



# Food Safety Service Plan 2023/24

Fenland  
District  
Council

## Contents page

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SECTION 1 OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .....	4
1.1 Service Aims .....	4
1.2 Service Objectives .....	4
1.3 Links to the Council’s Corporate Objectives and Plans.....	5
SECTION 2 BACKGROUND .....	6
2.1 Profile of the Food Industry in Fenland .....	6
2.2 Organisational Structure of Fenland District Council.....	6
2.3 Support Structure .....	6
2.4 Scope of the Food Safety Service.....	7
2.5 Demands on the Food Service .....	7
2.6 Enforcement Policy .....	9
Section 3 SERVICE DELIVERY .....	9
3.1 Interventions at food establishments.....	9
3.2 Food complaints.....	10
3.3 The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.....	11
3.4 Home Authority and Primary Authority.....	12
3.5 Advice to business.....	13
3.6 Sampling of Food .....	13
3.7 Food Safety Incidents.....	14
3.8 Liaison with other organisations.....	14
3.9 Food safety and standards promotional work.....	15
3.10 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease .....	15
3.11 Port Health .....	15
Section 4 RESOURCES .....	16
4.1 Financial Resources.....	16
4.2 Staffing Resource .....	16
4.3 Staff Development Arrangements .....	16
4.4 Software .....	16
Section 5 QUALITY ASSESSMENT .....	16
5.1 Quality assessment and internal monitoring.....	16
Section 6 REVIEW.....	17
6.1 Review against the service plan.....	17
6.2 Identification of any variation from the service plan .....	17
6.3 Areas of focus and/or improvement.....	17

## INTRODUCTION

This Food Safety Service plan has been produced as required by the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law enforcement. It is written in the format prescribed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), its purpose being to demonstrate that Fenland District Council has in place adequate and effective arrangements to meet its statutory obligations in respect of Food Safety.

Looking back at the last few years, in 2021/2022 our food service delivery was still being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in which the environmental health resource was focussed on responding to the pandemic requirements. Although restrictions eased in 2021/2022 this was only part way through the year and the backlog of food hygiene interventions which had built up, including an increase in food businesses registering during the period continued to impact on service delivery.

The FSA recognised the interruption to the normal duties of the Officers and the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on food business operations and officers' workload. The FSA implemented a Recovery Plan in 2021/23 to which the team had been working.

In 2022/2023 we continued working alongside the FSA Recovery Plan and ahead of the Plan's expectation. Having completed the requirements of the FSA's current Recovery Plan by 31st March 2023, the Food Safety Service is in a good position to fully revert back to the pre Covid model for the programme of food hygiene inspections, following the requirement of the Food Law Code of Practice. This is until such time as the FSA reviews the Code of Practice and implements a new food hygiene intervention work programme which is expected in 2024/2025.

## SECTION 1 OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1 Service Aims

The Council has a duty to enforce the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Hygiene and Safety (England) Regulations 2013. Food Safety inspections and enforcement is undertaken by the Environmental Health Team.

Our service aims are:

- To provide a food safety service in Fenland District Council that is proportional to the risk presented and consistent in the standards businesses are expected to maintain.
- To protect residents and consumers alike by providing a risk-based approach that responds to potential public health hazards and focuses on preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of ill health.
- Provide advice, information, support and guidance to local food businesses on their legal responsibilities.
- Manage a service that achieves measurable and successful enforcement outcomes.
- Maintain and improve the levels of public information provided on compliance with food legislation, in a way that is clear and easy to understand, based on the national FSA Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

### 1.2 Service Objectives

Our aims have been implemented alongside our key objectives:

- Ensuring by means of education and/or enforcement that food intended for human consumption which is produced and/or sold in Fenland District is safe to eat and complies with food safety requirements.
- Advising and educating consumers and service users on food safety matters.
- Delivering a programme of inspections and interventions in relation to food businesses, on a risk-based frequency and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.
- Investigating complaints about food and food premises and taking appropriate action.
- Maintaining an accurate register of food businesses within the District.
- Taking enforcement action on a consistent, transparent and proportionate basis in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy and the Enforcement Concordat.
- Supporting work on health inequalities in Fenland by working in partnership with others and with local businesses to improve food nutrition and quality.
- Sampling in response to emerging issues and in support of national studies.
- Preventing the spread of specified infectious and food borne diseases.
- Fulfilling our Port Health Authority functions in particular relating to food imports or exports.
- Working with stakeholders and customers to improve services delivered to them.
- Support relevant strategies for Health and Wellbeing.
- Engaging in an environmental health apprenticeship scheme.

### 1.3 Links to the Council’s Corporate Objectives and Plans

1.3.1 The Food Safety Service works to several objectives set by the Council’s Business Plan (Figure 1) – Communities, Environment, Economy.

The Business Plan sets out the actions it will take to ensure the District is a great place to live, work and visit.

It is underpinned by detailed delivery plans, one of which is the Food Safety Service Plan.

1.3.2. The Service Plans links include:

- Fenland District Council Business Plan
- Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement and Food Law Code of Practice
- Environmental Health Service Plan



Figure 1. Corporate Priorities of Fenland District Council

## SECTION 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Profile of the Food Industry in Fenland

- 2.1.1 Over 102,500 people live in the district with more than 70% living in the four market towns of Chatteris, March, Wisbech and Whittlesey.
- 2.1.2 Fenland has the most diverse food safety responsibilities of any of the Cambridgeshire authorities. The food industry in Fenland contributes significantly to the local economy. There are a diverse range of food businesses ranging from large food manufacturers to an ever-increasing number of catering outlets located in the main market towns. There are a number of large manufacturers of high-risk foods such as meat, fish and dairy products which are distributed nationally and internationally. Most of these establishments are required by food law to be approved by the Council under retained EU Law Regulation (EC) 853/2004. These premises require an enhanced level of supervision and inspection by Council officers. There are currently 9 approved premises in the District.
- 2.1.3 There are just over 761 registered food businesses.
- 2.1.4 Fenland has responsibility for monitoring live bivalve mollusc shellfish beds at the Mouth of the River Nene for microbiological and biotoxin contamination. Should such contamination be found then appropriate action would be taken in conjunction with other local authorities bordering The Wash. Eastern Inshore Fishery Conservation Authority (IFCA) collect the samples and the Centre for Environment Fishery and Aquaculture Sciences (CEFAS) examine the samples and report on the results.
- 2.1.5 The Council acts as Port Health Authority with responsibility for the port of Wisbech and Sutton Bridge. Officers carry out ship sanitation inspections as per international health regulations and where necessary carry out official controls on imported foods.

### 2.2 Organisational Structure of Fenland District Council

- 2.2.1 The political structure of the Council is based on a Cabinet, with a membership of a Council Leader and Deputy and Portfolio Holders. The food safety service is within the Environmental Health Team. The Environmental Health service reports to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Health, Environmental Health, and CCTV.
- 2.2.3 Officers who are authorised to undertake food hygiene controls and related enforcement actions are accountable to the Head of Environmental Health and Compliance for the delivery of the complete range of food safety regulation services for which the Council has responsibility.

### 2.3 Support Structure

- 2.3.1 UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) examines food samples at its accredited laboratory in Colindale, for bacterial and viral contamination.
- 2.3.2 A Consultant in Communicable Disease Control at UK Health Security Agency is appointed as Proper Officer under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and Health Protection Regulations 2011, with regard to food poisoning and food borne infectious disease. Alternates or Deputies have also been appointed.

2.3.3 Food Standards work is administered by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards. This split is due to the legislation. The Team liaises with neighbouring districts, both directly and through regular regional Cambridgeshire Food and Safety Group meetings.

2.3.4 Heads of Service attend strategic meetings at a county level.

## 2.4 Scope of the Food Safety Service

Food safety activities include:

- Programmed inspections or interventions at food businesses (fixed or mobile).
- Revisits to premises following programmed inspections where significant issues found.
- Carrying out joint visits with Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards on matters of mutual interest i.e. food allergens and 'use by' date labelling.
- Carrying out assessments and updating data for the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. This gives consumers information on the outcome of food hygiene inspections.
- Food and food environment microbiological sampling.
- Investigating complaints about the standards of hygiene in food businesses in Fenland.
- Investigating complaints about food that has been produced and/or sold in Fenland.
- The monitoring of live bivalve molluscs for microbiological and biotoxin contamination.
- Investigating food poisoning and food borne infectious disease cases.
- Responding to Food Standards Agency national food alerts.
- Working in partnership with the FSA and other local authorities in the detection and prevention of food fraud.
- Promoting food safety and good nutrition by education, training and business support.
- Providing advice and information on food safety issues.
- Providing Export Health Certificates if requested for food to be exported.
- Issue of specific approvals to food businesses subject to that requirement.
- Port health ship sanitation inspections at Wisbech Port and Port Sutton Bridge.
- Carry out sampling of private water supplies.
- Carry out sampling of potable water supplies on ships at Wisbech Port and Port Sutton Bridge.

## 2.5 Demands on the Food Service

### 2.5.1 Access to the service

The Environmental Health Service is based at The Base, Melbourne Avenue in March. The public have ready access to this service by way of direct telephone lines, Council Hubs, by e-mail and through the Council's website.

The service is provided normally at the time the business is trading including evenings and weekends when routine inspections may also be undertaken. In accordance with the FSA Food Law Code of Practice, inspections are without prior warning. However, inspections may be made by appointment where a business does not open at set times or officers need to meet with a particular person or see a particular operation.

Where a food business is based in residential premises, officers must give 24 hours' notice of entry.

Contact details for the team are as follows:

Email: envhealth@fenland.gov.uk

Daytime telephone number: 01354 654321

Out of hours contacts are dealt with by the Council's CCTV Service (01733 864153) with access to nominated Environmental Health staff in the event of an emergency.

#### 2.5.2 The profile of the registered food businesses in Fenland

As of 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the Team are responsible for 761 premises ranging from large manufacturers to one person operations:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Catering	77
Manufacturers and Distributors/transporters	18
Manufacturers and packers	35
Mobile food units	17
Hotel / Guest House	13
Importers	1
Pub / club	74
Primary producers	6
Retailer / other	51
School / college	41
Small retailer	166
Supermarket / hypermarket	27
Restaurants / Café / Canteen / Catering	100
Restaurants and Caterers - Other	29
Takeaways	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>761</b>

2.5.3. The majority of low or minimal risk food businesses do not require direct inspection and are dealt with through the Alternative Enforcement Strategy; for example, businesses selling only very low risk foods such as some retailers, businesses where food sales are very limited and registered child minders not providing main meals or handling open food. Under the Alternative Enforcement Strategy, food businesses undertake self-assessment which is then reviewed by an officer. Follow up inspections will be carried out if deemed necessary. In fact, a random percentage of these businesses are subject to inspection.

2.5.4. Scheduled visits are made to Wisbech and Sutton Bridge ports as is necessary to prevent potential illegal imports and also to inspect shipping vessels under food safety and port health legislation. We view all ship manifestos on a monthly basis for both ports.

2.5.5 Other factors are likely to have an impact on Food Safety Service Delivery in the short to medium term, for example:

- Industry staff shortages which affect a businesses' ability to retain the right number of quality staff to maintain targets.



- The cost of living is presently high. Gas and electricity prices have seen a sharp increase along with the price of fuel. In addition, there have been some supply pressures with for example the availability and price of vegetables and a general commodity price increase. The increased costs have put extra pressures on local businesses with some of them reducing their opening hours and/or deferring investments into the business including those that improve the health safety and hygiene of a premises. This has been challenging to the team (and is anticipated to continue being a challenge) when weighing up against the obligations of businesses to meet food and health and safety law and targeting the best possible regulatory outcomes.
- A reduction in food hygiene standards in some business which increases the Officer’s workload in terms of revisits and subsequent requests for rescores (food businesses are able to request a re-rating after they have made improvements; there is currently a charge of £130 for this service as it requires an additional inspection to be carried out).
- Revisits are made to any businesses where significant statutory requirements were found on the programmed inspection. Food Law Code specifies where 15 or higher is awarded for hygiene/structure or 20 for confidence in management, a revisit will be made. Revisits are always made after the expiry of statutory notices and to any businesses rated 0-2 FHRS. Revisits may also be made at the discretion of the EHO.
- The food hygiene intervention rating scheme will be reviewed and revised for implementation in 2024/25 - this means that during this period there will be a significant amount of work for all Local Authorities and the FSA to undertake in preparation.

## 2.6 Enforcement Policy

2.6.1 Food safety enforcement is undertaken in a graduated manner in accordance with the Council’s Corporate Enforcement Policy and the Regulator’s code. Informal action, advice and persuasion are the usual methods of achieving compliance, but the Council will use other measures if the circumstances demand this. The Council’s Corporate Enforcement Policy is referred to for specific guidance on how enforcement is delivered and the potential triggers for enforcement action.

2.6.2 Where there is an imminent risk to health and urgent action required then it will not be possible to use a graduated approach and enforcement action may need to be taken straight away.

## Section 3 SERVICE DELIVERY

### 3.1 Interventions at food establishments

3.1.1 Following the end of the FSA Recovery Plan, one of this Service Plan’s key priorities is to ensure that all businesses receive an intervention within the minimum frequency set down in the current Food Law Code of Practice:

Category	Minimum intervention frequency
A	At least every 6 months
B	At least every 12 months
C	At least every 18 months
D	At least every 24 months
E	A programme of Alternative Enforcement Strategies or intervention every 3 years

As the category is determined by risk to food safety it is possible for a business to move up or down the scale as they improve food hygiene practices, or present different risks in the food produced.

Following the end of the FSA Recovery Plan, we have resumed the given frequencies of food hygiene interventions in accordance with Intervention Rating Scheme in the Food Law Code of Practice.

3.1.2 Programmed Food Safety inspections and Alternative Enforcement Strategy interventions undertaken in 2022/2023:

A – C category (high risk) = 90

D category (low risk) = 98

E category (low risk) = 112

3.1.3 The current inspections / interventions due for 2023/2024 are:

Category A = 4

Category B = 18

Category C = 79

Category D = 168

Category E = 82

3.1.4 During early 2020 the Fenland’s food safety contracted partner, Breckland South Holland, completed the required inspection programme and the contract was not refreshed. At that time the authorised food safety officer resource in house was adequate to complete the inspection programme for 2020/2021. However, the emerging pandemic forced the council to again consider a changed approach. In 2021 we lost two Senior Environmental Health Officers who shared the Lead Food Officer role and had to appoint two external food safety officers to inspect C - D rated premises to help with the backlog of inspections.

Currently we outsource the Lead Food Officer role to Breckland whilst training one of our existing officers to fulfil this role in the future.

3.2 Food complaints

3.2.3 Additional food premises inspections or enquiries will be undertaken as a result of complaints, revisits, investigations and business requests for advice. Based on previous experience, this may also include additional, unforeseen work, for example, as required by the FSA to deal with national issues.

3.2.4 Our role is to investigate complaints and deal with any breaches of food law. We investigate complaints about food premises that relate to food safety, including poor food hygiene handling.

3.2.5 Dealing with food complaints is a relatively small part of the workload - from April 2022 to March 2023 the Council received 61 complaints.

### 3.3 The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

- 3.3.1 Fenland Council participates in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), which is a Food Standards Agency/Local Authority partnership initiative. It is a national scheme which provides consumers with information about hygiene standards in food business establishments using information gathered by officers at the time they are inspected to check compliance with legal requirements on food hygiene. The food hygiene rating given reflects the inspection findings.
- 3.3.2 The purpose of the FHRS is to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat or shop for food and, through these choices, encourage businesses to improve their hygiene standards. The overarching aim is to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness and the associated costs to the economy. The scheme supports businesses who are compliant by providing an independent and publicly available assessment which customers can easily access and understand.
- 3.3.3 Where a premises falls under the scope of the scheme, they will be awarded a rating on inspection ranging from 0-Urgent Improvement Necessary to 5-Very Good. It is the principle of the scheme that all food businesses, no matter what their size or nature, should be able to achieve a 5 rating. The Food Business Operator will be notified as soon as possible of their rating and in any event within 14 days of the inspection.
- 3.3.4 All food ratings are periodically uploaded to the FSA website which publishes the ratings at <https://ratings.food.gov.uk/>. All premises that receive a score will also receive a window sticker to display the rating. It is not a legal requirement in England to display a hygiene rating, however this may be changed in the future.

To ensure that the scheme is applied fairly and consistently to businesses there are a few safeguards in place:

#### Appeals

All food businesses can appeal their rating if they disagree. The operator is encouraged to speak to the inspecting officer first to discuss the matter but if this is not possible or there is still a disagreement then the operator needs to register their appeal within 21 days of the rating notification. The appeal would be determined by the Lead Food Officer or a designated deputy. It may be the case that Fenland may ask a Lead Food Officer in another authority to consider the appeal depending on the circumstances.

The inspection paperwork will be considered in an appeal against a hygiene rating. In some circumstances a further visit to the establishment may be required depending on the nature of the dispute and whether a decision can be made based on the paperwork alone.

The decision of the officer determining the appeal will be communicated to the Food Business Operator in writing within 21 days of the appeal being lodged. On appeal the rating could be increased, kept the same or even decreased.

#### Re-score Visits

It is the right of any Food Business Operator (FBO) to be able to request another visit to assess the hygiene rating. This is usually the case where the FBO agrees with the rating but has made improvements and requests a reconsideration of the rating.

The FBO must apply in writing and demonstrate what steps they have carried out following the original inspection. There is currently a form for applying for a re-score, which can be downloaded from <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/article/14770/Apply-for-a-Food-Hygiene-Rating-revisit>, however, the request can take any form as long as it is in writing and sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that improvements have been made.

If insufficient information is provided, then an application could be refused. In such an event the FBO will be informed of the reasons why and what needs to be done to ensure that adequate information is provided. Any disagreement can be discussed with the Lead Food Officer or put through the Council's 3C's complaints procedure.

The Council currently charges £130 for a re-score visit. On receipt of the payment the visit can occur at any time in the following 3 months. The inspection will be unannounced unless it is necessary to do so where certain staff must be present or an unannounced visit would compromise food safety.

FBOs can request as many rescore visits until the next programmed inspection as long as the fee is paid each time.

#### Right to Reply

FBOs have a right to reply where they can explain what steps have been taken since the inspection to rectify non-compliances. The comments are then uploaded to the rating website and can be read alongside the rating. This is not the same as an appeal or rescore visit.

The text can be edited by the local authority before being published at <https://ratings.food.gov.uk/> to remove inaccurate, irrelevant, defamatory, or offensive remarks.

### 3.4 Home Authority and Primary Authority

- 3.4.1 The Primary Authority principle provides a framework for a local authority to act as an interface and provide advice and assist with national regulatory issues. The relationship is initiated by the business making a request to the Council Office for Product Safety and Standards (Safety & Standards).
- 3.4.2 The Council has not so far been asked to provide a Primary Authority relationship with any of Fenland's food manufacturers. In the meantime, in the role of the Enforcing Authority for local businesses, it will provide advice, guidance and promote good working relationships in routine contact with these companies and other local authorities.
- 3.4.3 Currently, the service acts as Enforcing Authority for 53 medium to large-scale food manufacturers and packers. The Council receives frequent requests for assistance from other authorities regarding food safety and contamination of food, in its Enforcing Authority role capacity.
- 3.4.4 The food service will make note of premises where there is an agreement in place and adhere to any inspection plans provided by the primary authority as well as any guidance and advice provided.

3.4.5 The Service acts as the Originating Authority for our Approved Establishments and any businesses supplying food outside the district. At the request of another regulatory authority, the Team will give appropriate information and assistance.

### 3.5 Advice to Businesses

3.5.1 The emphasis of the Service is to work with businesses and develop positive working relationships. Officers are willing to invest significant time on advice and guidance to both support enterprise and maintain compliance; and in doing so avoid the need for future formal action.

Examples of business support include:

- Carrying out assessments and publishing National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme scores.
- Providing advice on allergen labelling requirements.
- Promoting the Food Standards Agency Safer Food Better Business pack.
- New business “start up” advice.
- Advice given during inspections and other visits.
- Providing advice in leaflets or on the Council’s website.
- Responding to individual queries.
- Customer evaluation surveys.
- Signposting to translated literature, when proprietors, managers or staff do not have English as their first language.
- Working in partnership within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.5.2 The Food Service has contributed towards a brochure of guidance for food business relating to food safety guidance and points of contact.

3.5.3 The number of service requests asking for advice / registering business has fallen sharply in comparison with recent years and is now more in line with pre-Covid-19 numbers:

Year	Number of service requests
2022/2023	41
2021/2022	93
2020/2021	305
2019/2020	356
2018/2019	111
2017/2018	60

### 3.6 Sampling of Food

3.6.1 Microbiological food and food environment sampling plays an important role in monitoring food safety standards. The result of such sampling helps to inform food businesses on areas for improvement.

3.6.2 The cost of microbiological food and food environment sampling is met by UK Health Security Agency. Samples are taken in accordance with legal requirements, Food Law Code of Practice, and guidelines issued by the Food Standards Agency, UK Health Security Agency or Local

Government Association. The Food Sampling Standard Operating Procedure gives practical advice on obtaining samples.

- 3.6.3 Food samples will, in normal circumstances, be submitted to the Public Analyst for chemical analysis and comment and to the UK Health Security Agency for bacteriological examination.
- 3.6.4 An annual food safety sampling programme is formulated for examination of food for microbiological safety and quality at the UK Health Security Agency Laboratory. Fenland District Council will contribute to the sampling programme where resources allow.
- 3.6.5 As the Port Health Authority, the Council also has responsibility for monitoring the classification of shellfish beds around the mouth of the River Nene. The cost of this sampling activity is recharged equally to the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and South Holland District Council under the provision of the Port Health Authority Order 1982. Eastern Inshore Fishery Conservation Authority (IFCA) collect the samples and the Centre for Environment Fishery and Aquaculture Sciences (CEFAS) examine the samples and report on the results.

### 3.7 Food Safety Incidents

- 3.7.1 On receipt of any food alert from FSA, the Environmental Health service will respond as appropriate and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.
- 3.7.2 A competent Environmental Health Officer in consultation, as appropriate, with the Lead Food Officer or Head of Environmental Health and Compliance, will determine response to Food Alerts and/or other relevant agencies such as FSA, UK Health Security Agency, Trading Standards etc.
- 3.7.3 In recent times there has been an increasing number of recalls of foods containing allergens where they have not been detailed on the labels. This is of some concern. Officers have worked with FSA other local authorities and FBOs to ensure food safety is not compromised.

### 3.8 Liaison with other organisations

- 3.8.1 The Service is committed to formal inter-agency liaison relationships as set out in Food Law Code of Practice. Additional communication takes place at officer level during the process of investigating offences, sharing information and exchange of intelligence.
- 3.8.2 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Protection Group have established a Food and Occupational Health and Safety Liaison Group and it monitors their work and strategy. The Group collaborates on food safety issues to produce common policies and procedures and promote consistency in food safety regulation.

The nominated Senior Environmental Health Officers represent Fenland District Council on the Cambridgeshire Food and Occupational Health and Safety Liaison Group.

This Cambridgeshire Food and Occupational Health and Safety Liaison Group include Trading Standards Officers, Health and Safety Executive, Food Standards Agency and UK Health Security Agency, to ensure cross agency co-ordination of functions.

- 3.8.3 The Service uses media such as the Council website, Facebook and Twitter to deliver food safety messages and communicate to customers about urgent or general food safety messages.

3.8.4 Officers routinely liaise with Building Control, Planning and Licensing staff, particularly when new businesses are being established.

3.8.5 Local Authorities responsible for classified shellfish production areas must ensure an effective Local Action Group and Local Action Plan are established. Fenland District Council is a member of the Eastern Shellfish Liaison Group (ESLG) – which is the Local Action Group covering shellfish production areas in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast.

### 3.9 Food safety and standards promotional work

The service participates, where resources permit, in targeted local and national activities and interventions.

Continued promotion of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, to encourage businesses to improve and to inform consumers of standards being achieved.

### 3.10 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

3.10.1 From April 2022 to March 2023, 6 reports of suspected or confirmed cases of infectious disease were notified to the service.

3.10.2 It is generally recognised that the number of reported cases is a small proportion of the actual number of cases of food borne illness each year in the UK. An Incident Control plan, agreed by the Cambridgeshire Food Liaison Group and UK Health Security Agency would be implemented when circumstances require. A similar plan has been produced by Anglian Water for incidents where the mains water supply becomes contaminated.

3.10.3 The Council works in partnership with UK Health Security Agency to investigate, prevent and control cases and outbreaks of food related disease.

3.10.4 In cases where the service receives reports of chemical contamination of food and there is a subsequent threat to human health, Environmental Health and Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards staff liaise to determine responsibility or undertake a joint investigation as the situation demands.

### 3.11 Port Health

3.11.1 As a Port Health Authority, the Council has a key role in the prevention of illegal food imports, prevention of infectious disease entry through the ports and ship sanitation issues on board ships. The Council continues to monitor activities at Wisbech Port and Port Sutton Bridge, including visiting ships berthing at the ports.

3.11.2 The Port Health function also includes responsibility for monitoring the classification of shellfish from beds if harvested for human consumption in the port health area in The Wash.

3.11.3 All animal products are automatically considered “high-risk” and are subject to specific import controls and border checks. Plant-based imports of food and feed are only considered high-risk if they come from certain countries where specific food or feed safety risks have been identified and need to be controlled.



## Section 4 RESOURCES

### 4.1 Financial Resources

The budget allocated for Food Safety services in 2023/2024 is £125,860. The budget allocated to food enforcement functions includes necessary staffing, administration, training and supplies.

### 4.2 Staffing Resource

Staffing resources commit the equivalent of 2.75 full time equivalent posts on food safety related matters.

### 4.3 Staff Development Arrangements

4.3.1 All staff have a Springboard meeting with 6 monthly reviews, monthly 1:1's and evaluation of training received. Staff training needs are identified as part of the process and then contribute to the Team learning plan.

4.3.2 All officers carrying out enforcement duties are registered with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) itself and/or its Registration Board (EHRB). Each enforcement officer is authorised in accordance with the standards and requirements of the respective legislation, FSA Food Law Code of Practice.

4.3.3 A minimum of 20 hours Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training each year on food enforcement related topics and additional training is ensured to promote the development of staff to ensure competent and consistent food law enforcement. Within the 20 hours there must be a minimum of 10 hours 'core' CPD.

4.3.4 The Service uses a range of external training organisations, including the CIEH and FSA, and also external providers in areas of specialist expertise, in addition to relevant in house courses. Four officers are currently subscribed to ABC Food Law (food law consultancy specialising in the provision of online CPD training to food law enforcement officers in the UK).

4.3.5 Training and development comprises:

- Structured training for all food safety enforcement officers.
- Cascade training sessions, to pass on information and updates.
- Regular updates through staff briefings and training days.
- Routine circulation of relevant information.
- Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Consistency Exercises.

### 4.4 Software

The Service operates a database for the collection and storage of data relating to all premises, inspections, sampling, complaints and other work undertaken by officers. This database is Idox Uniform a well-supported and nationally recognised system.

## Section 5 QUALITY ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 Quality assessment and internal monitoring

5.1.1 Officers authorised under food safety legislation are provided with Standard Operating Procedures describing how inspections, complaints and legal powers are dealt and the service is striving to achieve full compliance with the FSA Framework Document.



- 5.1.2 Performance management and monitoring arrangements will be undertaken against the monitoring standard and performance indicators.
- 5.1.3 Internal quality monitoring is undertaken in accordance with the prescribed Standard Operating Procedure.
- 5.1.4 Customer evaluation surveys of food businesses are undertaken to enable customer feedback and identify where service improvements can be made. In addition, a Local Performance indicator is monitored which measures how helpful and supportive officers have been during their inspection.
- 5.1.5 Officers take part in exercises provided by the FSA to ensure that scoring is consistent between officers and with other authorities.
- 5.1.6 Officers are expected to maintain 20 hours of Continued Professional Development (CPD) of which 10 hours must at a minimum relate to 'core' activities.
- 5.1.7 Staff from our partner local authority Breckland Council and any externally appointed contractors are required to provide details of their competencies in line with the Food Law Code of Practice.

## Section 6 REVIEW

### 6.1 Review against the service plan

The Food Safety Service Plan is reviewed annually.

The review against the overall objectives of this Service Plan will be undertaken based on:

- performance and resources available over the previous 12 months
- responses to feedback from local businesses and the community
- observations from Members and the Environmental Health Team
- advice and guidance issued by the FSA

### 6.2 Identification of any variation from the service plan

- 6.2.1 Any variation in service plan commitments will be monitored and reviewed as necessary and dealt with each month through the monthly performance report.
- 6.2.2 New legislative requirements for example, the regulation of beauty treatments, will require training and assessing these premises will be resource intensive. Continued priority of reactive work including notifiable accident, workplace ill health and occupational safety interventions is also necessary.
- 6.2.3 Targeting of a future workplan will be influenced by the outcome of consultation with Local Authorities and agreement by the Food Standards Agency Board on the new modernised hygiene delivery model.

### 6.3 Areas of focus and/or improvement

- To ensure implementation of the Food Standards Agency new delivery models as they are defined, to modernise food safety enforcement and ensure it is sustainable for the future.

- To continue to monitor the resource provided to food safety enforcement to ensure it is adequate to meet the demands of the service, including new food business interventions in a timely manner. To continue with the timely food safety interventions.
- Continue internal monitoring of officers and review regularly.
- Review competency frameworks (there is a requirement in the Food Law Code of Practice and Guidance to monitor professional competency and consistency).
- Develop officer's training plans.
- Continue Lead Officer upskilling.
- Continue monthly publishing the list of businesses that achieve Food Hygiene Rating 5s on social media platforms.
- Monitor changes related imports to ensure that improved controls are put in place to the timescale that the UK Government will set out.
- Respond quickly to changes in legislation, for example changes to food allergen requirements.
- Manage and update Food Safety pages on the Council's web site.
- Continue to implement efficient electronic processes for customers to access the service, for example online food business registration.
- Continue to improve use of software for the commercial premises database and handling of requests for service. Storing our data and information electronically.
- The subject of the report has a positive impact on improving customer focus and we will be looking into how officers can use handheld technology to record inspections and provide inspection reports to customers in a timely fashion.
- Continue to support businesses and work with Trading Standards to achieve compliance with Food Information to Consumers regulatory requirements in respect of food allergens.