to refer the matter to Council with the recommendation that the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2011/12 be approved.

**3. Introduction/Background**

The Food Standards Agency is an independent food safety watchdog set up by Act of Parliament in 2000 to protect the public health and consumer interests in relation to food.

The White Paper "The Food Standards Agency – A Force for Change" identified that Food Standards Agency as having a key role overseeing local authority enforcement activities. The Agency is therefore proactive in setting and monitoring standards and auditing local authorities enforcement activities to ensure that they are effective and undertaken on a more consistent basis.

Service Plans for food safety enforcement activities are seen to be an important part of the process to ensure that national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally. It was recognized by both central and local government that central guidance on the content of local service plans for food enforcement work would be helpful to local authorities.

The Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement has been developed in close partnership with the Local Government Regulation (LGR) and the Local Government Association. They have recommended a format for food enforcement service plans and given detailed guidance on the content of the plan.

**4. Current Position**

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2011/12 (attached) has been formulated to comply with the recommendations of the Food Standards Agency's Framework Agreement. It would be necessary to produce this plan in the event of an audit by the Agency.

On 7 June 2011, the report was submitted to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee for advice and consideration. The Committee recommended that the Plan be approved and also referred to the very high standard of work undertaken by staff within the Team and the high regard in which they are held.

## **5. Reasons for the Decision**

The Food Standards Agency which monitors and audits local authority activities requires the Food Law Service Plans to be approved by Members to ensure local transparency and accountability. The plan forms part of the Council's policy and budgetary framework as defined in the Constitution.

## **6. Alternative Options**

There are no practical alternative options.

## **7. Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

- (a) **Financial Implications / Gershon** – Details of financial and budgetary details in this report have been extracted from information supplied by the City Treasurer.
- (b) **Risk Analysis** – Failure to approve Plan would conflict with requirements of Food Standards Agency. Measures within the Plan promote the health of the population of the City.
- (c) **Employee Implications** – The Plan relates to existing staff resources working within the Department.
- (d) **Legal Implications** – Requirements relate to guidance given by the Food Standards Agency.
- (e) **Sustainability**  
The actions promoted by the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan seek to ensure the standards of food supplied within the City Legislation requires the application of standards within all food businesses.

## **8. Glossary**

FSA Food Standards Agency

## **9. List of Appendices**

Appendix - Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2011/12

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Framework agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement

# **Sunderland City Council**

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Public Protection and Regulatory Services

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## **FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2010/11**

### **1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **1.1 Aims and Objectives**

The Department's aim is to protect the health of all persons within the City in relation to food safety matters.

Our objectives are to proactively interact with food businesses within the City on a risk-based programme to improve the standard of food premises in the City. A variety of interventions are under consideration, with the Food Standards Agency approval, which will influence the actions at each premises during the year and the number of programmed inspections. Alternative strategies to inspection for enforcing standards in lower-risk premises are still being considered regionally with other interventions being considered. We will undertake a programme of food sampling, both microbiological and compositional. We will also respond appropriately to all food complaints, food alerts and food poisoning incidents.

We will also educate and advise the public and the food trade in matters of food hygiene and safety. Officers from the Food team will undertake the inspection of ships visiting the Port in accordance with current guidance.

#### **1.2 Links To Corporate Objectives And Plans**

The Sunderland Strategy for the years 2008-2025 sets out the framework for the work of everyone in the council. The full document can be viewed on the council's website. The Environmental Health section, in relation to Food, can impact on all of the five strategic aims to a greater or lesser extent.

They are;

1. To create a strong and diverse local economy that will provide jobs and careers for people in the city now and in the future.
2. To create a city that provides excellent health and social care services, where residents are supported to make healthy life and lifestyle choices.
3. To make Sunderland a place where everyone feels welcome and can be part of a safe and inclusive community.
4. To create a thriving learning culture where everyone can be involved in learning.
5. To ensure that Sunderland becomes a clean, green city with a strong culture of sustainability.

Of the five priorities set to achieve the goals, the Food section will be involved with – Prosperous City, Healthy City, Safe City and Learning City.

## **The Corporate Improvement Plan**

The Food teams are included in the following Corporate Improvement Objectives whilst undertaking their statutory and advisory roles;

- § Delivering Customer Focused Services
- § Being One Council
- § Efficient and Effective Council
- § Improving Partnership Working to deliver One City.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Profile of the Local Authority**

Sunderland City Council covers an area of 138 sq. kilometres and contains a population of about 284,000. It is the largest City between Leeds and Edinburgh. The area is largely urban ("metropolitan") but contains a great diversity of settlements including the City Centre, Washington and former coalmining communities such as Houghton le Spring and Hetton le Hole.

### **2.2 Organisational Structure**

The Council through a Leader, Cabinet and a total of 75 Councillors covering 25 wards, has an annual estimated budget of approximately £253.7 million for 2011/12. The Council employs 12,803 different individuals working full and part time across the City in a wide variety of jobs. The most recent estimate of the number of Council staff (Full Time Equivalents) currently employed is 10,180.35

#### **Current Departmental Structure;**

Chief Executive + 4 Directorates; City Services, Children's Services, and Health, Housing and Adult Services, and Office of the Chief Executive.

#### **Current Committee Structure;**

The Council operates through a system of Committees, both Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Regulatory Committees.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees include;

- Management,
- Prosperity and Economic Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Children, Young People and Learning
- Community and Safer City
- Environment and Attractive City
- Sustainable Communities



The Regulatory Committees include;  
Licensing / Regulatory Committee,  
Planning and Highways,  
Development Control Sub- Committees  
Personnel Committee.

## **Structure of City Services**

City Services have four main service areas, Street Scene, Culture and Tourism, Customer Services and Community Services.

Street Scene includes the Public Protection and Regulatory Services division as well as Responsive Local Services, City-Wide Services, Highways and Transportation, Cemeteries and Crematorium, Drainage, Grounds Maintenance, Refuse Collection and Street Cleaning, and Highways & Transportation.

Within Public Protection and Regulatory Services, (Environmental Health Section), the Commercial Food team and Health Promotion team are involved in food related matters and Trading Standards are involved in primary production and feedingstuffs control.

With regard to the line of Management for food matters, the Executive Director of City Services is the Chief Officer and the Assistant Head of Street Scene heads the Public Protection and Regulatory Services division. There is an Environmental Health Manager for Commercial sections and a Principal Environmental Health Officer responsible for food matters. The Assistant Head of Street Scene is also line manager to the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, and Health Promotion Specialist.

### **2.3 Scope of the Food Service**

The activities relating to food in the City are undertaken between the Commercial Food team, Trading Standards team and the Health Promotion team.

The Commercial Food team carry out a programme of food hygiene and food standards inspection duties as well as responding to requests for service and infectious disease notifications. Sampling of foodstuffs, both microbiological and compositional, is also undertaken. The team has for many years enforced health and safety at work in most food premises in line with recommendations in the Lord Young report "Common Sense, Common Safety". Officers also respond to Port Health requests and food hygiene inspections are part of the Ship Sanitation Certificates required under International Health Regulations.

Trading Standards Officers within the Department specialise in the primary production and animal feedingstuffs response.

The services of Health Protection Agency laboratories and the County Analyst, Durham currently complement the work of the two teams. The future of the

County Analyst is uncertain after July 2011 and possible alternative arrangements are being considered regionally.

The Health Promotion team provide Level 2 (Basic) and Level 3 (Intermediate) Food Hygiene Training Courses. Officers organise campaigns and undertake visits to educational establishments in connection with food hygiene. The Heartbeat award and Healthy Home Award schemes are promoted and managed by the team, with inspections being undertaken of relevant premises. Significant interest in the Healthy Home Award was generated at a seminar earlier this year and it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of awards presented this year.

The Joint Authorities in the region have previously co-operated with training for new businesses in a partnership arrangement between the Authorities and funded by the participants. We will continue to seek and cooperate in joint working between the Authorities.

The food service currently operates from the Civic Centre, (the Houghton Office having closed in November 2010). The Civic Centre is open to the public in normal working hours throughout the week, 8.30am to 5.15pm (4.45pm Friday), although officers work in a flexi-time scheme. There is an evening and weekend service arrangement for contacting management for out-of-hours emergencies. There are no formal planned "out of hours" arrangements for field Officers, however visits are conducted at events or as necessary outside normal working hours.

The Council website [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk) encourages the public to communicate with the Department by email and makes information constantly available. Letters from the Department to customers / companies encourage the use of email. The facility to contact the Department and individual Officers by direct telephone lines is also promoted with customers. Progress is being made to facilitate the initial contact for services through the Customer Services Network.

The Council displays current food hygiene ratings ("Scores on the Doors") on the [sunderlandcitycouncil.com](http://sunderlandcitycouncil.com) website, which is also linked from the [sunderland.gov.uk](http://sunderland.gov.uk) website (Food Hygiene). This Authority plans to use the Food Standards Agency national scheme with a contract having been signed and test system already operating successfully. A launch date for the FSA scheme of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011 has been chosen.

The Authority has a limited rural community, principally arable with few livestock holdings. The Trading Standards Division carries out the enforcement of primary production and feedingstuffs legislation and advice to farmers / retailers.

## 2.4 Demands on the food service

- There are 2142 food premises currently operating in the City, including 1 registered Primary Producer.

Food Premises in the City of which;	No.	Food Hygiene High Risk (a)	Food Hygiene Medium Risk (b)	Food Hygiene Medium Risk (c)	Food Hygiene Medium Risk (d)	Food Hygiene Low risk (e)	Unrated / unclassified
Primary producers / manufacturers / processors	80	0	18	33	11	11	4
Packers / Importers / Exporters / distributors, etc	36	0	1	3	16	13	2
Retailers	557	1	8	208	185	121	17
Restaurant / Other Caterers	1469	0	178	828	241	134	77
Contact Materials and articles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Food Premises	2142	1 0.05%	205 9.6%	1072 50.0%	453 21.1%	279 13.0%	100 4.7%
Outside the programme	7 0.35%						

- The majority are classified in the Restaurant / catering outlet group (1469) whilst there are 557 food retailers.
- The unrated / unclassified premises are those which have recently opened or changed proprietor since the last inspection. These premises are revisited for further inspection and rating within 6 months to make an informed judgement of on-going standards. This is currently under review
- The Stadium of Light can accommodate over 40,000 seated spectators, with significant catering from the outlets within the stadium. International events are also hosted at the site. This year several major music events again are planned in May / June at the Stadium that will involve the food team.

- There are a significant number of outdoor events held regularly each year (e.g. Air Show, International Friendship Festival) which are attended by up to 1.5 million visitors, with various mobile caterers and food businesses from around the region and beyond visiting the Authority to cater at the events.
- Port health inspections which require inspections of food hygiene and standards on board vessels coming into the port was undertaken. The provision of Ship Sanitation Certificates has continued to be requested from the Authority.
- Increased vigilance continues to be expected regarding the inland enforcement of imported food legislation in an effort to prevent the spread of disease in food animals.
- The Food Standards Agency conducted an audit in February 2011 in relation to the Authority's work on animal feed.
- The Freedom of Information Act can impact on the workload of the Department due to the administration of requests and time spent recovering the information. Press and other enquiries to Local Authorities in the region continue to request specific information regarding comparative businesses in each Local Authority. In the past year, again there have been 6 formal requests for information regarding food premises in the financial year 2010 to April 2011.
- Information regarding local food premises is available on-line i.e. "Scores on the Doors", from our own council website. This involves the publication of a food safety star rating for catering premises in the City based on standards of structure and hygiene ratings and confidence in management scores assessed during programmed inspections. Following inspections, the written communications to business owners advise them that the information may be released on the website in the future and in response to third party requests as required by Freedom of Information legislation. The Food Standards Agency national scheme is now operating and this Authority has signed a contract to join the national scheme. Trial runs of the data involved have been undertaken and the full operation is likely before June 2011.
- The Licensing function impacts on the workload. Officers consider new licences and applications for amendments to licences as part of the Responsible Authority consultation.
- There is some potential for any large outbreak of food poisoning or illness, or a serious accident at food premises, to impact significantly on the routine service operated by the Authority.

- There are no other likely major impacts e.g. significant food imports, seasonal variations or high numbers of food manufacturing businesses other than local catering businesses. Where food alerts necessitate a significant response, this will impact on other areas of the service.
- Food alerts are notified by the Food Standards Agency to Local Authorities. During 2010 there were 40 alerts plus 3 updates. In the first three months of 2011 a further 16 alerts were received with 1 update. (Many of these alerts have been product recalls where response from this Authority has been minimized). The alerts have included; possible hazards associated with the contamination of raisins, cheesecakes and baby food with plastic, food produced on premises without the required approval, glass fragments in coffee, bottled beer, wines, pasta sauce and bread, metal in couscous and coconut bites, salmonella in coriander, Listeria in black pudding and milkshakes, and contamination of semolina by rodents. Details of all the food alerts are available on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website, [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk).
- The FSA system of allergy alerts, separate from food alerts, continues with many instances of food labelling errors or contamination of specific ingredients. There were 35 such alerts in 2010 and 14 have been received in the first quarter of this year. Whilst not critical to the general public health they can have serious effects on persons who are allergic to specific ingredients.

## **2.5 Enforcement Policy**

The Department has a documented Enforcement Policy, which has due regard to the Tyne and Wear Food Enforcement Policy. The Authority works in accordance with the principles of the Regulators' Compliance Code, and a review is planned for this year.

The Code of Practice requires that any breaches of food law that may be detected in premises where the Authority is itself the proprietor of a food business should be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive, without undue delay. There have been no instances in the past year where such action was necessary.

## **3. SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **3.1 Food Control**

#### **3.1.1 Food Premises Inspections**

Officers routinely inspect high risk premises on a risk based basis. This year there is to be more emphasis on targeting non-compliant businesses. It is envisaged that those premises which are found not to be complying as indicated by poor structures, poor hygiene standards or where there is low confidence in management, will progress into a structured scheme to require improvements.

The National Performance Indicator (NI 184) set previously for the percentage of food businesses that are broadly compliant has been withdrawn, although Local Authorities will continue to send relevant data annually to the FSA, from which the Performance Indicator can be calculated. Premises that are not broadly compliant is available to the public as it is indicated on the “scores on the doors” information on the web. Businesses with less than 3 stars are not broadly compliant.

There will still be risk rating for all premises inspected and the Food Standards Agency still anticipate the frequency of inspections for high risk premises being governed by the rating.

Whilst it has been the Department's ongoing annual target to inspect all food premises at a risk rated frequency in accordance with previous guidance from the Code of Practice, the FSA are encouraging Authorities to spend more time at targeted businesses rather than spread over the whole range in future. The lowest rated categories will be subject to programmes of alternative enforcement strategies. The first quarter of premises subject to alternative enforcement have been sent letters and questionnaires requiring a response. Failure to respond, or unsatisfactory responses received will necessitate a visit by an Officer. Any complaints or where intelligence raises issues will result in a visit to the premises by an Officer. This scheme has been agreed to promote consistency and uniformity for businesses and Authorities across the region. Highest risk premises which require specific approval will receive interventions as required. They will be subjected to risk rating and intervention frequency will be determined on an individual basis.

The Department has again achieved high rates on inspection of food premises and in 2010/11 visited 1455 different food premises and undertook 1544 inspections. A total of 2004 visits were made including inspections, revisits and sampling. Only 6 inspections were outstanding at the year end (only Category C & D). These were completed early in April 2011.

The estimated number of inspections programmed for the year 2011/12 at the time of preparation of this report is approximately 1270 plus any new businesses commencing within the year. Alternative strategies for lower risk premises will determine a change in priority resulting in fewer premises being visited but potentially more visits being made to non-compliant premises to promote and confirm improved standards.

We aim generally to inspect the premises within one month of the due date for inspection, the only exceptions being those businesses that operate seasonally and those who may be subject to alternative enforcement strategies.

Secondary inspections (including revisits) to premises are carried out as necessary in order to ensure that material defects are rectified. Those premises which are not broadly compliant will be followed up with a view to enforcing compliant standards.

The Department has participated in a Business Transformation Programme (BTP) giving consideration to computer systems that are more sustainable. Existing in-house systems continue to work satisfactorily for the Commercial Teams whilst awaiting any change.

### 3.1.2 Food Complaints

The Authority is committed to responding to all food complaints, the extent of the investigation depending on the merits of the complaint. This can range from re-assuring the complainant to the more formal process, including reference to home or originating Authorities in accordance with the Local Government Regulation (LGR) guidance and the Code of Practice. Officers also refer to any Primary Authority, a scheme promoted by legislation and the Better Regulation Office.

In 2010/11, 281 requests for service requiring a response from Officers on the Food Team were made, including 81 complaints relating to food standards or labelling, and 27 requests relating to suspected food poisoning. The staff resources required to deal with these requests are drawn from the Commercial Food team. It is estimated that the time expended on food complaints in 2011/12 will be equivalent to 0.25 officers (full time equivalent).

## 3.2 Primary Producers and Feedingstuffs Control

### 3.2.1 Premises Inspection

The Trading Standards Section of the Department has the delegated duty to enforce legislation in relation to primary production and feedingstuffs control. Inspection and sampling of products at farms, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers is undertaken on a risk-assessed basis. As part of the animal health visits, feedingstuffs inspections are undertaken. Previous inspections have not revealed any premises using imported feed products. Ongoing dialogue with the Port of Sunderland may produce some activity if any feed is imported.

### 3.2.2 Feedingstuffs Complaints

Due to the relatively few number of feedingstuffs establishments, it is not anticipated that there will not be a significant number of complaints received by the Authority. Any complaints will be investigated in line with Departmental procedures. The Authority last year received no complaints which related to feedingstuffs. The most likely source of complaints will relate to pet foods.

### 3.2.3 Home Authority Business Advice

There are no businesses in Sunderland that manufacture or import feedingstuffs. The Port of Sunderland may at some point in time become a storage place and distribution hub for imported feed. If this occurs it can be managed from existing resources by means of prioritisation. It is currently believed that no other type of feed business would warrant a Home or Primary Authority relationship.

#### 3.2.4 Business Advice

With so few premises within the area and no history of previous requests for business advice in relation to feed it is not anticipated that there will be any business enquiries in relation to feed.

#### 3.2.5 Sampling Programme

Sampling will take place where a complaint justifies a sample be taken, though there is no expectation of any complaints. Samples may be taken to assist in project instituted by the Food Standards Agency or the North East Trading Standards Association or to maintain competence levels.

#### 3.2.6 Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

Previous history has shown no resource requirement for the control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease in relation to feed. If this were to occur, resources from other Sections would be utilised as necessary.

### 3.3 Primary Authority Scheme

This was introduced by legislation governed by the Better Regulation office whereby businesses operating in more than one Local Authority area can choose to partner individual Authorities in connection with a selection of regulatory elements.

The future local impact of food safety enforcement is still difficult to assess, however this Authority will comply with all legal requirements in the enforcement of legislation under this principle.

Another similar scheme called “Home Authority Principle” also continues to operate with some businesses.

### 3.4 Advice to Business

The Authority seeks to assist local businesses as part of the City / Community Strategy. Last year 35 specific requests for advice were logged by the Food Team. Advice is given informally at every visit to food premises by the Officers, as appropriate.

The Authority is committed to promote the Food Standards Agency (FSA) project “Safer Food, Better Business”, (SFBB) which is aligned to supporting certain food businesses in complying with the food safety management principles. There will continue to be great efforts to educate businesses in complying with the requirement for them to have implemented a suitable food safety management system, which some smaller food businesses seem to find difficult. Four free seminars were provided last year for businesses to assist in their understanding of requirements.



In correspondence to food businesses, a standard invitation is given to them to seek advice from the Department.

Larger manufacturing businesses and small–medium enterprises have both expressed their approval of the department's dealings with their business and readiness to assist with advice, a policy of the Department for many years.

In routine inspections and visits to businesses, Officers pay special attention to advising and explaining matters appropriate to the situation.

Over the last year, as part of Regulatory Services Performance Indicator (NI 182), surveys of businesses have been conducted to ascertain whether businesses felt that they had been treated fairly and whether they had been given good information and advice. The results have been particularly encouraging and the table below shows the results;-

1	I felt my business was treated fairly	☐ Strongly agree	9
		☐ Agree	17
		☐ Neither agree nor disagree	0
		☐ Disagree	0
		☐ Strongly disagree	0
		☐ Not applicable	0
2	I felt the contact was helpful	☐ Strongly agree	10
		☐ Agree	16
		☐ Neither agree nor disagree	0
		☐ Disagree	0
		☐ Strongly disagree	0
		☐ Not applicable	0

Close links are maintained with many business organisations in the City and informal agreement reached to cooperate more fully with businesses through these contacts.

### **3.5 Food Inspection and Sampling**

The Department is committed to sampling foods for compositional standards, bacteriological standards and food standards compliance. Sampling is undertaken proactively involving imported and locally produced foods, as well as participating in national and regional surveys with Local Government Regulation (LGR) and Health Protection Agency Laboratory Service.

The Department undertakes local sampling surveys from its own intelligence and from liaison with the Health Protection Agency and other Local Authorities in the region.

As a consequence of "demand" i.e. complaints, food alerts, food poisoning outbreaks, etc. further samples will be taken. Last year 411 samples were taken. An estimated 500 samples will be taken for bacteriological examination / compositional analysis in the year 2011/12, including 30 water samples. As a consequence of new legislation, private water supplies and distribution systems may require some sampling and work to identify such systems is on going.

Formal agreements with the Durham County Analyst exist who hold the classification of a Public Analyst, although this service is not guaranteed beyond July 2012. The HPA Laboratory transports samples from the region up to daily as necessary by courier to Leeds. Close liaison exists with the laboratories management and neighbouring Authorities to ensure the most effective and coordinated programme with flexibility for local peculiarities.

Participation with neighbouring Authorities in sampling and other food related matters ensures that the Authority works in a co-ordinated and compatible way. Last year we participated in seven regional microbiological sampling surveys and two compositional surveys. These included imported food and levels of salt in bread, Listeria in ready-to-eat foods, mobile food premises, pre-prepared sandwiches, cleaning cloths, Campylobacter cross contamination, Salmonella in herbs and a survey of commercial dishwashers. E Coli was isolated from the two dishwashers surveyed. (Follow up visits identified faults in the operation of the equipment which were corrected). Samples of bean sprouts for the presence of Salmonella revealed the necessity for them to be cooked and not eaten raw where indicated on the packaging.

### **3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**

This authority has agreed with the regional Health Protection Unit a policy for considering the investigation of confirmed food poisoning cases. Most cases other than suspected viral infections and Campylobacter cases receive contact to endeavour to trace the source and prevent further spread. These are usually undertaken during personal visits from an Environmental Health Officer. Campylobacter cases are contacted by letter (see below).

The Department, with the Health Protection Agency, operates under the updated “Guidelines – Preventing person-to-person spread following gastrointestinal infections”

A local Consultant for Communicable Disease Control is employed by the Health Protection Agency. Dr. Tricia Cresswell is available to the Department for any advice regarding specific problems relating to infectious disease.

It is vital that any food worker suffering from symptoms of food poisoning advise their employers. Ceasing to work with food until symptom free for at least 48 hours is a common requirement but advice should be sought for specific illnesses.

Advice on food poisoning is available on the [Sunderland.gov.uk](http://Sunderland.gov.uk) website by inserting “food poisoning” in the search box on the home page (top right) and following the links.

The number of reported cases of food poisoning depends on persons suffering attending their GP or hospital, where, if samples are taken, and found to be positive, the medical practitioner has a legal duty to inform the Authority. There are close liaisons between the laboratories, Health Protection Agency and the Department to follow up all positive cases.

The Department has maintained close links with the Health Protection Agency as a partner in tackling ill health. Regular meetings to discuss various matters relating to food poisoning cases and sampling programmes take place. The County Analyst and Health Protection Agency (ex-Public Health Laboratory Service) are contracted to assist with expertise where any additional problems arise. Networks exist within the region, nationally and with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Local Government Regulation (LGR).

### **Statistics of cases notified over recent years**

Year to March 31 <sup>st</sup>	Campylobacter	Salmonella	Cryptosporidia	Food poisoning & suspected FP	Shigella	Esch. Coli	Other miscellaneous organisms	Totals
2007	282	69	69	21	3	7	1	452
2008	292	53	28	13	1	3	6	396
2009	306	58	26	24	5	2	2	423
2010	357	52	38	12	4	4	4	471
2011	440	28	27	11	3	2	0	511

Year to March 31st	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Totals
2007	23	20	60	51	51	73	49	44	32	13	12	24	452
2008	19	33	42	46	58	44	39	40	19	13	18	25	396
2009	19	35	50	48	48	41	50	36	22	20	28	26	423
2010	28	38	66	44	40	56	56	41	24	21	24	33	471
2011	37	28	57	90	58	47	57	46	23	21	23	24	511

The Authority is committed to a response to all cases and outbreaks notified. The scale of the investigation and response will be measured and as appropriate to the causative organism and potential for further spread. Many cases appear to be the result of foreign travel or home acquired, and some infections e.g. Cryptosporidiosis and Campylobacter may be acquired from the environment rather than from a food source within the City.

As in previous years, the Norovirus (“Winter Vomiting disease”) continued to affect many residential establishments in the City and regionally.

This infection is commonly spread environmentally from person to person rather than being food-borne. Officers work closely with the Health Protection Agency to limit the spread of this infection environmentally and ensure an appropriate response is made, commensurate with the necessity to identify the infection and limit the impact.

Notifications of Campylobacter infections continue to be prominent throughout the country, and the investigation of cases in the past has been time consuming with little chance of identifying the definite sources. Campylobacter is present in the environment and may be picked up outdoors. It is also present in raw chicken and efforts to educate the public regarding risks of cross contamination in the home are being pursued. (This will be the national theme of Food Safety week in June). Unlike most Salmonella strains, it can take relatively few Campylobacter organisms to cause illness. The HPA have worked with EHOs regionally regarding investigations and a policy has been adopted by Local Authorities and the HPA regionally which will reduce the workload created by investigating the increasing number of Campylobacter notifications. Every case notified to the Authority will be contacted by advisory letter rather than visits by an Environmental Health Officer.

### **3.7 Food Safety Incidents**

The Authority is committed to responding appropriately to all Food Alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency in accordance with the Code of Practice on this subject. The level of response is determined by the category of response required and individual circumstances of the incident / local impact. Information is available to the public through Press releases and a link on the Council website to the Food Standards Agency.

### **3.8 Liaising with other organisations**

The Authority meets with the six other Authorities – Tyne & Wear plus Durham and Northumberland, in a North East Food Liaison Group, which operates particularly successfully with close cooperation between the representatives. There are also Sampling sub-groups, and the South of Tyne meeting between the Health Protection Agency, Local Authorities, and P.C.T., which includes representatives from the relevant bacteriological laboratories and Communicable disease specialists.

Trading Standards Officers meet frequently at North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA) meetings when any topical subjects can be considered.

Relevant Building Control and Planning Applications are referred to the Department for consideration and comment.

There is frequent liaison with other Departments and sections in connection with food matters, including Facilities Management (City Catering), School Meals, Procurement, Housing, Health and Adult Services, and also regarding premises licences.

The section has positive liaison with the local office of the Health Protection Agency, Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust, City Hospitals Sunderland, local food federations and guilds.

### **3.9 Food Safety and Standards Promotion**

Whilst Officers give advice and information in the course of inspections and other visits, the Health Promotion Team offer training for the Level 2 Award Food Hygiene, the Level 3 Intermediate Certificate in Food Safety and Level 1 Foundation Certificate in Nutrition. The Team also undertake campaigns during the year.

Following last year's success, this year the team will continue to promote a "Curry Chef of the Year" competition which will require, as part of the terms of entry, consideration of the standards of hygiene of the businesses involved. A joint final was held with 3 other Authorities in 2010. More local authorities in the region hope to have representatives in the final this year.

The Heartbeat Award has been running in Sunderland since 1990 and the Healthy Home award commenced in this Authority in 1997. Each of these award schemes has food hygiene related elements. A total of 144 Heartbeat awards and 23 Healthy Home awards were given in 2010/11.

During 2010/11:-

- § 4 Food Hygiene Refresher Training Courses were held for 59 delegates.
- § 25 courses were held in Level 2 Award Food Hygiene attended by 289 delegates.
- § 12 delegates attended Level 3 Intermediate Certificate training.

The Health Promotion team also respond to requests from schools and other educational and community organisations for information and talks on subjects pertaining to food. Talks and presentations were given to 6 schools on food safety and the importance of washing hands properly.

Training on the Food Hygiene Rating System and “Safer Food, Better Business” in 4 separate sessions was given to local businesses free of charge.

Basic food hygiene information for consumers is available on the Council Website. Similarly advice is also available on food poisoning organisms and what to do in the event of suspecting that you are ill from consuming contaminated food.

A new impetus on hygiene, safety and nutrition in care and nursing homes has started within the “Healthy Home Award.” A seminar held in February was very well attended and interest is high within the business sector for the scheme. An Environmental Health Specialist from Health Promotion is conducting food and safety inspections combined with advice on nutrition and smoking cessation. This scheme by Sunderland was promoted by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) as a good initiative.

#### **4. RESOURCES**

##### **4.1 Financial Allocation**

For 2011-12 the budget for Food Control (CC0120) is £431,000 of which £256,632 is delegated (i.e. controlled by the budget manager). The Sampling budget is assessed to be £15,500.

Health Promotion (CC0131) has a general budget of £175,193 (of which £27,717 is delegated) including anticipated income of £24,275 partly from food hygiene training.

The Feedstuffs element of the Trading Standards budget relating to Inspection, Training and Business Advice is estimated to be £2,500, equating to approximately 111 officer hours (Grade POF/G) per annum.

Overall £608,693 of the Department’s total budget will be available for use in relation to food safety, of which £286,349 is delegated.

In general terms, delegated budgets have been maintained at previous levels wherever possible.

Full budget details are set out below:

<b>FOOD SAFETY</b>	<b>2011/12 Budget</b>			
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Food Control</b>	<b>Health Promotion</b>	<b>Trading Standards (Feedstuffs Element)</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Staffing	250,063	42,867	2,500	295,430
Premises Expenses	700			700
Transport/Car Allowances	4,354	271		4,625
Equipment, Furniture & Materials	2,030	1,620		3,650
Clothing, Uniforms and Laundry	273	59		332
Printing, Stationery & Office Expenses	512	762		1,274
Communications and Computing	1,746	251		1,997
Services/Fees		4,761		4,761
Insurance - All Risks		901		901
Conference & Seminar Expenses	754			754
<b>Delegated Expenditure</b>	<b>260,432</b>	<b>51,492</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>314,424</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>(3,800)</b>	<b>(24,275)</b>		<b>(28,075)</b>
<b>Net Delegated Budget</b>	<b>256,632</b>	<b>27,217</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>286,349</b>
FRS 17 Adjustments	26,505	2,901		29,406
ICT Recharge	4,307	87,247		91,554
Central Admin Recharges	4,260	21,922		26,182
Internal Recharges	139,296	35,906		175,202
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>431,000</b>	<b>175,193</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>608,693</b>

## 4.2 Staffing Allocation

Staffing resources allocated to Food work currently are as follows;

### Food Team

- 1 Principal Environmental Health Officer / Team Leader (Full Time)
- 3 Senior Environmental Health Officers (2.9 FTE)
- 1 Environmental Health Officer
- 1 Technical Officer (Full time – working towards Higher Certificate)
- Clerical Support

The closure of the Houghton Area Office resulted in the re-deployment of 3 staff within the Civic Centre. One Senior EHO joined the Food Team, part-time (34 hours / week) although the post is for full time. This redeployment has been beneficial to coordinate available resources into one team serving the whole of the City.

All of the full-time Senior Environmental Health Officers currently employed have over 2 years experience in food matters. The EHO is progressing very well and continues to gain valuable experience.

#### Health Promotion

- 1 Health Promotion Specialist (Part time on food matters)
- 1 Health Promotion Assistant (Part time on food matters)

Apart from the training in food hygiene organised by the team, schemes entitled "Heartbeat Award" and "Healthy Home Award" are conducted by the team. Various aspects of health are covered in these schemes including food hygiene and nutrition.

For the Healthy Home Award, inspections are conducted by the Health Promotion Specialist, (a qualified Environmental Health Officer) which includes any programmed inspections of the homes who have applied for the award. These inspections include food hygiene as well as food standards, nutrition and health and safety, where this Authority is responsible for enforcing the relevant legislation in the establishment.

#### Trading Standards

- 3 Trading Standards Officer (Part time fertiliser and feedingstuffs)
- 3 Trading Standards Officer (Part time Primary Producers)

Estimated Total Full-time equivalent for all Food and Feedstuffs activity = 7.075 Officers on the establishment.

### **4.3 Staff Development Plan**

Staff Appraisals are undertaken annually and the findings form the basis of staff development and training plans. Cooperation regionally through the Food Liaison Group and the assistance of the Food Standards Agency in providing low cost training is acknowledged.

Individuals are sent to specific training where appropriate and all Environmental Health Officers are required to maintain a training log in order to comply with Continuing Professional Development.

Training days and training sessions on subjects are programmed as necessary.

Any members of staff "new" to the food team are supervised and receive training commensurate with the Code of Practice.

Environmental Health Officers in other sections also receive update training in food matters.



## **5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

Monitored inspections will continue to be recorded within the food premises database during this year.

The necessary arrangements were made, with assistance from the IT section, for the new annual return of statistics for 2009/10 (LAEMS – Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System). The 2010/11 return is well on schedule to be provided to the Food Standards Agency by the required internet method, as required before the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011. The return gives specific detailed information about every food business in the City rather than collated statistics as required in the past.

## **6. REVIEW / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Review against Service Plan**

A review against the service plan is undertaken mid-year with consideration of achievements against targets. In the interim periods, line management monitors progress, including utilising the very effective in-house database software.

Monthly targets are set for each officer and officers are expected to achieve the required inspection rate to reach annual service level targets.

The Corporate Improvement Plan and an Annual Report is produced to define achievements made during the previous year.

The Service Plan and Annual Report are submitted to the Chief Executive for consideration by the Council as part of the Director's Performance Agreement.

### **6.2 Identification of any variance from the Service Plan**

The food control teams performed extremely well against the Service Plan for 2010 / 2011 in all areas of Service Delivery.

The comprehensive review of procedure and policy documents is on-going.

### **6.3 Areas for Improvement**

- Implement the Food Hygiene Star Rating Award system on the FSA website (Target launch 28 June 2011).
- Continue to implement alternative enforcement strategy for low risk businesses with LAs in the region.
- Continue to implement the requirements / guidance of the Local Better Regulation Office in relation to the Regulatory Reform Act.

- Contribute fully to regional training and support all peer review, Inter Authority Audit and / or internal monitoring exercises between LAs in the region.
- Continue to promote the use of Safer Food Better Business (SFBB), a food safety management scheme, to appropriate food businesses in the City during visits by Officers and within training programmes.
- Continue to support the Healthy Home Award to raise standards in that sector.
- Progress any necessary actions as a result of future determination of the BTP re departmental computer software.

END