

CABINET

14 JANUARY 2019

FEED AND FOOD LAW SERVICE PLAN 2019/2020

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report informs Cabinet of the Feed and Food Law Service Plan 2019/2020 ("the Plan") which will be referred to Scrutiny Committee for comment and subsequently Full Council for endorsement.

2. Description of Decision

- a. Cabinet is recommended to provide comment on the 2019-2020 Feed and Food Law Service Plan (Appendix 1), which has also been referred to Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.
- b. Cabinet is further requested to give delegated authority to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, to make any amendments to the plan that are considered appropriate in the light of comments from the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, prior to it being referred to Council for endorsement.

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 The Food Standards Agency is an independent government department responsible for food safety and hygiene across the United Kingdom. It works with businesses to help them produce safe food and with local authorities to enforce food safety regulations.
- 3.2 The Food Standards Agency has produced a Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Law Controls by Local Authorities. The Agreement sets out what the Food Standards Agency expects from local authorities in their delivery of feed and food law.
- 3.3 Part of the Agreement contains specific service planning guidance. It ensures that key areas of enforcement covered by the Feed and Food Law Enforcement Standard are included within local service plans, whilst allowing scope for flexibility and the inclusion of any locally defined objectives.
- 3.4 The Food Standards Agency requires a Local Authority's proposed service plans to be submitted to the relevant Member forum to recommend approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.

4. Current Position

- 4.1 The Feed and Food Law Service Plan in Sunderland is the primary document for Feed and Food Safety Enforcement across the city. It has been developed by the Council to comply with the recommendations of the Food Standards Agency's Framework Agreement.
- 4.2 Service plans developed under the Framework Agreement provide the basis on which local authorities are monitored and audited by the Agency under The Food Standards Act 1999 and Official Feed and Food Controls Regulations.
- 4.3 The plan has been refreshed in light of the new Council structure. It has also been referred to Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for comments and it is recommended that the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport be authorised to make any changes that are considered appropriate in the light of the Scrutiny Committee's comments, prior to referral of the Plan to Council.
- 4.4 The Plan will be benchmarked across the region to determine best practice for local accountability and future approval mechanisms.

5. Reason for Decision

- 5.1 The reason for the decision is to provide local transparency of regulation and accountability and hence facilitate compliance with the guidance of the Food Standards Agency.
- 5.2 The Council has a statutory duty to enforce legislation relating to food. The Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice (England) March 2017 details the minimum training and qualification requirements for officers authorised by Food Authorities to undertake food enforcement work. Food Authorities that do not have regard to relevant provisions of this Code may find their decisions or actions successfully challenged, and evidence gathered during a criminal investigation being ruled inadmissible by a court.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1 The option of not producing Feed and Food Law Service Plan would place the Council at risk of receiving criticism in the event of an audit by the Food Standards Agency. It would also weaken the reputation of the Council and our ability to enforce regulations with regard to matters of food safety. It has been discounted on these grounds.

7. Impact analysis

- a. **Equalities** there are no equalities implications as a result of this decision. Equalities are embedded within the national framework with which the Feed and Food Law Service Plan complies.
- b. **Financial Implications** – Financial provision for the delivery of the Plan is included within the relevant service revenue budget as part of the Council's budget for 2020/2021 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

8. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Feed and Food Law Service Plan of Public Protection and Regulatory Services for 2019/20.

9. Background Papers

[Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities](#)

Appendix 1
Feed and Food Law
Service Plan
2019/20

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1. Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Aims and objectives

The aims of Public Protection and Regulatory Services (“the Service”) are to protect the health and wellbeing of all persons within the City in relation to food safety matters and, in relation to animal feed, to protect the health and welfare of livestock and prevent the outbreak of animal disease.

Our objectives are:

- To secure compliance with food safety law having regard to official codes of practice; particularly concerning the frequency of food safety interventions;
- To seek to secure the protection of consumers from the potential dangers of suspect or contaminated food; particularly those which may result in foodborne infections;
- To ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that food is fit for human consumption and free from extraneous matter;
- To increase the knowledge of food handlers, food managers and the general public about the principles and practice of food hygiene and food safety management;
- To increase the knowledge of food business operators of food safety management; thereby assisting the raising of standards and enabling improved food hygiene rating scores under the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme;
- To assist in the control and prevention of the spread of foodborne diseases;
- To carry out food safety interventions (activities that are designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment) in accordance with minimum frequencies and to standards determined by the Food Standards Agency (“the FSA”);
- To respond to and investigate Food Standards Agency ‘Food Alerts and Allergy Alerts for Action’ in accordance with published guidance where these impact upon food originating or traded within the City;
- To investigate all notified cases of foodborne disease and take effective action to control the spread of infection;
- To undertake the inspection of ships visiting the Port of Sunderland in accordance with current guidance;
- To carry out inspections at premises presenting the highest potential risk for contamination of the feed chain;
- To conduct on farm visits in order to examine primary production and animal feeding;

- To investigate complaints about feed and, where necessary, take samples;
- To give guidance to people supplying material into the feed chain and to new livestock keepers.

1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans

The City Plan sets out the vision for the Council and outlines the strategic direction of the Council up to 2030. The City Plan highlights three key priorities; one of which is:

By 2030 we will have a dynamic, healthy and vibrant City.

The delivery of this plan will contribute positively to the aspirations set out in the City Plan by, among other means:

- ensuring the protection of public health through inspection and education activity;
- protecting the livestock of our local farms from contaminants in their feed that could harm their health and welfare; and
- proportionate enforcement which provides a fair and equitable trading environment in which businesses can develop and be protected from those who fail to comply with the law.

1.3 Performance Management – Directorate Service Plans and Reporting

Our work is closely reviewed in accordance with the Council's and Directorate performance management systems. Activities reported quarterly include:

- Number of Food Safety Service Requests received in period
- Number of Food Safety Service Requests completed in period
- Number of Food Safety Service Requests responded to in five working days
- Number of cases of foodborne diseases investigated in period (based on incoming requests)
- Number of food outlets with a SotD rating of 5* at the end of the period
- Percentage of food outlets with a SotD rating of 5* at the end of the period
- Number of food outlets with a SotD rating of 3* or more at the end of the period (compliant)
- Percentage of food outlets with a SotD rating of 3* or more at the end of the period (compliant)
- Number of food outlets with a SotD rating of 2* or less at the end of the period (non-compliant)

- Percentage of food outlets with a SotD rating of 2* or less at the end of the period (non-compliant)

2. Background

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Sunderland City Council serves an area of 137 square kilometres and has a population of around 283,500 people resident in some 121,000 households. The City principally comprises urban areas, the City Centre and Washington, as well as the former coalfields communities of Easington Lane, Hetton-le-Hole and Houghton-le-Spring. A small number of farms surround the urban population centres.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The Council is composed of 75 councillors within 25 wards. Governance is through the Leader and Cabinet model.

This Feed and Food Controls Service Plan is delivered by staff from Public Protection and Regulatory Services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate. The service operates within the remit of the Environment and Transport Portfolio and works closely with the Portfolio Holder and Deputy Cabinet Member.

The Environmental Health Trading Standards and Licensing Manager reports to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods on several matters including feed and food control. Public Protection and Regulatory Services deliver the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions on behalf of the Council.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer, Commercial, has specialist responsibility for food hygiene and standards matters. The Principal Trading Standards Officer has specialist responsibility for feeding stuffs.

The Council uses the services of Public Health England Laboratories, a Public Analyst and an Agricultural Analyst as necessary. The Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst appointed by the authority is Public Analyst Scientific Services Limited.

2.3 Scope of the Feed and Food Service

The activities relating to feed and food in the City are undertaken by the Trading Standards and Environmental Health teams.

The Environmental Health team undertake a programme of food hygiene and standards interventions as well as responding to requests for service and infectious disease notifications. Sampling of foodstuffs, both microbiological and compositional, is also undertaken. Officers also respond to Port Health requests and food hygiene inspections are undertaken in connection with Ship Sanitation Certificates required under international health regulations.

The City has a small agricultural sector; principally arable with a few livestock holdings. The Trading Standards team carries out the enforcement of primary production and feeding stuffs legislation and provides advice to farmers and

retailers. The Trading Standards team also have some responsibility for food standards.

2.4 Demands on the Feed and Food Service

2.4.1 Food establishments profile

There are 2072 food premises currently operating in the City, including one registered primary producer.

Types of Food Premises in the City	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)	Not rated
Manufacturers/packers/primary producers	78	0	6	16	15	4	1
Importers/exporters/distributors etc.	26	0	1	0	9	16	0
Retailers	543	0	3	39	224	276	1
Restaurants/other caterers	1425	2	81	355	705	274	8
Contact materials and articles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total food premises	2072	2	91	410	953	606	10

Most of Sunderland's food premises are classified in the restaurant/catering outlet group (1425), whilst there are 543 food retailers. These categories feature many changes of food business operators. This creates additional demands for the Service in educating new operators.

There are 5 Approved Premises in the City including a cooked chicken processing plant, 2 kebab manufacturers, a manufacturer of meat products and a processor/distributor of natural sausage casings.

There are a significant number of outdoor events held regularly each year (e.g. the International Air Show) which are attended by up to 1.5 million visitors. Various mobile caterers and food businesses from around the region visit the City to cater at these events.

Port health inspections which require inspections of food hygiene and standards on board vessels coming into the port are undertaken. The provision of ten Ship Sanitation Certificates was requested from the Service last year in addition to five ships water samples being undertaken.

2.4.2 Feed establishments profile

There are currently 62 premises registered as Feed Business Operators.

Types of Feed Premises	Number
Arable farms	11
Livestock farms	10
Manufacturers and packers	6
Food businesses selling co-products/surplus food	25
Distributors / transporters	5
Stores	5
Total	62

The arable farms principally produce cereal for food production or for incorporation in animal feed. Inspections of these premises are on a low risk basis. Several of the farms are members of farm assurance schemes.

The livestock farmers generally grow arable crops for feeding to their own livestock along with silage. The use of supplementary feed is generally restricted to sheep and pigs. Visits to these premises are generally scheduled when the animals are housed and are undertaken in conjunction with animal health and welfare visits.

Sunderland has several pet treat manufacturers who operate from their residential properties. All have been assisted with advice on their legal obligations regarding both Feed and Animal By- Products. The premises may be visited for sampling purposes.

As supermarkets particularly find more environmentally friendly ways to dispose of their waste food, the recent upward trend in businesses sending these products into the feed chain has diminished somewhat. However, this is a relatively volatile market which could find feed being reinstated as the disposal route of choice. Following potential issues previously identified on inspection, all premises registering to supply waste food into the feed chain will be inspected.

One registered transporter removes waste food from shops for use in the manufacture of feed. The others are haulage companies who transport feed material (that can generally be used for other applications) on an occasional basis.

Increased vigilance continues to be undertaken with regard to the inland enforcement of imported feed legislation to prevent the spread of disease in food animals.

2.4.3 Service delivery points

The officers who undertake feed and food controls work are based at Jack Crawford House, Sunderland. The Council's Customer Service Centre in Fawcett Street, Sunderland is open to the public during normal working hours throughout the week, 8.30am to 5.15pm (4.45pm Friday), although officers from the Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams may be contacted by businesses directly. There is an evening and weekend service

arrangement for contacting managers for out-of-hours emergencies. Visits are conducted at events and as necessary outside normal working hours.

The Council website: www.sunderland.gov.uk encourages the public to communicate with the Service by email and makes information constantly available. Letters from the Service to customers / companies encourage the use of email. Initial contact for services to the public is through the Council's Customer Services Network.

The Council displays current food hygiene ratings on the www.sunderlandcitycouncil.com website. This website may also be accessed from the sunderland.gov.uk website (Food Hygiene). The Council also regularly updates data on the Food Standards Agency national scheme. Ratings can be found at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk>

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme involves the publication of a food safety rating for food premises in the City. The scheme is based on standards of structure, hygiene and confidence in management scores assessed during programmed inspections. Following inspections, business owners are advised in writing that the information may be available via the website in the future and in response to third party requests as required by Freedom of Information legislation. Where improvements have been made to a business, the food business operator has the right to request a re-visit for re-inspection.

2.4.4 External factors impacting upon the Service

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 impacts on the workload of the Service due to the administration of requests for service and time spent recovering the information. Press and other enquirers often request specific information with a view to making comparisons of businesses in various local authority areas. In the past year, the Service responded to twenty requests for information regarding food premises.

The Service's responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003 also impact on workload. Officers consider applications for new and varied licences for food premises in pursuance of duties as responsible authorities.

There is a possibility that any large outbreak of food poisoning or illness, or a serious accident at food premises, would impact significantly on the routine activities of the Service.

There are no other likely major impacts upon the Service expected, e.g. significant food imports, seasonal variations or an increase in the number of food manufacturing businesses. However, where food alerts necessitate a significant response, this will impact upon the Service.

Food alerts are notified to local authorities by the Food Standards Agency. During 2018/19 the Service received 55 alerts of food problems occurring elsewhere in the country. Many of these alerts were product recalls where the response required from the Service was limited.

The Food Standards Agency also notifies local authorities of allergy alerts, e.g. instances of food labelling errors or contamination of specific ingredients. There were 67 such alerts received in 2018/19. Whilst not critical to general

public health, such incidents can have serious effects on persons who are allergic to specific ingredients.

2.5 Regulation Policy

Public Protection and Regulatory Services has a documented Enforcement Policy covering the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions of the Council. The Service works within the principles of the Regulators' Code.

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/20308/PPRS-Enforcement-Policy/pdf/pprs-enforcement-policy.pdf?m=636620724549700000>

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Interventions at Food and Feeding stuffs establishments

Food premises in the City have been found to demonstrate an annual increase in the level of compliance over the last eight years, with the percentage of all premises achieving a rating of three on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme remaining at 87%. Within these figures the number of premises achieving a food hygiene rating of five has remained consistent, demonstrating that good premises are maintaining their high standards across the city.

The Service will use the wide range of interventions outlined in FSA guidance in order to monitor and increase business compliance in the most efficient and proportionate way.

Interventions are defined as activities that are designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment and they include but are not restricted to the following “official controls”:

- Inspections and audits (full/partial inspection and audits);
- Monitoring;
- Surveillance;
- Verification; and
- Sampling and analyses where examination is carried out by an Official Laboratory.

When undertaking official controls, officers will take account of any identified risks, the food business operator’s past record and current knowledge, an examination of practices and procedures in place, a physical inspection of the premises, the reliability of an operator’s own checks, and any information that may indicate non-compliance.

Other interventions that do not constitute official controls can be undertaken in some premises in addition to the official control or at an interval between official controls. These include:

- Education;
- Advice and coaching;
- Information and intelligence gathering; and
- Sampling where examination is not carried out by an Official Laboratory.

Premises will continue to be identified in categories ranging from A to E depending on the previous level of food safety and structural compliance together with confidence in management. Factors considered include the type of food prepared and the type and number of consumers potentially at risk.

Those food premises which fall into the highest risk categories are those with the highest risk, whether as a result of the nature of the main activities undertaken on the premises or because of the relatively poor operating conditions which have prevailed previously. These premises will be subject to controls more frequently than lower risk premises.

The approach to last year's intervention programme was to target the poorest performing premises across the City. This was achieved by providing tailored support and time to business operators who have fallen below a rating of three in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The service provided initial support and education, and as a last resort, undertook enforcement activity, in order to achieve sustained higher standards across the City for the benefit of all residents. There were 42 premises in total that were targeted in this way during the last financial year. At the end of the process, 30 premises were re-rated as at least broadly compliant. Of these, 15 achieved a rating of three stars, 10 achieved a rating of four stars and 5 achieved a rating of 5 stars. There were 12 premises that closed in this time. 8 food hygiene notices were served as a result of this programme and compliance followed in each case.

The service will also undertake to visit all new or currently unrated businesses.

In summary the predicted numbers of planned interventions are as follows:

- There are currently no high-risk category A rated premises;
- All high-risk category B premises will receive an inspection (93 visits);
- There are 246 compliant category C premises due an intervention this year;
- There are 485 category D premises due an intervention this year.
- There are 206 lower risk compliant category E premises due an intervention; and
- All new businesses will receive an inspection, which following that visit will be risk rated accordingly.

The total estimated number of interventions is therefore 1030 in addition to those pertaining to any new businesses established within the year.

There were also 122 outstanding interventions carried over from last year and 49 unrated new premises requiring an intervention.

In line with our commitment to carry out inspections on new businesses and revisits to check on compliance where necessary, it is estimated that the above-mentioned planned interventions will generate a further 400 visits.

This will result in an estimated 1,601 visits for 2019/20.

The Service aims generally to undertake interventions at premises within one month of the due date for inspection; the only exceptions being those businesses that operate seasonally.

Secondary inspections (including revisits and requests for revisits by operators of food businesses) will be undertaken as necessary on a risk assessed basis in order to ensure that any significant hygiene concerns are rectified. Those premises which are not broadly compliant will be visited with a view to enforcing compliance standards.

Individual businesses may be visited more frequently or the planned date for intervention may be brought forward if a problem is identified such as:

- A complaint about the food premises or notification of an issue received from another authority which requires further investigation;
- An unsatisfactory sampling result is received;
- The business is implicated in a food poisoning outbreak;
- There is a change in business operations resulting in a higher risk;
- A request for a re-rating revisit under the FSA Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is received; or
- A notification is received from the FSA regarding a food safety incident or food alert.

All requests for revisits by businesses wishing to amend their risk ratings as part of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme will be considered in line with FSA procedures. Whilst the published rating of the business may improve as a result of this revisit, the Service will need to examine sufficient elements of the business and be satisfied of the improvements made. Businesses are reminded that if their standards fall, their rating can go down as well as up.

The City, being principally urban in nature, has only a small number of feeding stuffs premises registered. None of the premises registered are high risk. The premises will be visited on a risk assessed basis. Last year there were eleven inspections undertaken at feed establishments.

The Service has good working relations with neighbouring authorities and the Public Analyst should any specialised process be identified. Sunderland City Council Feed Officers respond to requests for assistance received from those colleagues in neighbouring authorities with regard to queries that they receive.

3.2 Feed and Food Complaints

The Service is committed to responding to all complaints about feed or food. The extent of the investigation will depend on the merits of the complaint. This can range from re-assuring the complainant to a more formal process, including reference to home or originating authorities in accordance with the guidance and the relevant Code of Practice. Officers also liaise with any relevant primary authority in pursuance of the relevant scheme administered by the Regulatory Delivery directorate of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

In 2018/19, 629 requests for service requiring a response from officers were made including enquiries relating to foodborne illnesses, miscellaneous requests for service in relation to food businesses, and general food complaints.

Due to the relatively few numbers of feeding stuffs establishments, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant number of complaints received by the Service. Any complaints will be investigated in line with Service procedures. There was 1 feed complaint which resulted in a notice being served to secure compliance. Pet foods are anticipated as being the most likely subject of complaints.

3.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

The Service undertakes to comply with all the relevant legal requirements of the Primary Authority Scheme and liaises with other relevant local authorities within the context of the Home Authority Principle.

3.4 Advice to Business

The Service seeks to assist local businesses in order to encourage the success of our local economy. Last year 35 specific requests for advice were received by the Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams. Additionally, advice is given by officers informally at every visit to food premises, as appropriate.

The Service is committed to promoting the Food Standards Agency's project: "Safer Food, Better Business" which is intended to support food businesses in complying with the food safety management principles. There will continue to be great efforts to educate businesses in complying with their requirement to implement a suitable food safety management system, which some smaller food businesses seem to find difficult

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

An increasing number of business start-ups in manufacturing pet treats have been provided with business advice. Further advice is given on inspection and new livestock keepers are provided with guidance when registering their premises.

3.5 Feed and Food Sampling

The Service is committed to sampling foods in order to determine compliance with compositional and bacteriological standards. Sampling of imported and locally produced foods is undertaken pro-actively and the Service participates in national and regional surveys arranged by the regional food authorities' group and Public Health England Laboratory Service.

The collection of 31 samples were taken for bacteriological examination in the year 2018/19. This includes participation in the collection of samples for cross-regional surveys decided upon locally with the support of Public Health England. In addition to this, it is estimated that we will take a further 12 water samples.

The Public Health England Laboratory transports samples from the region as necessary by courier to York. The Service liaises with the management of the laboratory and neighbouring authorities in order to facilitate an effective and co-ordinated sampling programme with flexibility for local needs.

Participation with neighbouring authorities in sampling and other food-related matters ensures that the Service works in a co-ordinated and compatible way.

Sampling of feed will take place as appropriate following the receipt of requests for service, although there is no expectation of any such requests. Samples may be taken to assist in projects instituted by the Food Standards

Agency or the North East Trading Standards Association or to maintain competence levels.

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

The Service has agreed with Public Health England a policy for considering the investigation of confirmed cases of foodborne illness. The unwell people involved in most cases, other than in the case of suspected viral infections or Campylobacter, are usually contacted by officers in order to trace the source of the infection and prevent further spread. People involved in Campylobacter cases are contacted by letter.

The local Consultant for Communicable Disease Control, employed by Public Health England, will provide the Service with advice regarding specific problems relating to infectious disease.

Medical practitioners, where suspected cases of food poisoning are confirmed following analysis of a sample, have a legal duty to inform the Council. The Service liaises closely with relevant laboratories and Public Health England in order to effectively investigate all such cases.

Regular meetings are arranged regionally with local representatives of Public Health England in order to discuss various matters relating to food poisoning cases and sampling programmes. The Public Analyst and Public Health England will be contacted in order to assist with expertise where any additional problems arise. Similar networks exist within the regionally and nationally involving the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Food Hygiene Forum.

Statistics of cases notified over recent years

<input type="checkbox"/> YEAR TO DATE 31 MARCH	CAMPYLOBACTER	SALMONELLA	CRYPTOSPORIDIUM	FOOD POISONING SUSPECTED	SHIGELLA	ECOLI	OTHER MISCELLANEOUS ORGANISMS	TOTAL
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
2012	286	38	17	6	2	12	2	363
2013	329	40	48	19	2	3	3	444
2014	353	35	29	61	5	4	10	497
2015	292	28	18	38	4	4	27	411
2016	150	43	30	48	1	2	37	311
2017	152	54	39	47	3	5	57	357
2018	228	33	33	84	1	2	27	408
2019	255	40	28	31	2	3	32	391

3.7 Feed/Food Safety Incidents

The Service is committed to responding appropriately to all Feed and Food Alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency in accordance with the relevant

code of practice. The level of response is determined by the category of response required and the individual circumstances of the incident.

3.8 Liaison with other organisations

The Service seeks to co-operate in joint working with other local authorities in the North East. In relation to animal feed, information sharing and joint working is coordinated by the North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA), and via the Local Government Association Knowledge Hub. In respect of food matters, Environmental Health Officers liaise with colleagues via the North East Food Liaison Group and the North East Sampling and Public Protection Groups.

Officers of the Service meet with our six neighbouring authorities, i.e. those in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland, in the North East Food Liaison Group. This group facilitates close cooperation between the representatives. Officers are also involved with sampling sub-groups, the combined North and South of Tyne meetings involving Public Health England, Local Authorities and the Primary Care Trust. These meetings involve representatives from the relevant bacteriological laboratories and communicable disease specialists.

Officers liaise frequently with Council colleagues in connection with food matters, including catering and school meals, and with regard to building control and planning applications.

3.9 Feed and Food Safety and Standards promotional work

The very small number of feed establishments registered within the City does not make promotional work on any scale viable. Imparting information on the importance of feed control is restricted to business advice given on inspection.

Basic food hygiene information for consumers is available on the Council's website.

4. Resources

4.1 Financial Allocation

The Council allocates a budget for the delivery of Food Safety and Enforcement which includes appropriate staffing, running and equipment costs as part of the overall Council's revenue budget.

Last year there was some considerable investment in a new database system for Regulatory Services. It is envisaged that further investment will be required to extend the functionality of the system as officers become more agile working.

Any costs for legal action will be supported from other Regulatory revenue budgets as necessary with associated costs being recovered where possible.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Environmental Health personnel specialising in food comprise:

- 1 Principal Environmental Health Officer – 0.7 Full time equivalent (FTE)
- 4 Senior Environmental Health Officers - 2.2 FTE
- 2 Technical Officers - 0.7 FTE
- 1 Senior Trading Standards Officer (part time on food standards) - (0.25 FTE)

All food-specialist Environmental Health Officers have over two years' experience in food matters and are fully competent in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.

Of the team working on food there are 3 Senior Environmental Health Officers and 1 Principal EHO competent to deal with Approved Premises.

4.2 Staff Development Plan

Staff appraisals are undertaken annually, and the findings are included in staff development and training plans. A competency matrix has been developed in line with the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice and training needs have been assessed. An action plan in order to ensure that personnel are fully competent commensurate with the activities assigned will be delivered during the current year. Individuals will receive specific training where appropriate and all food-specialist Environmental Health Officers are to complete a minimum 20 hour Continuing Professional Development (10 hours of food-specific).

The Service cooperates regionally through the Food Liaison Group and with the Food Standards Agency in order to source low cost training.

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

Any inexperienced officers assigned to food work are supervised and receive training commensurate with the Code of Practice.

Officers enforcing feed work undertake training provided by the FSA and will utilise online training provided by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

5. Quality Assessment

A documented internal monitoring procedure in accordance with Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004 (Official Feed and Food Controls), the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance will be reviewed and updated annually.

Monitored inspections are recorded on a database in addition to random file checks, case load meetings and specific premises interventions.

Visits to feed establishments are recorded and feedback on the inspection provided to the business operator. Annual returns on activities are provided to the FSA.

6. Review

6.1 Review against Service Plan

A review of the plan will be undertaken mid-year with consideration of achievements against targets. In the periods either side of the mid-year review, managers monitor progress with case work and regular meetings.

The Service carried out 87% of planned interventions of food premises in 2018/19 with 1094 food premises being inspected with 122 inspections outstanding at the year end.

6.2 Identification of any variance from the Service Plan

There were 122 programmed premises outstanding from the inspection programme at the end of the financial year 2018/19.

Heavy officer workloads from routine inspection work and an increase in revisits due to the service of notices and requests for re-inspection, have contributed to the number of overdue inspections.

A significant project to move from the previous bespoke environmental health commercial premises database to a new Idox system commenced part way through the year. This involved a significant amount of officer resource, taking the team from planned work to undertake training on the new system. Additionally, there is an ongoing demand which continues to challenge the service as new procedures and reporting methods are developed and system errors are encountered. This has significantly impacted on the service coming into in 2019/20. Once the full functionality of the system is realised, we anticipate service efficiencies and cash savings.

The method employed by the new Idox system of calculating the due inspections also differed from the previous system. This resulted in identifying a significant number of overdue programmed inspections too late in the financial year to enable any additional officer resources, placing additional demand on the existing staff.

A further challenge to the workload has been an increase in the number of unrated businesses arising from new food business registrations with an additional 225 businesses spanning the whole of the last financial year which were in addition to the planned programme. So far in this half year, there has already been an additional 200 new food business registrations requiring an inspection, adding to the workload of the team in addition to the programmed work.

This financial year has also seen the service of 4 hygiene emergency prohibition notices, and significant officer time to prepare case files for potential court proceedings for another 4 prosecutions for breaching food hygiene legislation, impacting on the routine work of the staff.

Additionally, where we have in the past used alternative interventions for category E premises, we aim to visit all these premises this financial year. This creates an additional 200 interventions, placing a further demand on the service.

A strategy continues to make every effort to recover the position through 2019/20 using a combination of an external contractor and in-house resource. We have already secured the assistance of permanent variable hours officer part-time and aim to recruit further resources to pick up the backlog of inspections.

7. Areas of Improvement

To assist in long term with the resolution of current and future Idox operating systems issues, we have recently appointed a Regulatory Delivery Officer, whose role it will be amongst other things to ensure appropriate updates in our Idox operating systems as necessary within the department. The role will also involve building and developing a document management system and developing a system of reporting and workflow tools to support internal monitoring procedures.

A new sampling budget has been included within the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan for the coming financial year, and appropriate staffing resource allocated to ensure we can fulfil commitments to local and regional sampling plans.

Additional funding has also been provided for this year to recruit additional agency staff up until the end of the financial year. They will assist our current staff in completing our planned programme of interventions, up to the end of this financial year. Looking forward to next year work is being undertaken to benchmark the service with other local authorities with a view to determining the most appropriate level of resourcing for the unit.

The service will continue to develop the service to improve our delivery in response to changes brought about by the Food Standards Agency's 'Food Law Code of Practice 2017'.

On-going review and development of operating procedures, including a review of the premise's inspection pro-forma, will be undertaken in order to assist with the consistency of planned interventions.

Additionally, we will further consider innovative methods of service delivery, agile working, service redesign and an appropriate business operating model to ensure the most appropriate officers are tasked with the right work.

In line with previous years, we continue establishing and targeting workload priorities with available resources to deliver and maintain the best achievable levels of public health protection, through the development of alternative approaches to business engagement.

