

Southend on Sea City Council
Department for Neighbourhoods and Environment
Regulatory Services

Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2023-24

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Service Plan has been prepared by the Regulatory Services team of Southend-on-Sea City Council, linking into the Council's corporate priorities and the 2050 ambition for the future.
- 1.2 The Service Plan is structured in accordance with the service planning guidance contained in the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement. Powers to enable the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. In accordance with this guidance the plan will be submitted to the relevant Member or senior officer forum for approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Service Plan is to ensure that national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally in accordance with the relevant codes of practice and guidance. It details the contribution that Regulatory Services makes to the ambition for the Council with respect to feed and food.
- 1.4 Last years' Service Plan 2022-23 supported the Food Standards Agency recovery plan. This required the local authority to prioritise high risk activities and to catch up with the delivery of official controls for lower risk premises to be in line with the Food Law Code of Practice inspection frequencies. The Food Standards Agency requirement for 2023-24 is that official controls be delivered in line with the current Food Law Code of Practice, and this has been taken into account in the development of this plan.

2.0 Service Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aims and Objectives

The delivery of this plan aims to:

- Ensure that the highest achievable levels of feed and food control (food safety, standards and feeding stuffs).

The objectives are to:

- Ensure hygienic conditions in the sale, preparation, manufacture, and storage of foodstuffs and feeding stuffs.
- Ensure the wholesomeness and appropriate labelling/composition of foodstuffs and feeding stuffs.
- Focus on a risk-based approach to inspections and enforcement activity in accordance with the Council's Environment and Regulatory Enforcement Policy.
- Administer the legislation in compliance with the approved codes of practice and related official guidance.
- Continue participation in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).
- Focus on the local enforcement of illegal harvesting of shellfish and linking to the FSA Food Crime Unit and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority objectives.
- Provide guidance and assistance to local businesses on regulatory compliance and on new arrangements now the UK has left the European Union (EU).
- Provide guidance and assist local businesses with respect to infectious disease controls.

2.2 The Aim of the Service is to support the Council's Corporate Priorities and 2050 Ambitions

- 2.3 The Council achieved city status in 2021. The feed and food service plan aligns with the 2022-2026 corporate plan. The delivery of the service supports economic regeneration and business development and enhances tourism, cultural and the leisure offer. This is achieved through the regulation and advice provided to businesses. The plan also enables people to age well, live well and care well through enabling a safe food environment and to the promotion of preventing waste.

- 2.4 It links to the Council's 2050 ambitions for those living, working, and visiting the city. The activities that Regulatory Services undertakes contributes to the aims and outcomes of the 2050 themes for Pride and Joy, Safe and Well, Opportunity and Prosperity and Active and Involved.
- 2.5 The Service Plan shows how the team contributes to a Southend in which people can be proud of the services, supporting the safety and wellbeing of those who work, live, and visit the town. To support the economic development team by helping businesses grow though assisting and supporting these businesses so that they bring prosperity to the town. Corporate priorities and the 2050 objectives are reviewed at staff conversations and assists in integrating the service across the organisation.
- 2.6 Public Health (PH) are working on a Healthy Southend approach, which will encompass both food and the environment to deliver the changes that are required to diets. This integrated approach is to meet existing government targets of reducing high fat, salt, and sugar consumption and to support people to make healthier choices.

3.0 Background

3.1 Profile of the Area

- 3.2 Southend-on-Sea City Council is a unitary authority. It is a seaside town which is a tourist destination with local shopping areas covering 6,785 hectares and is the closest seaside resort to London. It is located within the Thames Gateway region, with visitor numbers in 2021 of 5,435,900, and may reach the pre-pandemic levels of 7.5 million. There are seasonal businesses within the city, and the Council actively promotes events to support business prosperity across the Council area.
- 3.3 The total population estimate for 2021 was 180,700. The Southend Skills Strategy Evidence review for Southend-on-Sea January 2023 showed the following:

Figure 2.8: Share of employment by industry, 2021

Industry	Employe Southend- on-Sea	% Employment			Difference	
		Southend -on-Sea	South Essex	England	South Essex	England
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	100	0.2%	0.3%	1.3%	-0.1	-1.1
Mining and quarrying	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0	-0.1
Manufacturing	4,000	6.1%	6.0%	7.3%	0.1	-1.2
Electricity, gas, steam supply	50	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0	-0.3
Water supply and sewerage	75	0.1%	0.7%	0.7%	-0.6	-0.6
Construction	3,000	4.5%	7.6%	4.9%	-3.1	-0.4
Wholesale and retail trade	10,000	15.2%	16.5%	14.4%	-1.3	0.8
Transportation and storage	1,750	2.7%	8.6%	5.2%	-5.9	-2.5
Accommodation and food	6,000	9.1%	6.7%	7.4%	2.4	1.7
Information and communication	1,500	2.3%	3.2%	4.5%	-0.9	-2.2
Financial and insurance activities	1,500	2.3%	2.5%	3.6%	-0.2	-1.3
Real estate activities	1,250	1.9%	1.6%	2.0%	0.3	-0.1
Professional, scientific, technical	6,000	9.1%	7.6%	9.3%	1.5	-0.2
Admin & support services	6,000	9.1%	9.5%	8.9%	-0.4	0.2
Public admin and defence	3,000	4.5%	4.1%	4.1%	0.4	0.4
Education	7,000	10.6%	9.2%	8.5%	1.4	2.1
Health and social work activities	11,000	16.7%	11.7%	13.1%	5.0	3.6
Arts, entertainment, recreation	2,250	3.4%	2.2%	2.3%	1.2	1.1
Other service activities	1,250	1.9%	1.9%	2.0%	0.0	-0.1

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, Office for National Statistics

- 3.4 The main share of employment relevant to food premises are those within the wholesale and retail trade (15.2%) and transportation and storage (2.7%) although these includes non-food activities and accommodation and food (9.1%).
- 3.5 It should be noted that the covid-19 pandemic caused Southend's economy to contract by 13% in 2020. The most affected industries were transportation and storage and consumer facing services (other services activities, accommodation and food service activities, and arts, entertainment and recreation).
- 3.6 There were job gains in some areas which have been offset by losses in other areas. It is reported that over the period 2015 to 2021, Southend-on-Sea experienced no overall jobs growth. Strong job gains in Accommodation and Food Service Activities (+1,000) and Administrative and Support Service Activities (+1,000) were offset by heavy job losses in Wholesale and Retail Trade (-1,000), which will include food businesses, Other Service Activities (-500), Public Administration (-500), and Construction (-500).
- 3.7 Organisational Structure**
- 3.8 The Council structure with respect to delivery of the feed and food services together with details of individual responsibilities is presented in Annex 1 of this plan.
- 3.9 Microbiological Examination and Public Analyst**
- 3.10 The Council sends food for microbiological examination to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Laboratory at Colindale via a collection service.

<p>UKHSA Food Water and Environmental Microbiology Lab 61 Colindale Avenue London NW9 5EQ 0208 327 6548 /6550 Fax: 020 8327 6542 fwem@phe.gov.uk</p>	<p>Consultant of Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), PHE East of England, Health Protection Team, Second Floor, Goodman House, Station Approach, Harlow CM20 2ET Tel : 0300 303 8537 Fax : 01223 724499 Email : EastofEnglandHPT@phe.gov.uk <u>uk</u> Secure email mailto:phe.eoehpt@nhs.net</p>	<p>Stool Samples</p> <p>Pathology First Helpdesk Tel 01268-968300</p> <p>Reports provide by David Marquez Information Manager at Pathology First david.marquez@pathologyfirst.co.uk <u>uk</u> non-secure emails to david.marquez@synlab.co.uk</p> <p>Specimen Reception Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 0RY Tel 01702-385564/ 385411</p>
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- 3.11 The appointed Public Analysts for feed and foods are located at:

<p>Feed Agricultural Analyst – Mr Jonathon David Griffin Kent Scientific Services 8 Abbey Wood Road Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4YT</p> <p>Tel: 03000 41 51 00 kss@kent.gov.uk</p>	<p>Food Public Analyst – Duncan Arthur Public Analyst Scientific Services Limited 154 Business Park Valiant Way Wolverhampton WV9 5GB</p> <p>Tel: +44 (0) 7734 383707 (Direct) +44 (0) 1902 627238 (General) duncanarthur@publicanalystservices.co.uk http://publicanalystservices.co.uk</p>
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3.12 Scope of Regulatory Services

3.13 Regulatory Services is part of Public Protection which sits within Neighbourhoods and Environment. The team aligns the delivery of its services to the corporate priorities and the Council's 2050 ambitions. This is achieved through supporting those living, working, and visiting the city to stay safe and well when using the services of businesses throughout the city. They also assist businesses to prosper by supporting compliant businesses and targeting resources to the less compliant businesses.

3.14 With respect to feed and food the responsibilities of Regulatory Services are to:

- Undertake proactive food safety and standards inspections.
- Undertake proactive feed inspections.
- Deal with imported food and feed matters.
- Investigate complaints about food and feed.
- Investigate complaints about food and feed premises.
- Investigate food poisoning and infectious disease referrals/complaints.
- Deal with health and safety and PH matters at food premises related to drainage, industrial noise, /and rubbish.
- Assess businesses against single use plastic use, including the use of straws contributing to preventing waste and protecting the natural environment.
- Trading standards issues.
- Animal health.
- Respond to emerging PH issues.
- Respond to reports of illegal shellfish harvesting.
- Provide consultation recommendations on planning, licensing, and event applications.
- Regulate businesses to ensure that those who are purchasing foods based on price alone are not adversely affected by poor quality foods.
- Advice to be given to those providing Community fridges and Food Banks.
- Participate with the delivery of the PH integrated approach for healthy Southend; and
- Provide business advice.

3.15 Demands on the Regulatory Services Team

3.16 The Service uses the Uniform database, which is an ICT supported application, linked to the property gazetteer. Table 1 below highlights the food premises profile as of 31st March 2023.

Table 1: Food Premises profile as of 31st March 2023.

FSA category	Number
A	1
B	44
C- broadly compliant	283
C- less than broadly compliant	37
D - broadly compliant	680
D - less than broadly compliant	23
E	467
Awaiting intervention	25
Outside the programme	85*
Total	1645

*Those outside the programme are to be re-evaluated to be in line with the new reporting guidance.

3.17 Table 2 highlights the inspections due in line with the Food Law Code of Practice:

Table 2: Food Hygiene Inspections Due:

FSA Category	No. of Premises	Frequency Required	Due 2023 – 2024e
A	1	Every 6 months	2
B	44	Every 12 months	44
C	320	Every 18 months	209
D	703	Every 24 months	441
E	467	Alternative enforcement or every three years	246
Awaiting Inspection, includes overdue*	25		25
Not in programme+	85		0
Total Inspections due as at 01/04/23			966

*Fluctuation in year as new premises register and are inspected which will affect the number of premises due for inspection in year compared to the start of the year. Last year there were 203 new food registrations throughout the year. The awaiting inspection figure have all been triaged through a risk-based assessment and have been allocated for inspection where needed.

+Includes premises undertaking very low risk activities e.g., selling pre-packed bars and providing teas and coffees, the requirement of which to continue to be registered will be assessed in line with current guidance.

- 3.18 With regards to business' included on the database, child-minders are not currently included as they are registered with the Council's Early Years team, and a risk-based approach is taken. The team disseminates information to Childminders and the Early Years Team work with Regulatory Services so that interventions are undertaken where required. This will be reviewed when the new Food Law Code of Practice is issued.
- 3.19 The awaiting inspection figure includes home-caterers, where the team have undertaken information gathering to identify low risk premises and prioritises high-risk interventions.
- 3.20 The Food Law Code of Practice (FLCoP) requires that Category A - B food hygiene, Category A food standards and non-compliant C premises be subject to an inspection, partial inspection, or audit at the required interval. Broadly compliant C risk food hygiene premises and broadly compliant B risk food standards can alternate between inspection, partial inspection audit and other Official Controls.
- 3.21 Category D risk premises can only alternate between an intervention which is an Official Control, and an intervention that is not an Official Control, if the potential hazard element at risk assessment is less than 30 and they are broadly compliant.
- 3.22 Premises rated E for food hygiene and C for food standards can be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy.

3.23 Table 3 below indicates the required number of food standard inspections in line with the Food Law Code of Practice.

Table 3 Food Standards Inspections Due:

FSA Category	No. of Premises	Frequency Required	Due 2023-24
A	0	Every 12 months	0
B	192	Every 24 months	118
C	1329	Alternative intervention or every 5 years	122
Awaiting Inspection* includes overdue	39		39
Not in programme+	85		0
Total Inspections due as at 01/04/23			279

*As for FH above there is fluctuation in year as new premises register and are inspected which will affect the number of premises due for inspection in year compared to the start of the year. Last year there were 203 new food registrations throughout the year.

+ Includes premises undertaking very low risk activities e.g., selling pre-packed bars and providing teas and coffees, the requirement of which to continue to be registered will be assessed in line with current guidance.

3.24 There are no high-risk food standards inspections due in year. Food standards inspections will be completed when a food hygiene inspection is due to bring the intervention programme in line with the Food Law Code of Practice.

3.25 Interventions outside the inspection programme for Food Hygiene and Food Standards are intelligence led. This includes responding to the public and feedback from businesses and officers. The status of their registration will be reassessed this year in line with the current FSA guidance.

3.26 There is data available on the ethnicity of those living in Southend, this does not however reflect the number of people whose first language is not English. There is no information held on business owners, whose first language is not English. There is a translation service available which is available to inspectors to assist where business have difficulties in communicating in English.

3.27 Table 4 below details the number of approved food premises within the city.

Table 4: Approved Food Premises:

Types	No. of each Type
Cockle and / or Whelk Processing	4
Meat Products	1
Fishery Products / Cold Stores	4

3.28 There are no registered feed importers in Southend. The food importers in Southend are mostly registered offices, operating as brokers, or small retailers importing a small range of low-risk foods. Southend has responsibilities as an inland authority as there are no border inspection posts in Southend, or inland transit sheds subject to customs controls.

- 3.29 The food and feed service will continue to support businesses to export product into the EU. Training and arrangements are in place to provide health certificates for businesses exporting to the EU. Fishing vessels have been inspected for compliance, and advice has been provided for businesses who were distributors and now have importer responsibilities.
- 3.30 There are still concerns regarding the harvesting of shellfish from the foreshore, therefore, the team have regulated the commercial harvesting of a number of legal pickers. The quantities being taken indicate commercial activity, and a risk with shellfish entering the food chain without the required controls in place.
- 3.31 Regulatory Services continues to respond to incidents of illegal shellfish harvesting, food fraud, with respect to counterfeit products, and to emerging PH issues.
- 3.32 Regulatory Services undertake sampling around the National Priorities identified in the FSA's Guidance on the food sampling programme. The programme also considers the sampling priorities for the Council and for the priorities identified through the Regional Strategic Assessment and the East of England Trading Standards Association (EETSA). There is no funding available for imported foods and no identified sampling programmes for feed this year. Where grants are available Regulatory Services will bid for relevant funding.

3.33 Seasonal Activities

3.34 Being a seaside location the service:

- Assists cockle and whelk producers during the harvesting season, which includes advisory visits and sampling and contributes to intelligence into the classification of production beds monitoring system.
- Monitors and disrupts the illegal harvesting of shellfish and supports legal harvesting.
- Supports the increased demand from higher visitor numbers from day trippers and those taking city breaks.
- Supports the City with reviewing and advising on food activities associated with events organised across the city. There were 110 events last year that would have required an evaluation of the food element.
- Provides of an export health certification process for local shellfish producers to enable local businesses to export into the EU.

3.35 Feed Premises Inspections:

- 3.36 There are national enforcement priorities for animal feed, with the inspections being co-ordinated through the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) and the FSA. This approach is to ensure that regionally animal feed enforcement is effective, and there are risk-based controls in place across the Region.
- 3.37 From 1 April 2019, delivery of the NTSB Feed inspection programme, including the role of the lead Feed Officer role is contracted out to Essex Trading Standards to deliver the current NTSB funded programme.
- 3.38 The Council had 21 businesses registered under the Feed (Hygiene and Enforcement) Regulations 2005, for feed inspections as of the 1 April 2023. These are retail premises, which distribute food on for feed purposes, and one manufacturer of animal feedstuffs and 1 feed storage premises. Table 5 below highlights the Feed Premises Profile for 2023/24.

Table 5: Feed Premises Profile as at 2023/24.

Category of Premises	No.
Pet Food Manufacturers R06	1
Supplier of Surplus Food R07	19
Feed Storage Premises R09	1

Total	21
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3.39 A Desktop Exercise for 2023-24 identified that there are two R07 feed inspections to be completed this year.

3.40 The feed service will support businesses to export production into the EU should they wish to do so.

3.41 Service Requests:

3.42 Regulatory Services will continue to respond to requests for service, including business advice, investigation and management of complaints, management of food incidents and hazards, including outbreaks of foodborne illness. The service will also prioritise requests from businesses to assist them with export requirements for food and feed.

3.43 Officers are located both in the main Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, and also undertake remote working. The service responds to inspections and incidents outside of normal hours, and the 24-hour contact centre receives emergency calls.

3.44 Demand on the service can vary according to both the season, and the weather, with high seasons or hot weather usually resulting in increased service requests.

3.45 Enforcement Policy

3.46 The Council's Environment and Regulatory Enforcement Policy was adopted by the Council in 2021. This policy was developed and consulted on meeting the requirements of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and the Regulator's Code.

4.0 Service Delivery

4.1 Interventions by Regulatory Services Officers for Food and Feeding stuffs.

4.2 Details of inspections due in each food category are in Tables 2 and Tables 3, and for feed in 3.39. Regulatory Services Officers will prioritise premises for food hygiene inspection in line with the Food Law Code of Practice and those assessed as being required for feed by NTSB.

For this Authority they are:

- Food hygiene inspections in line with risk and the frequency required by the Food Law Code of Practice.
- Visits to Approved food premises for conditional and full approval.
- Inspection of fishing vessels.
- All approved food premises that have been risk rated.
- All premises processing shellfish will be inspected annually at the start of the season, and other approved premises when due.
- Risk assessment of all new food business registering to determine intervention.
- Alternative intervention at low-risk premises.
- Feed interventions identified through the national enforcement priorities and co-ordinated by NTSB.

4.3 A food sampling programme Annex 2 will be delivered to supplement and inform the service. Delivery of the sampling programme will be reviewed in line with the priorities detailed above.

4.4 Regulatory Services Officers for food and feed are authorised in line with qualification and competency requirements detailed in the respective Codes of Practice. Co-ordination of food and feed is through the Lead Food and Feed Officers and the Regulatory Services Officer for Trading Standards.

4.5 Officers have access to expertise and peer support through attending local liaison group meetings, detailed in section 4.41, and suitably qualified and competent Enforcement Officers will support the service where the Code of Practice allows.

- 4.6 As detailed above, all high-risk food standards are prioritised for inspection each year. Due food standards inspections rated B and C will be inspected at the time the food hygiene inspection is due or overdue.
- 4.7 All new premises be inspected in year, however, where this is not possible those undertaking high risk activities will be prioritised over low-risk inspections.
- 4.8 With regards to home caterers, questionnaires continue to be used to determine the activities being undertaken, and subsequent inspections are prioritised where high risk activities are being undertaken. Many of this category of caterer register to enable them to benefit from the use the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), rather than a legal requirement to do so. Inspections at premises undertaking lower risk activities will be carried out where resource is available.
- 4.9 Enforcement Officers will assist for any alternative interventions and sampling.
- 4.10 To assist Southend fishery businesses the service provides export health certificates, specifically to assist our businesses and for other food export certificates. There are five officers who have the necessary accreditation training to deliver this service.
- 4.11. Regulatory Services supports the Safety Advisory Group process for events to ensure that compliant caterers operate at these events. Caterers at these events will normally be required to be rated 3, 4 and 5 under the FHRS.
- 4.12 Where mobile traders are inspected at events or markets, the outcomes will be reported to their registered local authority in line with the FLCoP. Similarly reports from other local authorities regarding mobile traders registered with Southend-on-Sea City Council will be used to inform SCC ratings and interventions.
- 4.13 Regulatory Services Officers for food safety, standards and health and safety, will determine whether additional pro-active inspections need to be carried out at events based on intelligence.
- 4.14 The Council will continue to participate in the FHRS to promote transparency and enable individuals to make informed choices about where they eat. The team will continue to use and develop the Uniform database to improve reporting capability.
- 4.15 Regulatory Services Group Food and Feed Complaints**
- 4.16 Details of the demand on the service for food complaints in 2022-23 is in Section 9.1. It is anticipated that the number of complaints received in 2023-24 will be similar to those received in previous years.
- 4.17 There are very few complaints regarding feed, and the action required will be assessed by the lead for animal feed.
- 4.18 All food complaints will be allocated to officers with appropriate feed and food competencies. Investigations of service requests/complaints will be based on intelligence and will be proportionate to the risk.
- 4.19 Primary Authority Partnership and Home Authority Scheme**
- 4.20 The Council does not have any formal arrangements in place for food hygiene, standards or feeding stuffs. The Regulatory and Environment Enforcement Policy requires all Officers to consider any partnerships and formal intervention strategies prior to taking enforcement action. As part of an informal Home Authority arrangement this authority will continue to undertake sampling for examination of the cockle processing establishments in liaison with the City of London Corporation Port Health Authority.
- 4.21 All Officers have access to the Primary Authority Scheme website and will adhere to inspection plans or priorities identified through this scheme.

4.22 **Advice to Business**

4.23 The level of demand from businesses last year is included in section 6.1 but does not take account of advice given during inspection. Advice to businesses will be available to businesses under both the FHRS and the Regulators' Code to assist businesses to grow, and for those within the FHRS to achieve a higher rating.

4.24 Ad-hoc advice will be given on request and where necessary businesses will be advised of specialist support that they can obtain for themselves. Businesses have identified that information were to be produced in bite-size. Specific tailored advice is delivered as part of the inspection programme and will be reviewing with businesses their requirements,

4.25 Regulatory Services continues to support the Economic Development team (EDT) and Culture and Tourism by providing advice at events. The team will continue to support businesses through bringing attention to grants that are available for business development and energy efficiency.

4.26 Details of what to expect during an inspection are included on the reverse of the inspection report, which is left on site following an inspection, together with the officer's contact details. Advice is given to businesses on how to improve their food hygiene rating is also given on any further correspondence and includes the officer's contact details.

4.27 **Feed and Food Sampling**

4.28 The food sampling policy prioritisation is detailed in Section 3.32 and the food sampling programme for this year attached as Annex 2. Regulatory Services will continue to participate in the Essex Food Group programme as well as take samples to support local work. It is planned that sampling will be undertaken in accordance with the sampling plan (Annex 2). Enforcement Officers support this work.

4.29 There is no funding available for sampling of animal feed, or funding available this year from the FSA to support imported foods, (which is a national priority). The team has usually been successful when bidding for additional funding, where it is available. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continues to provide a free allocation for microbiological sampling. Where resources allow, the team will participate in the East of England Trading Standards Association (EETSA) programme undertaking compositional food sampling and standards as well as taking samples in support of local work.

4.30 Samples for food examination, will be submitted to UKHSA Laboratory at Colindale; samples for food will be submitted to the Public Analyst Scientific Services Limited. The nominated Agricultural Analyst for feed is the same as Essex Trading Standards (ETS). This is to reduce the cost of transport of samples to the laboratory. The details for the returns of any sampling information will be provided to the Food Standards Agency, as required.

4.31 **Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**

4.32 The team responds to notifications of infectious disease associated with gastrointestinal infections from UKHSA and from the local pathology laboratory. The goal is to identify potential sources of infection and to stop further communicable transmission within the community.

4.33 There are procedures that detail the range of interventions that can be taken and the team have a range of responses such as guidance, exclusion criteria and microbiological clearance. Where necessary the team offer advice and regularly liaise with the Essex Health Protection Group involving Consultants in Communication Disease Control (CCDC), epidemiologists and other Environmental Health teams across the region.

4.34 SARS-COVID-2 continues to be a notifiable disease however Regulatory Services will only respond to specific requests from UKHSA where actions are required to be taken to protect public health.

4.35 **Incidents**

- 4.36 The team will review all food alerts and will respond where relevant or directed by the FSA or DEFRA. The demand for responses will usually be included within the resource allocated to the food service, but dependent on the demand may result in a reduction in the pro-active service.
- 4.37 Resource may be necessary to support the Council's emergency control plan. All additional resource requirements will be requested through the relevant Gold and Silver Command Groups.
- 4.38 Regulatory Services continues to respond to incidents of illegal harvesting of shellfish from the foreshore. These products are removed from the food chain where commercial harvesters have been unable to demonstrate that the shellfish will be subject to the correct controls. The team is currently working with the National Food Crime Unit (FSA) and other agencies.

4.39 **Liaison with Other Organisations**

- 4.40 The Council will continue to participate locally in liaison arrangements with:
- The Essex Food Liaison Group (including microbiological sampling).
 - East of England Trading Standards Association (EETSA) Food Group.
 - EETSA Feed Group.
 - Southeast Shellfish Liaison Group.
 - Food Hygiene Focus Group.
 - Essex Environmental Health Managers Group.
 - EETSA Heads of Service.
 - UKHSA.
 - NTSB.
 - Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.
 - City of London Port Health Authority.
 - Town Centre and Marine Units of Essex Police; and
 - Planning.
- 4.41 The Council will work with national bodies as appropriate, including the FSA, Chartered Trading Standards Institute, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Local Government Association and Justice and Care Organisation.
- 4.42 **Promotional Work and other non-official controls interventions for food and feed**
- 4.43 Participation will be as part of a larger exercise organised nationally or through Essex County and will be prioritised in line with corporate objectives.
- 4.44 The team continues to work with the Public Health Team and other colleagues to create and implement a plan for the food environment in Southend. It remains clear that substantial changes are required to diets over the next few decades to meet existing government targets of reducing high fat, salt, and sugar consumption.
- 4.45 An integrated approach to improving health is required in order to achieve better health outcomes and will incorporate tackling the current fast-food environment whilst providing support to people to make healthier choices. With this in mind, this plan also delivers to the Council's objectives on the healthy eating strategy, and the improved health outcomes for residents, visitors and those working in Southend.
- 4.46 The team is currently involved with the relaunch of the Southend Supports Breastfeeding campaign and is working on providing advice to event organisers in Southend on sustainability.

4.47 The Team provides intelligence to the Intelligence Database (IDB) and directly to the National Food Crime Unit and the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Agency.

4.48 Regulatory Services will also participate in:

- Health Promotion Events organised by SCC.
- Targeted events.
- Southend Action Days, targeted activity in specific areas
- Social media messaging through Facebook and twitter

4.49 The Council has continued to use social media through a Facebook page to inform business of emerging issues, including reinforcing the FHRS; publicising campaigns and informing members of where a business achieves a five under that scheme.

4.50 The team uses resources to support leisure events across the town, though participating on the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and inspecting at events previously identified as higher risk.

5.0 Resources

5.1 Financial Allocation

5.2 Table 6 below highlights the financial allocation associated with the plan.

Table 6 financial allocation

	£ Budget 2023-24
Travel and Subsistence	1,250
Equipment	0 (there would be budget available if required)
IT & Legal (included in management, administration, and technical services)	18,800
¹ Sampling Budget	0 (funding stream from grants where available and would be available if required)
*Staffing Costs	390,000
**Contracted food hygiene and standards inspections	11,800
Contracted animal feed inspections	525
Total	421,850 (Excluding animal feed)

⁽¹⁾Microbiological samples are included as part of our free allocation with UKHSA.)

*Includes calculations of on-costs as amended 2023-24

**Underspend on vacant posts to be used to complete food hygiene and standards activities.

5.3 Staffing Allocation

5.4 Table 7 highlights the staffing allocation over time, and Table 8 in section 5.8 highlights the staffing allocation necessary to deliver this plan.

Table 7 Staffing Allocation over Time

Staff	FTE 2020-21	FTE 2021-22	FTE 2022-23	FTE 2023-24
Management Food and Feed	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Regulatory Services Officers Food* vacancy factor used for Contracted inspections	1.8	2.0	2.2	3
Enforcement Officers Food	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.5
Contracted food inspections	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.6
Total Officers	3.7	5.1	4.6	4.6
Administration	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5
Regulatory Services Officers Feed	Contracted out service	Contracted out service	Contracted out service	Contracted out service
Total FTE	4.3	5.7	5.1	5.1

5.5 Staff Development Plan

5.6 Training will be identified as part of the annual conversations with staff members to meet the needs of the service to be delivered. Registered Environmental Health Practitioners are responsible for managing their own CPD training which funded by the Council.

5.7 Continued assessment of competencies in line with the Code of Practice is undertaken as part of the Council's appraisal system, Officers who support areas of food, feed, infectious disease, and legal processes will receive appropriate training which will be provided both in-house and externally as appropriate, and Officers working to complete their registration as food practitioners will be supported.

5.8 Table 8 shows the projected resource required to deliver programme.

Table 8 projected resource required to deliver programme.

Activity (does not include Business Support time)	FTE
Food Hygiene & Standards Inspections	1.94
Approved Premises	0.04
Revisits to check compliance / FHRS	0.6
Service Requests	0.33
Events applications	0.17
HA / Primary Authority	0.02
Advice to premises	0.08
Formal action	0.12
Co-ordination liaison	0.11
Promotional / Facebook / FHRS	0.12
Sampling activities	0.21
Food poisoning (does not consider outbreak)	0.11
Incidents (including illegal harvesting of shellfish)	0.5
Training for competency (Code of Practice requirement) & internal	0.3
Auditing	0.15
Management of activities (service and improvements)	0.48
Administration	0.5
Total Food (including dedicated administration)	5.78
All Feed Activities	0.1
Total FTE	5.88

5.9 There is a contract in place to undertake food inspections to assist with meeting the Food Law Code of Practice requirements, to ensure that high risk interventions are completed in

year. However, Table 7 and 8 demonstrate that there is a 0.68 FTE deficit between current resources and the number required to deliver the programme. This deficit is covered by utilising underspend in salaries across Regulatory Services to bring in additional contractors, to meet the inspection programme.

6.0 Quality Assessment

6.1 Quality Assessment and Internal Monitoring

6.2 A comprehensive audit of data entering by the business support and officers was undertaken this year. It identified key areas of control to be implemented, and new processes have been developed along with associated training. New reports are available to identify errors going forward.

6.3 The team participate in the consistency exercises that are organised by the FSA, and to improve consistency further share these results at the Essex Food Liaison Group.

6.4 There is performance monitoring in place which is reported monthly to the Director of Public Protection.

7.0 Review

7.1 Review against the Service Plan 2022-23

7.2 There is continued support for report writing and there are a range of performance reports available.

7.3. Table 9 shows the Inspections Under the Food Safety Recovery Plan 2022-23

Table 9 Inspections completed 2022-23.

FSA Category	Numbers Due	Achieved
A	8	100%
B	36	100%
C	205	98% (4 closed as seasonal)
D	5	100%
E	0	100 Due or Overdue Inspections
Unrated assessed for prioritisation	384	100% assessed. 198* completed 93% inspected

*The deviation from those due is because on inspection they either did not open or closed shortly after opening.

7.4 The service fully complied with the FSA recovery plan for food hygiene inspections, and undertook additional inspections, which were due in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice, but not required in year. The team also fully supported all premises which were exporting to the EU, and this included the additional responsibility of inspecting fishing vessels that registered to the Council.

7.5 The FSA recovery plan only required A rated risk food standards inspections to be completed. There were none due, the team did complete 50 B risk rated and 439 C risk rated food standards inspections.

7.6 The Assistant Regulatory Services Officer completed their training route and achieved full competency for food interventions.

7.7 To cover for the officer who was seconded to public health, additional inspections were contracted to assist with the priorities of the inspection programme.

7.8 Table 10 presents the Feed Premises Profile for the 2022-23 inspection programme, in line with the desk-top study.

Table 10 Feed Premises Profile Inspection Programme

Category	No. In category	Due 2022-23	Completed	% Achieved
R7	19	2	2	100
R6	1	1	1	100
R5 ¹	1	0	0	

7.9 To reduce the cost to the authority of the time element of the training and enforcement for feed, this part of the service has been contracted out to Essex Trading Standards.

8.0 Enforcement

8.1 Table 11 below highlights the enforcement undertaken in Food Premises.

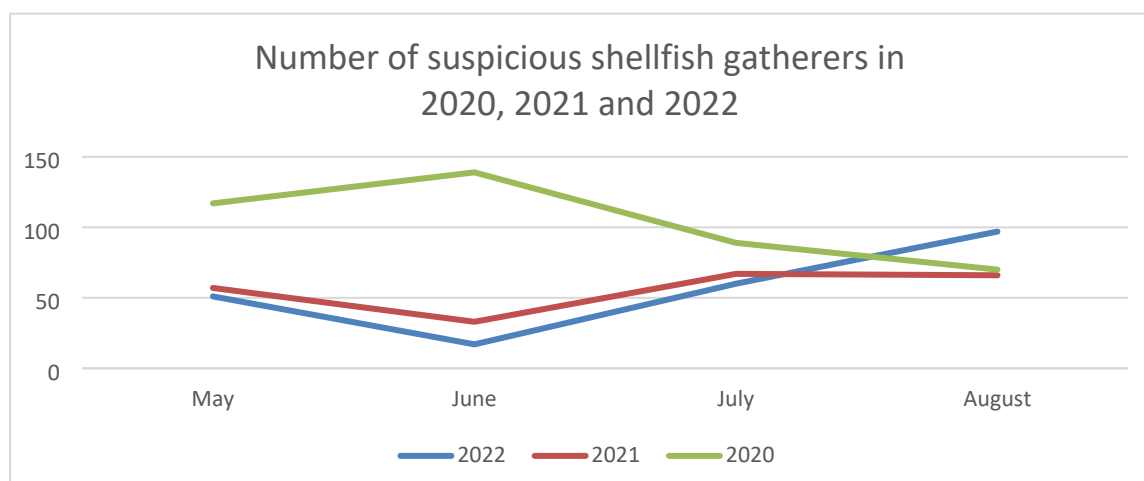
Table 11 Enforcement undertaken in Food Premises

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
<i>Prosecutions</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Simple Cautions</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Improvement Notices</i>	9	2	0	5
<i>Prohibitions & Voluntary Closures</i>	2	1	1	0
<i>Seizure and Detentions (including voluntary surrender)</i>	4	18	51	47
<i>Remedial Action and detention notices</i>	3	0	0	0
Total	18	21	52	52

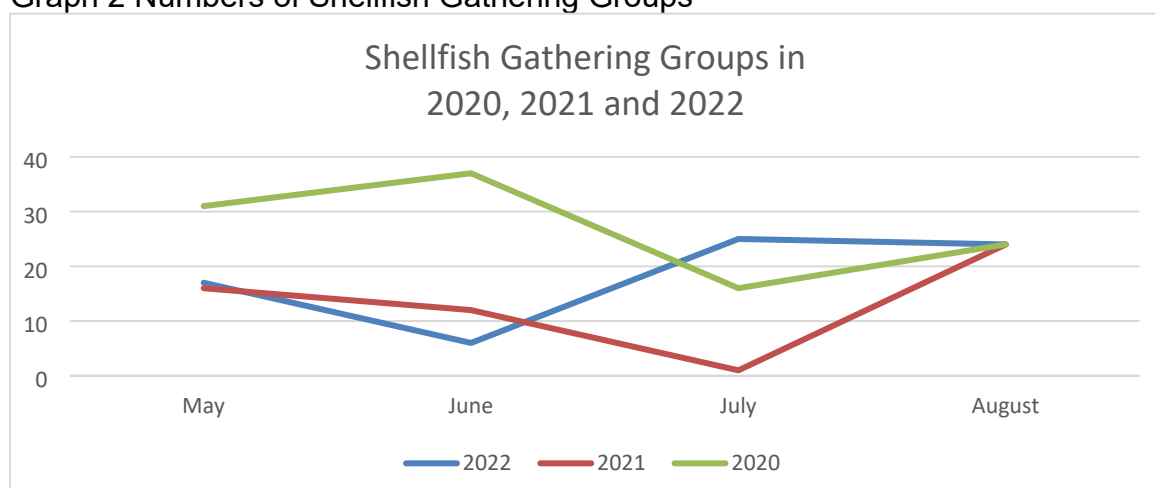
There has been an increase in the number of improvement notices served to remedy non-compliance. The reduction in seizures and detention is attributable to the effectiveness of the continued disruption to the illegal oyster harvesting.

8.2 Enforcement relating to Illegal shellfish harvesting.

Graph 1 Numbers of Shellfish Gatherers



Graph 2 Numbers of Shellfish Gathering Groups



- 8.3 Both the numbers of individuals and groups believed to be illegally harvesting shellfish has declined since 2020, with the shellfish gathering activities periods in Southend foreshore between May and August.
- 8.4 The high visibility overt surveillance approach in 2021 and 2022 saw a significant reduction of suspicious shellfish gathering activities along Southend foreshore from 2020 figures, and it is planned that this continued disruption approach continues.
- 8.5 The team continues to work collaboratively with partners, these include: the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, the town centre and marine units of Essex Police, and the charity Justice and Care.

9.0 Service Requests

- 9.1 Table 13 highlights the service requests for food safety and standards and infectious disease investigations over the last 4 years.

Table 13 Service Requests for Food Safety and Standards, and Infectious Disease Investigations and Covid interventions

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
<i>Food Safety and Standards</i>	158	423	596	535
<i>Infectious Disease</i>	187	196	137	266
<i>Covid interventions</i>	0	130	891	0
Total	345	749	1624	799

- 9.2 The number of service requests have reduced, this is attributable to the Food Standards Agency closing their referral service. This service had previously placed demand on the service for anonymous and complaints found to be unsubstantiated. As expected, there were no Covid interventions required, this will be removed from reporting next year.
- 9.3 Table 14 highlights the numbers of samples taken.

Table 14: Sampling

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
<i>Microbiological Samples Taken</i>	199	192	111	210
<i>Analytical Samples Taken</i>	12	30	25	42

9.4 The FSA funded an EU imported food sampling project which was completed. There were no samples required for feed analysis in 2022-23.

10.0 **Identification of any Variation from the Service Plan 2022-23**

10.1 The FSA recovery plan priorities were completed, and that plan focussed on the priorities identified by the FSA.

10.2 A sampling grant for sampling imported foods became available in-year, and a successful grant application was made. 12 samples were taken by officers in line with the FSA priorities. However, the plan to explore the use of alternative enforcements and the use of Uniform to reschedule the next intervention was not achieved and has been rescheduled to this year.

10.3 Additional resource was required by officers to correct inputting errors of administrators.

10.4 **Areas for Improvement**

10.5 The following areas of improvement have been identified:

- Continue to enhance and develop the functionality of the Uniform database.
- Continued improvement of remote working facilities to integrate paperwork for inspections.
- Improved reporting tools for performance management purposes.
- Standardising work where possible and process improvements.
- Continue to review and prioritise for inspection new premises where risk identified.
- Training of Officers to support work areas and identified competency requirements.
- Explore the use of the alternative enforcement visits and reschedule for the next intervention in line with the Food Law Code of Practice. A process will be developed and ensure the mapping in Uniform reflects this. This will coincide with the revised Food Law Code of Practice, when issued.
- Work with businesses to identify service and advice needs, including the production of a newsletter with bite-size updates.
- Improve process compliance of administration staff.

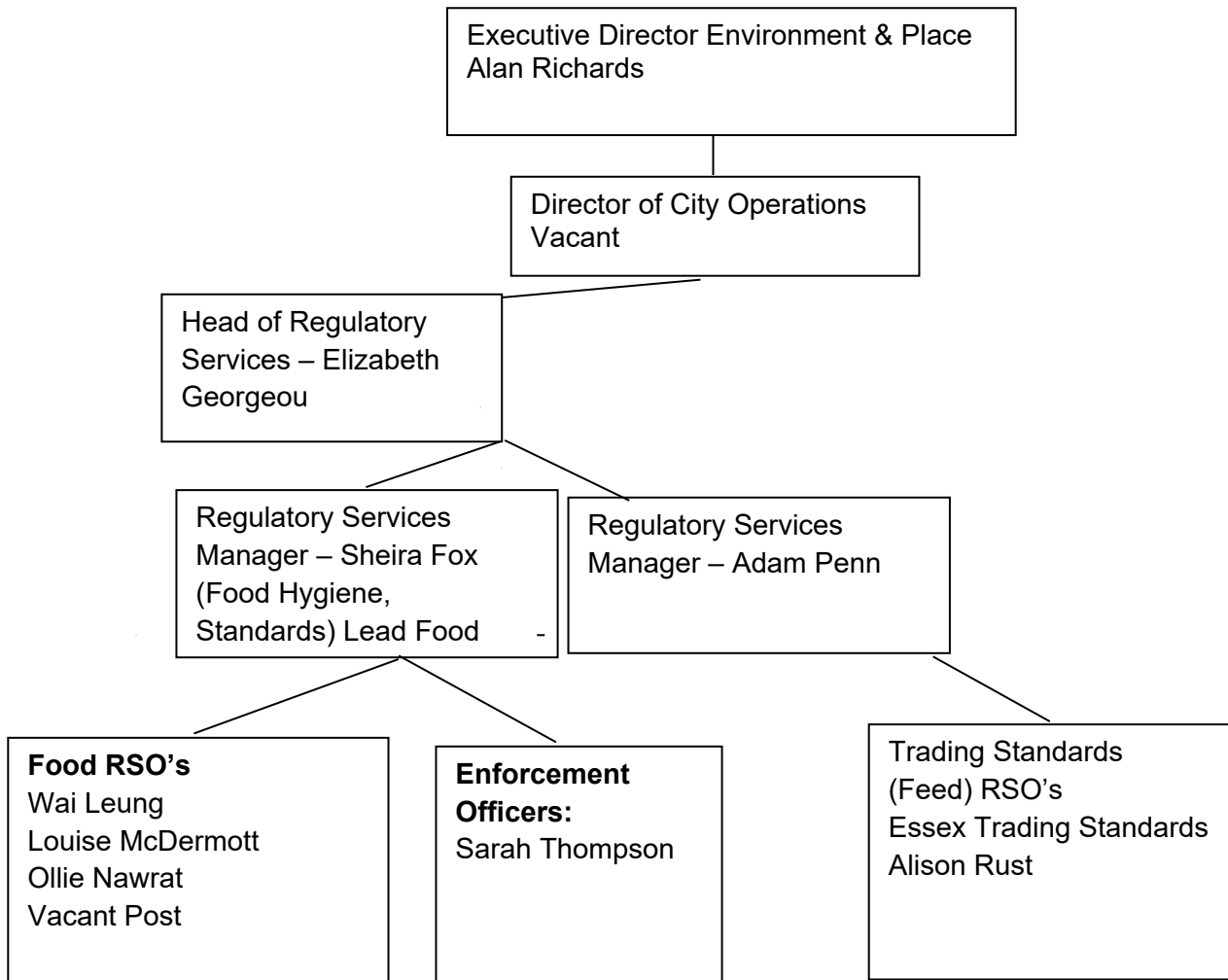
Annex 1

Leader and Cabinet Portfolio for Regulatory Services:

Leader Cllr Tony Cox

Public Protection: Cllr John Lamb

Food Service – Officers undertaking food work only:



**SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL
SAMPLING PROGRAMME; 1 April 2023– 31 March 2024**

Sampling is also undertaken on a monthly basis between June and October (depending on start and end of cockle season) from the cockle sheds.

Week	Date	Sampling Projects 2023-24
1	19/04/2023	In house Scooped and machine ice cream
2	03/05/2023	In house Scooped and machine ice cream
3	17/05/2023	National Vegetarian Week - In house Homemade coleslaw/ Study 77 RTE salad
4	31/05/2023	Study 77 RTE salad/ Study 78 Swabbing - kebab shops, Fast food takeaways
5	14/06/2023	Study 77 RTE salad/ Study 78 Swabbing - kebab shops, Fast food takeaways
6	28/06/2023	Study 77 RTE salad/ Study 78 Swabbing - kebab shops, Fast food takeaways
7	12/07/2023	In house Loose ready to eat seafoods
8	26/07/2023	In house Loose ready to eat seafoods
9	09/08/2023	In house Made to order sandwiches - chicken, eggs, sliced ham fillings
10	23/08/2023	In house Made to order sandwiches - chicken, eggs, sliced ham fillings
11	06/09/2023	In house Made to order sandwiches - chicken, eggs, sliced ham fillings
12	20/09/2023	In house Community Fridges/ Soup kitchen
13	04/10/2023	In house Community Fridges/ Soup kitchen
14	18/10/2023	In house Vegan food/Listeria Shopping Basket/ Budget branded Ready to eat foods (Supermarket chains)
15	01/11/2023	World Vegan Day/In house Listeria Shopping Basket/ Budget branded Ready to eat foods (Supermarket chains)
16	15/11/2023	In house Cakes from European shops
17	29/11/2023	International Cake Day - In house cakes from European shops
18	13/12/2023	In house Christmas theme foods - nuts, dried dates, chocolate coated products

19	27/12/2023	NO SAMPLING ACTIVITY
20	10/01/2024	In house Independent Grocers - biltong, pork cracklings, sandwiches, soft cheese etc
21	24/01/2024	In house Independent Grocers - biltong, pork cracklings, sandwiches, soft cheese etc