

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 29 July 2024
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: Yes
Title of Report: Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25

Executive Director: Alan Richards
Report Author: Elizabeth Georgeou
Executive Councillor: Cllr Ian Gilbert

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Food Standards Agency provides guidance on the priorities for the delivery of the official food controls and sets out what the local authority should include in the service plan. There is a requirement for the plan to be approved at an appropriate level. The plan details how this authority will prioritise its resources and provides an estimate of the resource required to deliver those priorities.
- 1.2 The FSA wrote to local authorities on 8 February 2024 highlighting the importance of ensuring that teams are appropriately resourced to deliver food and feed functions.
- 1.3 The Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25 has been drafted in accordance with the service planning guidance detailed in 1.1.
- 1.4 The plan has been developed in line with the Food Standards Agency priorities for both feed and food, ensuring risk-based controls are in place across the region. It seeks to meet the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice.
- 1.5 This plan details the national enforcement priorities for animal feed, with inspections being co-ordinated through the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA).
- 1.6 It reports the activities for the previous inspection year against the plan for 2023-24.
- 1.7^{OBJ} on 8 February 2024 highlighting the importance of ensuring that teams are appropriately resourced to deliver food and feed functions.
- 1.8 The authority participates in the Food Hygiene Rating scheme, and of those premises within that scheme 95% are rated as 3 and above, which means that

they are satisfactory, good or very good for food hygiene. There are less than 1% of premises rated as requiring further improvement.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the achievements against the previous Plan 2023-24.
- 2.2 Approve the Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25 'The Plan' (**Appendix 1**) and recommend its adoption by Full Council.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Food Standards Agency wrote to Local Authorities on 8 February 2024 highlighting the importance of ensuring teams are appropriately resourced to deliver statutory food and feed functions, details of which must be included in the Service Plan.
- 3.2 The Service Plan details how the local authority will achieve the required levels of food control (food safety, standards and feeding stuffs) throughout the city. Every local authority is required to develop an annual food service plan, which is the basis on which the local authorities are monitored and audited by the FSA.
- 3.3 The Service Plan recognises that resource may be required to assist Public Health in the event of future pandemic controls, which may be provided by Regulatory Services.
- 3.4 To ensure local transparency and accountability, it is a requirement that the Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan is submitted to an appropriate level of approval, which can be determined by the local authority.
- 3.5 The Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 requires Regulators to have regard to the Principles of Good Regulation. This means that activities should be carried out in a way that is proportionate, accountable, consistent and transparent. The Statutory Code of Practice for Regulators which will include the provisions contained in the Regulators Code April 2014 contains details of how this should be carried out. These provisions are contained in the Environment and Regulatory Enforcement Policy² which was updated in January 2024.
- 3.6 The Food Standards Agency directs the Authority on the priorities for inspection and interventions, which is based on risk. The details of the risk-based approach are detailed in the Food Law Code of Practice¹.
- 3.7 The Service Plan for 2024-2025 is attached as **Appendix 1** and forms an integral part of the organisation of the Regulatory Services within Regeneration, Housing and Regulatory Services.
- 3.8 In accordance with the requirements contained within the Framework Agreement, the food service is a mix of enforcement, intelligence-based work,

investigation, advice and education. Businesses are supported with advice, which assists them to comply with legislation. In response to business requests the team is providing targeted advice to assist businesses with compliance.

- 3.9 Progress through the Service Plan is monitored monthly. Resource will be directed to additional contracted inspections where required.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1 To comply with the letter from the Food Standards Agency dated 8 February 2024 regarding appropriate resourcing of official controls for feed and food. To comply with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement and in line with the Food Standards Agency audit findings. The audit findings were agreed by Cabinet on 18 June 2013.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 The Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement sets out the statutory duty for Southend-on-Sea City Council to develop a Service Plan. There is no alternative to statutory duties and the inspection frequencies are detailed in the Food Law Code of Practice. Deviation from these priorities may initiate an audit by the Food Standards Agency, and where non-compliance is found the authority may be required to agree an action plan to bring an inspection programme back into compliance.
- 5.2 The Council could reduce the non-statutory activities, such as routine sampling, support for events and the provision of business advice. This may reduce the Council's ability to understand and respond to emerging issues which support the prosperity of the town.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Service Plan for 2024-2025 identifies resources allocated to the service and the budget is within the Regulatory Services' overall budget. The plan recognises that resource may be diverted to assist with emerging issues and the Service Plan may be altered in response to that demand.
- 6.2 Where relevant grant funding is available the service will make an application. The authority has been invited to make bids for imported food sampling, and is awaiting the outcome of this bid.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The FSA places a requirement on local authorities to develop a Service Plan and provides guidance on what should be contained within the plan.
- 7.2 The authority has the flexibility to decide locally whether the plan is approved at Member, Member forum or suitably delegated senior officer level.
- 7.3 The plan is in the Council's policy framework and is required to be recommended by Cabinet for adoption at Full Council.

7.4 Local Authorities are audited and assessed by the FSA on the basis of their compliance with the framework agreement.

8. Policy Context

8.1 Supports a growing city with a strong prosperous community through the regulation and advice provided by businesses, assisting in the regeneration and business development, enhancing tourism, cultural and the leisure offer,

8.2 The plan also contributes to a safe city with a good quality of life for all regulating a safe food environment and to the promotion of preventing waste.

8.3 Identifies improvements in processes to drive efficiencies and cost-effective services through the procurement of food and feed inspections.

9. Carbon Impact

9.1 The plan adopts the principle of making every contact count. When completing interventions the team will continue to assess against compliance with the legislation on single use plastic use, including the use of straws. The purpose of this is to prevent waste and protect the natural environment.

9.2 The team also continues to reduce paper waste by providing information to businesses electronically.

9.3 The team has also reduced the production of paper by providing inspection reports electronically for businesses, and through giving out food hygiene rating stickers at the time of the inspection, rather than posting them to the business, where it is appropriate to do so.

10. Equalities

10.1 An equalities impact assessment has been completed. There were no areas identified to include in the action plan.

11. Consultation

11.1 There is no consultation undertaken on this plan as it is developed in line with the Food Standards Agency statutory requirements. The plan is publicly available following adoption and those visiting the pages are encouraged to give their feedback.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1: Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25.

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	5.6.2024
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	7.6.2024
Executive Director(s)	Alan Richards	6.6.2024
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Ian Gilbert	18.06.2024