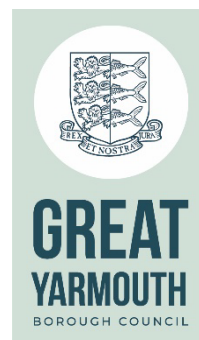


Subject: THE FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2022/2023

Report to: Environment Committee 15th November 2022

Report by: Gemma Tilley - Environmental Health Manager

UPRN: 22-206



SUBJECT MATTER

The Food Standards Agency requires that Local Authorities have a Food Service Plan. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of and seek approval for the formal adoption of the Food Service Plan for 2022/23 which is detailed in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment Committee approve and adopt the Food Service Plan for 2022/23

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Food Standard's Agency (FSA) requires that all Local Authorities produce and review an annual Food Service Plan for all areas of food law that the Authority has a duty to enforce. The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities and Chapter 2 of the FSA's Food Law Practice Guidance (England) sets out the FSA's guidelines for what should be documented in the service plan.
- 1.2 The service plan should include service aims and objectives, background, service delivery, resources, quality assessment and a review. A performance review must be carried out at least once a year and be documented. This Food Service Plan for 2022/23 uses the recommended format for service plans.
- 1.3 This Food Service Plan also outlines the service plan outcomes for 2020/21 and the plan contains information on proposals for undertaking duties in 2022-2023 that the team are working towards.
- 1.4 To ensure local transparency and accountability it is recommended that the Food Service Plan is submitted to the relevant Member forum for approval.
- 1.5 The Covid pandemic has had a major impact on the delivery of food enforcement over the last two years. During the pandemic the majority of the food officers were utilised in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak by providing community support, advice, and enforcement. Many food businesses were closed during the lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021 and then returned to trading. For food enforcement this has meant that the inspections that were due during the times of lockdown were unable to be completed which has resulted in a backlog of inspections. In response to this the FSA produced a Food Recovery Plan which covers the period from the 1st July 2021 to 2023/24. The FSA's Recovery Plan provided a framework for local authorities to

catch up with the food hygiene delivery programme in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice. This Food Service Plan 2022/23 also incorporates the requirements of the FSA Food Recovery Plan, and the service is committed to working to meet these requirements.

1.6 Throughout lockdowns the service also saw a surge in new food business registrations and this trend is continuing. Some of these businesses have closed but they still impact on officer time as the registrations must be processed, visits arranged for a hygiene inspection, provide guidance, and advise them.

1.7 The FSA has received and approved a draft of this Food Service Plan for 2022/23. (As Appendix 1)

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 There are no additional financial implications in approving this plan. This Food Service Plan is currently managed and resourced through existing budgets.

3. RISK IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The key risks that relate to the service not following the food service plan, achieving statutory targets, and failing to protect the public/businesses from Environmental Health Risks are as follows:

- An audit and assessment by the FSA based on the Local Authorities food law enforcement service as provided in their service plan.
- If statutory targets are not achieved the service can be taken over and managed by the Food Standards Agency.
- Potentially that the public & businesses are put at risk.
- Legal action taken against the Council.
- Reputational damage to Council.

3.2 There are currently 2 FTE vacant posts which will need to be successfully filled with the appropriately trained officers to enable us to successfully deliver the food service plan. There is currently a national shortage of qualified officers and we as other councils are struggling to recruit into these professional posts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The food service plan provides a current picture of the food safety service. It highlights the main areas of work during the previous year and comments on the work and resources proposed for this year including areas for change.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Great Yarmouth Borough Council Food Service Plan 2022-23

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation	As part of ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation	As part of ELT
Existing Council Policies See background papers	No
Financial Implications Within existing budgets	No
Legal Implications (including human rights)	No, Statutory Provision
Risk Implications	Yes, as set out in the report
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment	No
Details contained in strategy	No
Crime & Disorder	No
Every Child Matters	No



GREAT YARMOUTH

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Food Service Plan

2022-23

INTRODUCTION

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has a vision to revitalise and regenerate the borough supporting residents to thrive and businesses to recover and to grow back stronger in the wake of the pandemic. The work of the Commercial Environmental Health Team has an integral role in practice of delivering this work which is aided by the close relationship that the team has with our business community.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council is committed to ensuring that the food produced, sold, or consumed within the borough is safe to eat and does not pose a risk to public health. This is achieved by the work undertaken by the Commercial Environmental Health Team who are responsible for the enforcement of food hygiene within the borough.

As part of this role, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires the production of an annual food service plan. This requirement is laid down by the FSA in its Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement. This annual service plan is produced by the Environmental Health Manager to set out how the Council will deliver those aspects of food safety and hygiene for which we have enforcement responsibility.

This plan covers the functions carried out by authorised officers of the Commercial Environmental Health Team in accordance with the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990, the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and relevant regulations made under the European Communities Act 1992. This plan has been reviewed in accordance with the FSA's service planning guidance for Food Law Enforcement and the Food Law Code of Practice (England) and Guidance. This service plan also reflects the work required of food authorities by the FSA in its Covid-19 Local Authority Recovery plan for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023/24.

In 2019/20 the service was improving and addressed some backlog issues and was in a strong position to deliver the full programme of the planned inspection programme. However, The Covid-19 pandemic introduced new and unexpected challenges to this, and the food service was impacted. For most of the period the team was reduced to 0.5 FTE, while the rest of the team were dedicated to the Covid-19 outbreak providing community support, advice, and enforcement. The service operated in accordance with the FSA guidance during this period offering a risk-based approach in terms of food establishments. This has however, unfortunately created a backlog of inspections, dating back to two years in some instances.

In response to the pandemic the FSA produced a Recovery Plan for Local Authorities to re-start the food intervention programme. The Recovery plan identifies certain activities and interventions to be completed by set dates during 2022/23. The service is committed to working to meet these requirements. We also plan, resources allowing to inspect lower category premises which are overdue, but not prioritised within this Recovery Plan. The focus all visits will continue to be prioritised on a risk basis.

2022/23 remains challenging, but we are committed to delivering all in year inspections, plus resolving the two-year backlog, again prioritising on a risk basis. In addition to this the

service continues to proactively work alongside businesses by providing advice, training and partnership working to ensure the ongoing improvements in the quality of the business community in Great Yarmouth.

1. Service Aims and Objectives

Aims and Objectives

To ensure that all food and drink intended for sale for human consumption that is produced, stored, distributed, handled, or consumed in Great Yarmouth, is safe, hygienic, and compliant with food hygiene legislation and that all food premises and food handlers comply with Food Hygiene Regulations.

This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- To carry out an annual planned programme of food hygiene inspections in accordance with the FSA framework guidance, codes of practice and relevant statutory requirements
- To register and/or approve relevant food business as appropriate
- Investigate food and food premises complaints and take appropriate action in accordance with our procedures and national guidance
- Inform businesses of their legal obligations under relevant legislation
- To publish the scores of Food Hygiene interventions to the public via the Food Standards Agency's Food Hygiene Rating Schemes website and adhere to the 'Brand Standard'
- Carry out routine microbiological sampling in accordance with national guidance and participate in local, regional, and national co-ordinated surveys
- Investigate and monitor reports of infections and notifiable diseases in partnership with UK Health Security Agency
- Respond to food alerts issued by the FSA in accordance with national and local guidance
- Provide advice, assistance, training and development opportunities for businesses and wherever possible consumers. Help businesses improve their standards by promoting best practice
- Promote food safety and, where appropriate, participate in local and national campaigns
- Work in partnership with other agencies to help secure and promote good food hygiene and safety, including the Norfolk Food Liaison Group
- To support the Primary and Home Authority Principles
- To provide appropriate responses to public health emergencies
- To sample and risk assess private water supplies
- To carry out port health functions including ship sanitation inspections
- To respond to licensing applications as a statutory consultee

Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

The Council has 'The Plan' which sets out the Council's vision and priorities for 2020-2025.

- A strong and growing economy
- Improved housing and strong communities
- High-quality and sustainable environment
- An efficient and effective council

The Environment and Sustainability Service Plan further details how these priorities are met within this area, including actions for the Food Safety Services.

The Food Safety Service Plan is linked to all the corporate objectives that are shown in the Environment and Sustainability Service Plan 2022/23.

In addition, this Food Safety Service Plan links to the priorities in the Council Plan directly and is particularly relevant to supporting businesses and encouraging sustainable economic development and improving the year-round tourism offer by working with businesses to improve standards.

2. Background information

Profile of Businesses within the Borough

The Borough of Great Yarmouth is a diverse coastal area, focused around two urban centres – Great Yarmouth and Gorleston – and surrounded by a rural hinterland of small villages on the edge of the Norfolk Broads. Great Yarmouth is predominantly a tourist area and as such has many hotels, holiday parks, caravan sites and other tourist attractions that are mainly open between Easter and October.

The Borough of Great Yarmouth has a population of approximately 99,800 residents according to the 2021 census and is growing. Great Yarmouth has been a seaside resort since the late 19th century. Today the Borough is one of the most popular British seaside resorts and has over 70,000 available bed spaces, caters for around 4 million-day visits and nearly 5 million visitor nights each year. In the summer months the population effectively doubles which places a seasonal demand on the Food Safety Service. There is heavy dependency on the tourist industry and many of the jobs in the Borough are service based.

The ethnic minority population is small and currently makes up approximately 5.1% of the population (Norfolk County Council, 2020) in the Borough. Many migrants in Great Yarmouth come from Portugal, Poland and Republic of Lithuania. Greater than expected numbers of people where the first language is not English place greater demands on the service.

There are currently a total of around 1139 food premises within the Borough of Great Yarmouth as of August 2022. The department receives a steady flow of new business registrations.

All interventions with businesses and members of the community are carried out with regard to the local authority's commitment to equality of opportunity for local people as stated in the Equalities Approach and Actions Policy.

The food safety work of the team is delivered through proactive and reactive visits and interventions reaching every one of our approximately 1139 registered food businesses. There are a variety of food businesses registered in the Borough, although the majority of these are small scale caterers and retailers. We have very few food manufacturers.

Most catering establishments are made up of schools, residential care homes, hotels and guesthouses, holiday parks, restaurants, takeaways and pubs and clubs. Retail establishments include supermarkets and smaller retailers.

Great Yarmouth has a very high turnover of food business operators within the small catering and retail establishments in the Borough, a result of the nature and seasonality of the town. This means that the food team see new businesses constantly opening that requires registering and assessing throughout the year.

Organisational Structure

At Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the Council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) comprises of the Chief Executive and Directors. They are supported by the Heads of Service, who have responsibilities for overseeing service areas within the Council. Collectively known as the Management Team, these senior officers lead work to deliver on the public and council priorities set out in the corporate plan.

Environmental Services underwent a restructure in December 2021 and January 2022. The Commercial Team forms part of Environment and Sustainability Service. This team is led by the Commercial Team Manager who reports to the Environmental Health Manager. The Environmental Health Manager reports to the Head of Environmental Services and Sustainability.

The Commercial Team service consists of:

- The Commercial Team Manager (1FT)
- Two Senior commercial Officers (2 FT)
- Three Commercial Officers (2 FT, 1PT)
- One Environmental Health and Safety Officer (0.8FT)

During the recent restructure within the department, 0.6 FTE commercial officer post was transferred to the Licensing Team as animal, special treatment, scrap metal licencing transferred to the Licensing Team. The Commercial Team prior to the restructure were also responsible for Commercial statutory noise and nuisance. After the restructure this function transferred to the Environmental Protection Team.

Where there are staff shortages or long-time vacancies arise, overtime (time off in lieu) or contractors may be used to meet the objectives of the work plan. At present (August 2022) the service has two vacant posts, the Commercial Team Manager post and a Senior Commercial Officer post. The Commercial Team Manager's post has now been filled following successful recruitment. The other vacant post is in the process of recruitment. In the interim the service has allocated resources to employ contractors to backfill the work and the Environmental Health Manager has undertaken the Commercial Team Managers workload. The Environmental Health Manager has taken the position of Food Lead until the Commercial Team Manager commences their post.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council is a District Council and therefore provides the Food Safety Service whilst Norfolk County Council Trading Standards is responsible for Food Standards and Feed Stuffs Control.

Through the Council's constitution the Monitoring Officer (and any person authorised by her) is authorised to institute, defend or participate in any legal proceedings in any case where such action is necessary to give effect to decisions of the Council, or to protect the Council's interests. In addition, Directors (and any persons authorised by them) are authorised to institute legal proceedings in respect of matters falling within their areas of responsibility.

Scope of the Service

The Commercial Team is responsible for the enforcement of the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and the food hygiene legislation made thereunder. The range of food safety functions carried out by the Commercial Team are varied and include the following:

- Carrying out interventions e.g., Inspections, audits, sampling and revisits at food premises within the Borough;
- Registration of all food establishments including Approvals where appropriate;
- Advising both new and existing businesses of the requirements of food law;
- Undertaking a food sampling programme of food from food businesses in partnership with other authorities as part of a local, regional and national sampling programme.
- The enforcement of all aspects of Food Hygiene and Safety in Food business in the Borough;
- Provision of food hygiene training and advice to support our food businesses on food safety matters;
- Promotion and operation of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in accordance with the national guidance. To process and respond to any appeals against scoring or requests for revisits for the purpose of rescoring. To provide all collected information to the FSA as per the frequency laid down by the guidance;
- Identifying and assessing premises that require approval of specific food products and ensuring that they are issued with conditional and full approval as necessary;
- Imported food control as an inland authority for food imported from outside the EU through sampling, inspection and enforcement;
- Promotional and educational activities and initiatives based around food safety and food hygiene;
- Investigating and controlling outbreaks of food poisoning and Infectious diseases;
- The receiving and investigation of all relevant FSA Alerts for Action and their updates as appropriate, and to communicate with businesses to disseminate relevant information concerning relevant food risks;
- The investigation of complaints regarding food and food hygiene premises/practices;
- The receiving and resolving of general enquires regarding food premises and legislation;
- Dealing with unfit food;
- Provision of food export certificates for businesses intending to export foods;
- Carrying out ship sanitation certificate controls;
- The investigation and consideration of matters relating to smoking legislation;
- The delivery of public health promotion in conjunction with relevant stakeholders;
- Providing consideration and response to consultation documents;
- Partnership working with other enforcement agencies where appropriate;
- Working with organisers of outdoor event to ensure that each event is as safe and compliant as practicable;
- Working with Primary Authorities to improve standards.

In addition, if during an intervention visit to a food premises health and safety matters of evident concern, creating a risk of serious personal injury or ill health are observed or brought to attention; actions will be taken in accordance with national guidance to deal with the issue(s). For example, this could include unguarded equipment, seriously defective gas or electrical appliances etc.

All officers within the Commercial Team also pick up other areas of work at varying levels. In addition, there are further demands coming into the service in the following areas: -

- Corporate Health and Safety
- Health and Safety
- Investigation of accidents in the workplace
- Public Health Funerals
- Private water supply risk assessments and sampling
- Planning and licensing consultations

A Civica APP database is used to maintain the register of food premises and determine intervals of interventions and visits to food premises based on the risk rating of the premises and manage the FSA Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Data is recorded of all food safety, health and safety activities and actions. This database is shared with Norfolk County Council Trading Standards Department.

Demands on the Food Service

The local authority's food service is delivered from the Great Yarmouth Town Hall Offices on Hall Quay in Great Yarmouth and can be contacted in several ways: -

- A reception facility is operated between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday;
- The Environmental Health Service has a dedicated telephone contact number on 01493 846478 which provides a link to the Commercial Team;
- By email at health@great-yarmouth.gov.uk;

The Environmental Health Service also has an out of hours answer phone that directs callers to the Council's 24-hour Central Control number in the event of emergencies. Depending on the nature of the call an appropriate Officer may be called, or the matter may be referred to an Officer the next working day.

The Council has a website that provides access to further information and advice, and this can be accessed at www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk.

There are several languages other than English identified as in use within the Borough. Many proprietors are, however, able to communicate in English or have somebody present at the premises that can translate. In many cases where there may be language difficulties the service has the use of Language Line (Intran), a telephone and translation service to which the Council subscribes and the use of Intran (Cintra) when a face-to-face interpreter is required. Correspondence can be sent where necessary in languages other than English.

As already stated, the Commercial Team is the enforcement service for food safety for the Borough. There is currently a total of 1139 food premises in Great Yarmouth Borough that are subject to programmed food hygiene interventions as per the table below. This can vary day to day as businesses open and close.

FSA Category	Number of establishments
Primary Producers	1
Manufacturers/Packers	6
Importers/Exporters	2
Distributors/Transporters	8
Retailers	318
Restaurants and Caterers	804
Total	1139

Great Yarmouth Borough Council have approved establishments which produce, meat, fish and dairy products. The number of food establishments which are approved or conditionally approved within the Borough is: 5.

The distribution of the above food business based on risk as of September 2022 are as follows:

Premises Rating Category	Number of businesses
A	2
B	30
C	184
D	432
E	272
APPROVED PREMISES	5 (included in above)
NOT YET RISK RATED	219

All food businesses are subject to a programmed food hygiene inspection as defined by food law, which is supplemented by formal guidance. This also defines the inspection interval, ranging from 6 months to 3-year intervals, and the type of intervention permitted, from a full or partial inspection, and audit or alternative intervention.

New business that register with the local authority each year also have to be inspected and subsequently risk rated. The precise number of new businesses that register each year cannot be forecast but approximately 140 are received annually. With 142 received during 2020/21 and 141 received during 2021/22, this reflects the high number of new businesses registering. Whilst some will replace existing businesses, which close or change hands, they all need to be fully inspected which imposes an additional burden on the service. There have been 102 new food registrations received since 1st April 2022.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the service ability to carry out the food hygiene intervention programme and has resulted in a significant backlog of work. During the pandemic commercial team were redeployed to assist with vulnerable communities, advice and enforcement of Covid-19 regulations which left the service with 0.5FTE. The service therefore needs to recover the food inspection backlog arising from 2020/21 and 2021/22. The FSA ceased the programmed inspection of business during most of 2020. The focus of work was reactive, responding to complaints and remote assessments were used to monitor those businesses that had been non-compliant at previous interventions

The pandemic resulted in many businesses having to close for a significant period. On reopening business, the on-site interventions recommenced and from July 2021 food safety standards have significantly dropped in some premises. This has impacted on officer resource due to the need for more revisits and enforcement work.

The service is following the FSA recovery plan that reduces the intervention burden. The FSA's recovery plan requires the following to be completed:

- All category A inspections due by 31st March 2022
- All category B inspections due by 30th June 2022
- All non-compliant category C inspections (rated 0,1,2) by 30th September 2022
- All non-compliant category D inspections (rated 0,1,2) by 31st December 2022
- All broadly compliant category C inspections by 31st March 2023
- Category D broadly compliant no intervention required during recovery period unless intelligence suggests risks
- Category E no intervention required during the recovery period unless intelligence/information suggests risks.

In October 2021 'Natasha's Law' was introduced to protect allergy sufferers. This new law covers labelling requirements for foods that are prepared and packed on the same premises from which they are sold (Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS)). The team as required to undertake additional training in this new legislation. Whilst Norfolk Trading Standards are responsible for the enforcement of the regulations, Great Yarmouth Borough Council will provide information and signposting to Food Business Operators during routine interventions and refer any non-compliance to them for enforcement. This targeted work will continue for 2022/23 to increase awareness and compliance with allergen legislation within commercial operations and thus ensuring consumers who suffer with food allergies or intolerances are equally able to safely enjoy meals out within the Borough.

The team is also responsible for undertaking several additional roles aimed at protecting the public as already detailed in this document. In addition to this, the FSA develops national guidance and codes of practice for all food authorities and can direct reactive work, which may also place a unknown demand on the team looking to the year ahead.

Enforcement Policy

The Council has a corporate enforcement policy which was reviewed in July 2020. This policy details how the Council will use its powers in relation to enforcement. This policy is designed to help promote efficient, effective and consistent approaches to regulatory inspection.

This Policy has been written in conjunction with the Regulators Compliance Code 2014, The Human Rights Act 1998, and The European Convention on Human Rights, The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

All officers within the Commercial Team are expected to act in accordance with this policy.

3. Service Delivery

Interventions of Food Businesses

During the pandemic the inspection programme was put on hold and food inspection recommended using priorities set by the FSA from 1st July 2021. In total 235 food hygiene inspections were successfully completed from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. Where a physical visit was unable to be completed businesses received a remote assessment. 4 FHRs rescore revisit were completed, 10 complaint follow up visits and 40 advice visits/assessments.

The service is committed to carrying out inspections at a frequency (that where capability allows) is not less than that determined by the FSA's Food Law Code of Practice. However, the scope of the food safety intervention programme for 2022/23 has been developed in conjunction with the expectations imposed on the authority by the FSA. To this effect, the service will aim to proactively inspect all food business that are due to be inspected, although the nature of the intervention will differ depending upon the hazard posed by the business, following the FSA's Recovery Plan requirements (detailed below).

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All food premises rated A & B will receive a full or partial targeted inspection. The team will complete 100% inspections due up to 30th June 2022 by this date and maintain inspection frequency of every 6 months and 12 months respectively going forward. This has since been achieved.

All category C premises rated less than broadly compliant and due by 30th September 2022 will receive a full or partial inspections. The team will complete 100% of the less than broadly compliant inspections due by 30th September 2022. The service will then complete all the remaining category C

inspections due by 31st March 2023.

All new food businesses are prioritised, and our usual aim is to ensure all are inspected within 28 days of their opening or registration date if this is later. However, the global pandemic, the seasonal nature and relatively high turnover of some businesses, increasing number of new businesses along with staffing issues has made this more challenging to achieve. It may therefore be the case that this deadline will not always be met. To assist with the high numbers, when a registration form is received the team contact the food business and complete a questionnaire and/or remote assessment to triage the most high-risk inspections. The business support team also periodically contact the new food businesses to ascertain whether they have opened and are still trading. A contractor is to be employed to assist with the back log of unrated inspections and the team are now able to begin prioritising these inspections.

All Category D premises that are broadly compliant and due by 31st December 2022 will receive a full or partial inspection by this date. Although the recovery plan does not require low risk category D inspections to be completed during the recovery plan, inspections will be prioritised and carried out where intelligence suggests there is a risk. Where resources allow, the service will aim to commence inspections of low-risk category D premises within the programme that have the earliest inspection date.

There is no requirement by the FSA recovery plan to complete Category E inspections. However, the service plans to use an alternative intervention programme for the Category E rated premises (which present least risk to safety of food) where we alternate between postal/telephone questionnaires and an inspection at the premises. Interventions, however, would be carried out at these premises where the service receives a complaint, change of owner or for any other occasion that may (need further investigation to establish if any increase in risk to safety of food) be justified by an officer. Where possible food inspections will also include imported food checks.

The table below includes the due inspections and overdues from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2023.

Premises Rating Category	Inspection Frequency	Number
A	At least every 6 months	2
B	At least every 12 months	20
C	At least every 18 months	132
D	At least every 24 months	283
E	Every 3 years or programme of alternative enforcement	209
Unrated premises	n/a	197
Total		843

Because of the pandemic, we are behind on our inspection programme, but we are following the FSA Recovery Plan as discussed above and will be on target to achieve the Phase 2 milestone by the end of September 2022.

There are several demands of unpredictable and unplanned work that can have a significant impact on the service delivery and resources. This can include infectious disease investigations, health and

safety enforcement, port health functions, poor compliance and food and non-related food legal work.

Revisits and Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Rescoring Visits

Great Yarmouth Borough Council supports the FSA's Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). This scheme allows for the publication and promotion of the food business rating score, from 0 (urgent improvements necessary) to 5 (very good). The scheme also identifies those qualifying food businesses that are broadly meeting their legal obligations (rated 3 to 5), and those failing to do so (rated 0 to 2); this threshold is known as Broadly Compliant. The team will use this information to target the non-compliant businesses to assist them to improve their rating, and thus aim to increase the overall percentage of broadly compliant businesses within the borough.

Under the FHRS, although subject to a number of specified conditions, food businesses may request re-rating visits in the hope of raising their public FHRS rating. As this does impact on the quantity of reactive work required of the Commercial Team, there is now a charge for Food Hygiene Rating rescoring visits of £166 and these must be carried out within 3 months of the request.

Whilst display of the FHRS sticker is not legally required, we do encourage businesses to display their stickers. Additionally, all FHRS scores we produce are uploaded to help populate the national FHRS website; which makes each qualifying business rating score available to the public.

During 2022/23, the team will encourage all food businesses to improve their ratings and aim to achieve an overall standard of 90% broadly compliant by those qualifying food businesses inspected during the year. Those businesses rated with an FHRS of 0 to 2 will receive a follow up visit and appropriate intervention to help them improve. Where necessary this may include formal enforcement action.

Officers will continue to carry out compliance revisits to premises to check compliance with notices and letters as per the food law code of practice and guidance, but the business will not be rescored at this time.

Enforcement Action 2021/22

Although the number of inspections carried out by the team was small due to redeployment for Covid-19, we continued to ensure that enforcement action was taken when required. Details of action taken are set out in the following table:

Written Warnings	132
Improvement notices	8
Hygiene emergency prohibition notices	0
Hygiene emergency prohibition orders	0
Voluntary closure	1
Seizure, detention and voluntary surrender of food	0
Simple cautions	0
prosecutions	0

Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices are served where an imminent risk of injury to health has been identified and action is required to stop a food business or process from operating. Any of these notices served must be followed up by an application to the Magistrates' Court within 3 working days for an Order confirming the action taken.

Supporting New Businesses

Inspecting and advising new food businesses are a priority to the food safety team; officers either becoming aware of them through food business registration, licensing and planning applications or when they go out in the borough.

The Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to different business ideas and models, with established businesses looking at different opportunities as well as completely new businesses starting up. Some of these new or updated business models have continued, and we have seen an increase in businesses being started in the home.

Our aim is to visit all new food businesses prior to opening or within 28 days of opening. This ensures that they are operating in compliance with UK legislation and safe procedures. We are also able to aid through signposting to other organisations and Council departments. As discussed earlier the team will contact all new businesses in order to triage while there is a backlog.

The service will continue to look at ways of strengthening communication links with other Council services to help us identify new food businesses and to help the Authority maintain up to date and accurate business information. We have recently joined the FSA food business registration portal on gov.uk as this will make it easier for businesses to register with us and will update Trading Standards at the same time, reducing officer time and duplication of work. This can also be incorporated into a new IT Management Information System which will further reduce officer administration time and ensure an accurate database.

The team are also using social media sites such as Just Eat, Facebook and Trip Advisor to identify new food businesses opening in the Borough.

Advice for Food Business Operators

Officers are committed to building positive working relationships with food business proprietors and work with them to help them comply with the law and to improve food safety standards.

This is achieved by: -

- Providing up to date advice and guidance during inspections and as part of follow up documentation.
- Contacting new businesses to provide advice.
- Responding to enquiries from food businesses operators for advice.
- Signposting people to information available on the Council's website pages.
- Delivering training courses and seminars.
- Responding to businesses requesting guidance either by telephone or e-mail.
- Working with Visit Great Yarmouth and internal council departments to provide advice and guidance.

- Advice visits

As financial constraints are being imposed on the council, departments need to review their services to try and identify opportunities for either savings or identify and develop new income generations. This can be achieved by providing additional services that can be charged for and one area for consideration is the provision of a mentoring service to replace advice visits. This would be aimed at assisting both new and existing businesses to become fully compliant with Food Safety requirements.

Food Safety Complaints

The investigation of customer complaints regarding food safety is an important area of work for the team. We rely on the public providing us with information in respect of food businesses.

Food Safety service requests received by the team usually relate to complaints about the condition of food, food premises and/ or the practices of food handlers. The local authority has a response target of 5 days for such complaints.

All consumer complaints are taken as potential indicators of management problems within a food business and prompt a food safety assessment. This includes general complaints relating to cleanliness or waste disposal, as well as allegations of food poisoning. If the business has only recently been assessed and is not due a routine assessment, officers' judgement is utilised to determine the most appropriate action to investigate the complaint.

Requests for service include concerns regarding the condition of the premises or food with microbiological or physical contamination. In relation to requests for 2021/22, a total of 21 premises complaints were received and 31 food hygiene complaints.

Training for Food Handlers

The team has a programme to deliver the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering together with an in-house food safety refresher course. Officers also carry out tailored training sessions to businesses. This assists businesses and also generated income for the service.

Primary Authority Partnerships

The Primary Authority principle was developed by food and training standards authorities for businesses to form a 'Primary Authority' Partnership with a local authority to aide consistent enforcement. The scheme provides businesses with a source of guidance and advice. The guidance and advice the local authority provides must be taken into consideration by officers carrying out inspections and dealing with instances of non-compliance.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council fully supports the Primary Authority principle but has yet not received any requests for support in this area.

Food Sampling

The Council participates in the Norfolk Food Liaison Group, Eastern Region Food Sampling Liaison Group and national co-ordinated sampling programmes by UKHSA. However, due to the Covid-19

pandemic, sampling was not carried out during 2021/22.

The Commercial Team will restart proactive sampling during September 2022/23 and reactive sampling will be carried out as required. The service will continue to aim to take a minimum number of programmed samples requested of each local authority in microbiological survey program.

Reactive sampling may also be undertaken in relation to complaints received and conditions found during inspections and visits and following referrals from other Local Authorities, and in relation to suspected food poisoning cases and outbreaks.

Sampling is important to protect public health and safety through the examination of foods and/ or food equipment. We understand the importance of this type of research to identify potentially unsafe foods and food production methods.

Food, water and environment sample examinations are dealt with by UKHSA at Food, Water & Environmental Microbiology Network, and 61 Colindale Avenue, London, NW9 5EQ. Other food samples are sent to the Public Analyst located in Norwich for food testing.

Imported Food Controls

Imported food controls are important to ensure that consumers and businesses are protected from contaminated products.

The authority has responsibility for imported food control as an inland authority and imported food control forms part of the overall food safety intervention process. Although there are currently no border inspection posts or enhanced remote sheds within the county boundaries, officers will routinely look for foods imported during visits to premises and carry out imported food control sampling and examination to check traceability and compliance with compositional, microbiological, and labelling compliance standards.

Port Health

Great Yarmouth is an authorised port for the issue of ship sanitation certificates. During 2021/22 it was decided that in general, due to the Covid-19 pandemic that ship sanitation visits would be suspended as they require onsite visits, often on vessels from overseas. We continued to provide extension certificates for ship sanitations, and the physical inspections have been re-started for 2022/23.

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Infectious Diseases

The team are informed of potential outbreaks by various means including from UKHSA and consumers. All formal and informal notifications are recorded on an infectious disease database. We respond to all notifications of infectious diseases, either by the provision of advice to those suffering the illness to prevent disease spread or to investigate potential sources of infectious disease. The Commercial Team will investigate food-related infectious disease notifications in accordance with procedures agreed with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC). These response to these notifications of illness will be dependent on the severity of illness. Any unusual illness activity that

indicates a possible outbreak will be reported to the CCDC without delay and may be notified to the Food Standards Agency Incidents Team. Investigation of outbreaks will be in accordance with the CCDC Outbreak Control Plan agreed with UKHSA.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, UKHSA were focussed wholly on dealing with cases and outbreaks of Covid-19 and as such, we were not notified of any issues during this period.

The team also receive a few alleged food poisonings from members of the public. These are investigated on a case-by-case basis. *(None of these reports resulted in any need for formal action or legal proceedings to be taken)* During 2021/22 there were minimal reports of alleged food poisoning from the public, likely due to the reduced opportunities for eating out during this time.

Food Safety Incidents

The Council reacts to Food Alerts and Food Safety Incidents issued by the Food Standards Agency in compliance with the requirements of the FSA Code of Practice and guidance.

All notifications received are reviewed and pursued depending upon category allocation. County-wide liaison through the Norfolk Food Liaison Group ensures a consistency of approach and establishes whether the District Council or County Council Trading Standards Department take the lead.

This ensures businesses and the public are advised quickly of any potential hazards to food supplies and receive guidance on any actions required of them. We can use our social media channels to pass on any messages if deemed necessary.

Liaison with Other Organisations

The Commercial Team has liaison in place with a wide range of other organisations. For food safety matters these include: -

- Food Standards Agency
- Norfolk Food Liaison Group
- National Food Hygiene Focus Group
- UK Health Security Agency Advisory Group (which has not met since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020)
- Local Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) and UKHSA
- Norfolk Trading Standards
- HMRC

There is also regular liaison and consultation with our Council internal service providers on issues such as: -

- Great Yarmouth Event Safety Advisory Group Consultations (eSAG) on food safety matters;
- Licensing Service on licensing issues;
- Business rates.

4. Resources

Financial Allocation

The total budget allocated to the Commercial Team for 2022/23 is shown in the table below:

	2021/22	2022/23
Total Expenditure		
Set	£292,386	£278,705
Actual	£268,739	
Food safety Income:		
Via Rescore visits & training	£7,837	£11,317

Staffing Allocation

The number of full time equivalent (FTE) officers deployed in food safety is set out in the following table:

Officer Post	% Food Safety	FTE
1 Environmental Health Manager (x1)	30	0.3
1 Commercial Team Manager (x1)	50	0.5
2 Senior Commercial Officers (x2)	80	1.6
1 Commercial Officers (x 1)	100	1
1 Commercial Officer (x 0.5)	80	0.4
1 Environmental Health & Safety Officer (x 0.8)	0	0
1 Commercial Officer (x 1)	0	0
Total	-	3.8

There has been a recent restructure within the department and 0.6 FTE technical officer post was transferred to the Licensing Team. Contractors have been employed in 2021/22 and in 2022/23 to assist with the backlog of inspections.

The Senior Commercial Officers Post has been filled by a newly qualified EHP who is following the new FSA competency framework as well as completing the CIEH CDP qualification. At the time of writing this officer is only authorised to complete D, E, and low risk unrated inspections.

The Council continues to review resources required particularly when workload pressures remain high to ensure service needs set out in this plan are met.

Staff Development Plan

All officers are appropriately qualified as proportionate to their status, whether upon appointment or through training and development whilst in a current or a previous post.

All officers of the Food Safety Team have been assessed against the Food Law Code of Practice relevant competencies by the Commercial Manager to ensure that they hold the appropriate qualifications, have enough experience of food law enforcement, and are properly trained and competent. The FSA competency framework for all Food Officers should be completed by the end of March 2023.

Bi-annual formal reviews of training and development needs for individual staff are carried out as part of the Council's appraisal process. In addition, staff receive regular one-to-ones with the Commercial Team Manager to regularly review their training and competency needs.

Records of qualifications, training and experience are documented by officers and will form the basis for their competency framework.

Each officer is responsible for undertaking and maintain their own accredited Continual Professional Development (CPD), subject to the requirements of the FSA and their own professional institute. However, staff are encouraged to maintain at least 20 hours of CPD per year split into 10 hours on core food matters and 10 hours on other professional matters.

The staff development includes:

- Internal and external training courses including online
- The employment of competent enforcement officers capable of performing their role within the team
- Evidence of formal qualification (sight of original qualification certificates prior to commencement of work)
- Where appropriate, confirmation of EHO registration with the EHORB
- Cascade training by officers who have attended a training course
- Departmental meetings and briefings
- Attendance at as hoc working groups
- Self-training via suitable journals and up to date information
- FSA consistency exercises
- The undertaking of shadowing or mentoring with a qualified or experienced Officer if identified as being necessary
- Newly qualified officers will be trained, mentored and shadowed in accordance with their own training needs to provide them the sufficient resources to become fully qualified as appropriate to their post.

5. Quality Assessment

To improve consistency all officers are expected to carry out joint visits with all other officers within the team. The Commercial Team Manager accompanies each officer at least once a year as part of this process. The Commercial Team will also participate in regional food standardisation exercises.

To ensure that the quality of the work undertaken by the Commercial Team is maintained, Standard Operating Procedures will be periodically reviewed, and where changes required, these will be made in accordance with the latest and most appropriate legislation and guidance.

Other monitoring arrangements in place are:

- Internal audit
- Joint visits and/or peer review inspections
- Inspection monitoring
- Norfolk Food Liaison Group
- Standardisation exercises
- Documentary checks of records
- All statutory returns checked and verified by Environmental Health Manager before submission.

Measuring Performance of the Service

Along with the annual LAEMS return to the FSA, and their recent temperature checks, we also have Local Key Performance Indicators identified in the Environmental Health Service Plan to achieve. These two KPI's are provided on a quarterly basis.

EN01 –

- A) % of food premises scoring 3 food hygiene ratings or above (Quarterly Snapshot at last day of month)
- B) Number of food premises inspected (Quarterly)

The target for measure A was 90% for 2021/22 with 97.5% of businesses achieving a 3 or higher rating. Measure B is a new measure to understand the numbers of inspections carried out by the team on a quarterly basis. For the financial year 2021/22, 235 inspections were carried out.

Areas for Change

Development and refinement of a Management Information System (MIS) for all food safety is essential for a consistent and organised delivery of a food safety enforcement service. The department is currently in the process of procuring for a new cloud-based MIS platform. It is anticipated that this process will be underway by the end of 2022/23. A new MIS will provide the service with the ability to compete mobile inspections and will generate further efficiencies.

There have been staffing changes throughout the year, however the recruitment process has been successful in a new Environmental Health Manager joining in June 2022 and a new Commercial Manager will be joining in November 2022. In the meantime, additional resources have been provided for the short-term use of contractors to continue with the work plan to ensure that we successfully meet our service objectives.

The service should continue to consider opportunities for potential savings and/or potential source of income generation.

Since the pandemic there has been a national drop in food safety standards by food businesses. The team will continue to work with food businesses to try and raise the FHSR scores to ensure that as many food businesses as possible achieve a broadly complaint rating (FHSR rating of 3, 4 or 5).

To continue to participate in a food sampling programme and ensure that sampling credit uptake is met by taking part in national and regional sampling surveys.