

**Southend on Sea City Council
Department for Environment and Place
Regulatory Services**

Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25

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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 plan for 2023 to 2027 which sets out the four main priorities for the organisation.
- 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 year's Service Plan 2023-24 aimed to return to the priorities outlined in the Food Law Code of Practice. This year's Service Plan continues with the objective of complying with the Food Law Code of Practice, which is that local authorities inspect in line with the frequency of inspections detailed in that Code of Practice.

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 Policy².
- 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.

2.2 The Aim of the Service is to support the Council's Corporate Plan for 2023 – 2027.

- 2.3 The feed and food service plan align with the 2023-2027 corporate plan and is reviewed during staff conversations and assists in integrating the service across the organisation.
- 2.4 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 supports businesses which boosts our local economy and ensures that safe food is available to those who work, live, and visit the City.

- 2.5 The plan also aims to have a safe city and clean city with a good quality of life for all through enabling a safe food environment and to the promotion of preventing waste. The aim of the team is to transform the service by designing efficient systems and managing resources.
- 2.6 Public Health (PH) are working on delivering an 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 2022 of 6,972,300 which was an increase over the previous year of over 1,500,000. 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 information relating to the breakdown of employment within the food industry in Southend:

Figure 2.8: Share of employment by industry, 2021

Industry	Employment 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 Economic Growth Strategy 2024-28 provides a clear approach for boosting and sustaining a robust economy in Southend-on-Sea that fosters prosperity for businesses and our communities.

The strategy sets out our vision and objectives for delivering economic growth in Southend-on-Sea, which is to:

- Support established businesses in Southend-on-Sea to achieve sustainable economic growth.

- Promote Southend-on-Sea as the home of micro, small and medium sized enterprises.
- Support employees, business owners, jobseekers, and students in Southend-on-Sea to achieve their career ambitions.

The strategy centres on fostering growth for both businesses and residents, with the aim of advancing economic inclusion.

3.5 Actions in the strategy will be taken forward in a delivery plan which Regulatory Services will contribute to through the provision of advice to businesses to assist them to achieve regulatory compliance.

3.6 Organisational Structure

3.7 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.

3.8 Microbiological Examination and Public Analyst

3.9 The Council sends food for microbiological examination to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Laboratory at Colindale via a collection service.

<p>Food Water and Environmental Microbiology Lab 61 Colindale Avenue London NW9 5EQ 0208 327 6548 /6550 / 6551 Fax: 020 8327 6542 fwem@phe.gov.uk</p>	<p>Consultant of Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), East of England HPT</p> <p>UK Health Security Agency, First Floor Nexus, Harlow Innovation Park Maypole Boulevard Harlow CM17 9TX Tel : 0300 303 8537 Email : EastofEnglandHPT@ukhsa.gov.uk Secure email phe.eoehpt@nhs.net (via egress)</p>	<p>Stool Samples</p> <p>Pathology First Helpdesk Tel 01268-968300</p> <p>Pathology First Main Reception Tel: 01268 968227</p> <p>Patient contact information from main lab Tel: 01268 968285</p> <p>Reports provide by David Marquez Information Manager at Pathology First david.marquez@pathologyfirst.co.uk 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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3.10 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 154 Business Park Valiant Way Wolverhampton WV9 5GB Tel: +44 (0) 7734 383707 (Direct) +44 (0) 1902 627200 (General) duncanarthur@ftuki.eurofins.com PassInfo@ftuki.eurofins.com http://publicanalystservices.co.uk</p>
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3.11 Scope of Regulatory Services

3.12 Regulatory Services is part of Regeneration, Housing and Regulatory Services which sits within the Environment and Place Directorate. The team aligns the delivery of its services to the corporate plan. This is achieved through supporting businesses and regulating to ensure that those living, working, and visiting the city to stay safe and well when using the services of businesses throughout the city. Additional resources to businesses to prosper is through targeting resources to the less compliant businesses.

3.13 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 public health 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 public health integrated approach for healthy Southend; and
- Provide business advice.

3.14 Demands on Regulatory Services

3.15 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 2024.

Table 1: Food Premises profile as of 31st March 2024.

FSA Category	Food Hygiene	Food Standards
A	1	1
B	40	125
C	301	1385
D	681	N/A
E	497	N/A
Awaiting intervention	17	28
Outside the programme+	72	72
Total	1609	1611

The intervention ratings for food hygiene are A-E and for food standards A-C.

+Those outside the programme are being reviewed to be in line with the reporting guidance.

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

Table 2: Food Hygiene Inspections Due:

FSA Category	Frequency Required	Due 2024 – 2025e
A	Every 6 months	2
B	Every 12 months	40
C	Every 18 months	177
D	Every 24 months	303
E	Alternative enforcement or every three years	289
Awaiting Inspection, includes overdue*		17
Not in programme+	72	
Total Inspections due as at 01/04/24		828

*Fluctuation in year as new premises register and are inspected and premises close, this will affect the number of premises due for inspection in year when compared to the start of the year. Last year there were 250 new food registrations throughout the year. We continue to triage new inspections through a risk-based assessment and have been allocated for immediate 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 is currently being assessed in line with current guidance.

- 3.17 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 works with Regulatory Services so that interventions are undertaken where required. The majority of these child-minders are not preparing meals, these being supplied by parents / guardians.
- 3.18 The Food Law Code of Practice (FLCoP) requires that Category A - B food hygiene, Category A food standards and C premises be subject to an inspection, partial inspection, or audit at the required interval.
- 3.19 Category D risk premises can 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.
- 3.20 Premises rated E for food hygiene and C for food standards can be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy.

3.21 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	Frequency Required	Due 2024 – 25
A	Every 12 months	1
B	Every 24 months	62
C	Alternative intervention or every 5 years	185
Awaiting Inspection* includes overdue		28
Not in programme+	72	
Total Inspections due as at 01/04/24		276

*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 is being assessed in line with current guidance.

3.22 There is one high-risk food standards inspections due in year, which will be inspected. All other food standards inspections will be completed when a food hygiene inspection.

3.23 Interventions outside the inspection programme for food hygiene and food standards are intelligence led. The status of their registration is being reassessed this year in line with the current FSA guidance.

3.24 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.

3.25 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	2
Fishery Products / Cold Stores	3

3.26 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.

- 3.27 The food and feed service will continue to support businesses to export product into the EU, through ensuring that all inspections are completed enabling compliance with the manufacturing and storage requirements of EU legislation.
- 3.28 The approach that the team has taken with respect to illegal harvesting is to disrupt the activity and support the commercial harvesting of legal pickers.
- 3.29 Regulatory Services continues to respond to incidents of food fraud, with respect to counterfeit products, and to emerging public health issues.
- 3.30 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 some funding available for imported foods and no identified sampling programmes for feed this year. Where grants are available Regulatory Services will bid for funding.

3.31 Seasonal Activities

3.32 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 107 events last year that would have required an evaluation of the food hygiene element.
- Assist those businesses exporting to the EU with advice to ensure compliance with manufacturing and storage requirements.

3.33 Feed Premises Inspections:

3.34 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.

3.35 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.

3.36 The Council had 21 businesses registered under the Feed (Hygiene and Enforcement) Regulations 2005, for feed inspections as of the 1 April 2024. These are retail premises, which distribute food on for feed purposes, and one manufacturer of animal feedstuffs and one feed storage premises. Table 5 below highlights the Feed Premises Profile for 2024/25.

Table 5: Feed Premises Profile as at 2024/25.

Category of Premises	No.
Pet Food Manufacturers R06	1
Supplier of Surplus Food R07	19
Feed Storage Premises R09	1
Total	21

3.37 A Desktop Exercise for 2024-25 identified that there are 3 feed inspections to be completed this year.

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

3.39 Service Requests:

3.40 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.

3.41 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.

3.42 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.

3.43 Enforcement Policy

3.44 The Council's Environment and Regulatory Enforcement Policy^{v2} was updated in 2024. 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 3.37. 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.

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 in line with the inspected at the time the food hygiene inspection is due.

4.7 All new premises be inspected, 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. 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.
- 4.11 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 the rating displayed for these traders on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 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.
- 4.14 Regulatory Services Group Food and Feed Complaints**
- 4.15 Details of the demand on the service for food complaints in 2023-24 is in Section 9.1. It is anticipated that the number of complaints received in 2024-25 will be similar to those received in previous years.
- 4.16 There are very few complaints regarding feed, and the action required will be assessed by the lead for animal feed.
- 4.17 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.
- 4.18 Primary Authority Partnership and Home Authority Scheme**
- 4.19 The Council does not have any formal arrangements in place for food hygiene, standards or feeding stuffs. The Regulatory and Environment Enforcement Policyv2 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.
- 4.20 All Officers have access to the Primary Authority Scheme website and will adhere to inspection plans or priorities identified through this scheme.
- 4.21 Advice to Business**
- 4.22 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.
- 4.23 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 businesses can now sign up to receive an electronic newsletter which provides up to date information and invites businesses to identify topics that they would like to receive guidance on.
- 4.24 Regulatory Services continues to support the objectives of the Economic Development team (EDT) and Culture and Tourism team by providing advice at events and to businesses. The team will continue to support businesses through bringing attention to grants that are available for business development and energy efficiency.

- 4.25 Details of what to expect during an inspection are included on the reverse of the inspection report, which is either left on site or emailed to the business, 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.
- 4.26 The costs associated with the mailing of results has been reduced by providing the food hygiene rating stickers where appropriate for those rated as 5, 4 or 3 at the time of the inspection.
- 4.27 **Feed and Food Sampling**
- 4.28 The food sampling policy prioritisation is detailed in Section 3.30 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, but bids have been invited by the FSA to support imported foods, (which is a national priority). The team has bid for this funding and 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. Where there is no funding identified for feed or food sampling, where sampling is required, resources would be found.
- 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 **Incidents**
- 4.35 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.
- 4.36 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.
- 4.37 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.

4.38 Liaison with Other Organisations

4.39 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.

4.40 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 and Trade (BTS) Local Government Association and Justice and Care Organisation.

4.41 Promotional Work and other non-official controls interventions for food and feed

4.42 Participation will be as part of a larger exercise organised nationally or through Essex County Council and will be prioritised in line with corporate objectives.

4.43 An integrated approach to improving health is required to achieve better health outcomes and will incorporate tackling the current fast-food environment, whilst providing support to people to make healthier choices. 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 and will be adopting the Essex Tuck-in programme this year.

4.44 The public health team will be working with a local charity group on the introduction of Southend Supports Breastfeeding campaign, and Regulatory Services will be inputting into that campaign.

4.45 Information is provided to the Intelligence Database (IDB) and directly to the National Food Crime Unit and the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Agency.

4.46 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 X.

4.47 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.

4.48 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.

4.49 The team has responded to requests by businesses for bite-sized information to be provided which is provided via an electronic newsletter to those who have signed up for this service. Businesses are invited to identify any topics they would like covered.

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 2024-25
Travel and Subsistence	1,100
Equipment	0 (there would be budget available if required)
IT & Legal (included below)	£0 (no separate budget but IT and legal could form part of overheads and would therefore have additional budget supplied.
¹ Sampling Budget	£0 (funding stream from grants where available and would be available if required)
Staffing Costs (includes overheads)	£306,850
**Contracted food hygiene and standards inspections	£11,750
Contracted animal feed inspections	£5,000
Total	£324,700

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

**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

Staff	FTE 2024-25
Management Food and Feed	0.5
Regulatory Services Officers Food (*vacancy factor used for Contracted inspections)	3.2
Enforcement Officers Food	0.5
Contracted food inspections	0.6
Total Officers	4.8
Administration	0.5
Regulatory Services Officers Feed	Contracted out service
Total FTE	5.3

5.5 Staff Development Plan

5.6 Training is 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 is usually 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	2.4
Approved Premises	0.02
Revisits to check compliance / FHRS	0.05
Service Requests	0.37
Events applications	0.19
HA / Primary Authority	0.02
Advice to premises	0.09
Formal action	0.14
Co-ordination liaison	0.12
Promotional / Facebook / FHRS	0.13
Sampling activities	0.25
Food poisoning (does not consider outbreak)	0.13
Incidents (including illegal harvesting of shellfish)	0.4
Training for competency (Code of Practice requirement) & internal	0.3
Auditing	0.15
Management of activities (service and improvements)	0.5
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 Monthly reviews of the database are undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the information held. Those premises that have registered and have not opened are reviewed each month so that the initial inspection can be carried within 28 days of opening, as required by the Code of Practice.

6.3 The number of inspections is reviewed monthly so that resource can be diverted, and all inspection targets are met in line with the Code of Practice.

6.4 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.

7.0 Review

7.1 Review against the Service Plan 2023-24

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 Code of Practice for 2023-24

Table 9 Inspections completed 2023-24.

FSA Category	% Food Hygiene Inspections of those due Completed	% Food Standards Inspections of those due Completed
A	100	100
B	100	84
C*	98	59
D	86	N/A
E	0	N/A
Unrated assessed for prioritisation	94	91

7.4 The service focused on completing high risk inspection and unrated premises to comply with the FSA priorities for food hygiene inspections, The team continued to support 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 Some premises were not inspected because they were seasonal and did not open until after the end of the inspection year.

7.6 There were 250 new premises registered within the year all of which were triaged for inspection and prioritised for inspection.

7.7 In line with our service plan food standards inspections were completed at the time where a food hygiene inspection was due.

7.8 Table 10 presents the Feed Premises Profile for the 2023-24 inspection programme, in line with the desk-top study.

Table 10 Feed Premises Profile Inspection Programme

Category	No. In category	Due 2023-24	Completed	% Achieved
R7	19	2	2	100
R6	1	0	0	N/A
R5 ¹	0	0	0	N/A

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

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
<i>Prosecutions</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Simple Cautions</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Improvement Notices</i>	0	9	2	0
<i>Prohibitions & Voluntary Closures</i>	1	2	1	1
<i>Seizure and Detentions (including voluntary surrender)</i>	7	4	18	51
<i>Remedial Action and detention notices</i>	0	3	0	0

Total	8	18	21	52
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Within the Food Hygiene Rating scheme, of those premises within the scheme 95% are rated as 3 and above. There are less than 1% of premises rated as requiring further improvement.

8.2 Enforcement relating to Illegal shellfish harvesting.

- 8.3 Overt and high visibility surveillance was undertaken, and advice provided to shellfish foragers. The team continues to disrupt illegal shellfish gathering along the foreshore.
- 8.4 The practice of disruption continues to result in a reduction in the number of harvesters on the production beds on our foreshore. It is believed this is due to the due to high levels of enforcement undertaken by the team, including collegial input from other teams such as the resort officers and CCTV.
- 8.5 A Day-of-Action was organised on 13th August 2023 which was very successful with interagency collaboration between ourselves, Essex Police, CCTV and Community Safety.

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

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
<i>Food Safety and Standards</i>	171	158	423	596	535
<i>Infectious Disease</i>	215	187	196	137	266
Total	386	345	619	733	801

- 9.2 The number of service requests is similar to last year, and the overall reduction 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.
- 9.3 Table 14 highlights the numbers of samples taken.

Table 14: Sampling

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
<i>Microbiological Samples Taken</i>	207	199	192	111	210
<i>Analytical Samples Taken</i>	0	12	30	25	42

- 9.4 There was no FSA funded sampling for EU imported food undertaken, and no samples required for feed analysis in 2023-24.
- ## 10.0 Identification of any Variation from the Service Plan 2023-24
- 10.1 The team had a vacancy which it had not been able to fill, and this meant that not all the C and D inspections due were completed as indicated above.
- 10.2 There was also long-term absence of one of the officers and the implementation of the planned alternative inspection has been delayed.
- 10.3 In response feedback from businesses the team routinely sends out electronic newsletters with bite-size information to assist businesses to comply.

- 10.4 The team has put in a process for issuing food hygiene rating stickers at the time of inspection, where it is appropriate to do so. This has reduced the time taken for producing and sending letters.
- 10.5 The contractor process has been reviewed to eliminate delays in updating the food hygiene rating scheme.
- 10.6 The team has successfully recruited to the vacant post and continues to have the dedicated contractor to assist with inspections.
- 10.7 To assist work with public health we have mapped all our premises in City View which is an online resource to enable targeting of premises.

10.8 Areas for Improvement

- 10.9 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.
 - Change in function from Regulatory Services Officer to Compliance and Performance officer, to undertake the contract management role undertaken by Officers to enable additional front-line engagement.
 - To restart the alternative enforcement plan, exploring 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.
 - Continue to improve process compliance of administration functions.
 - Continue the mapping in City View to support the 'Tuck-in' public health priority for reducing obesity.

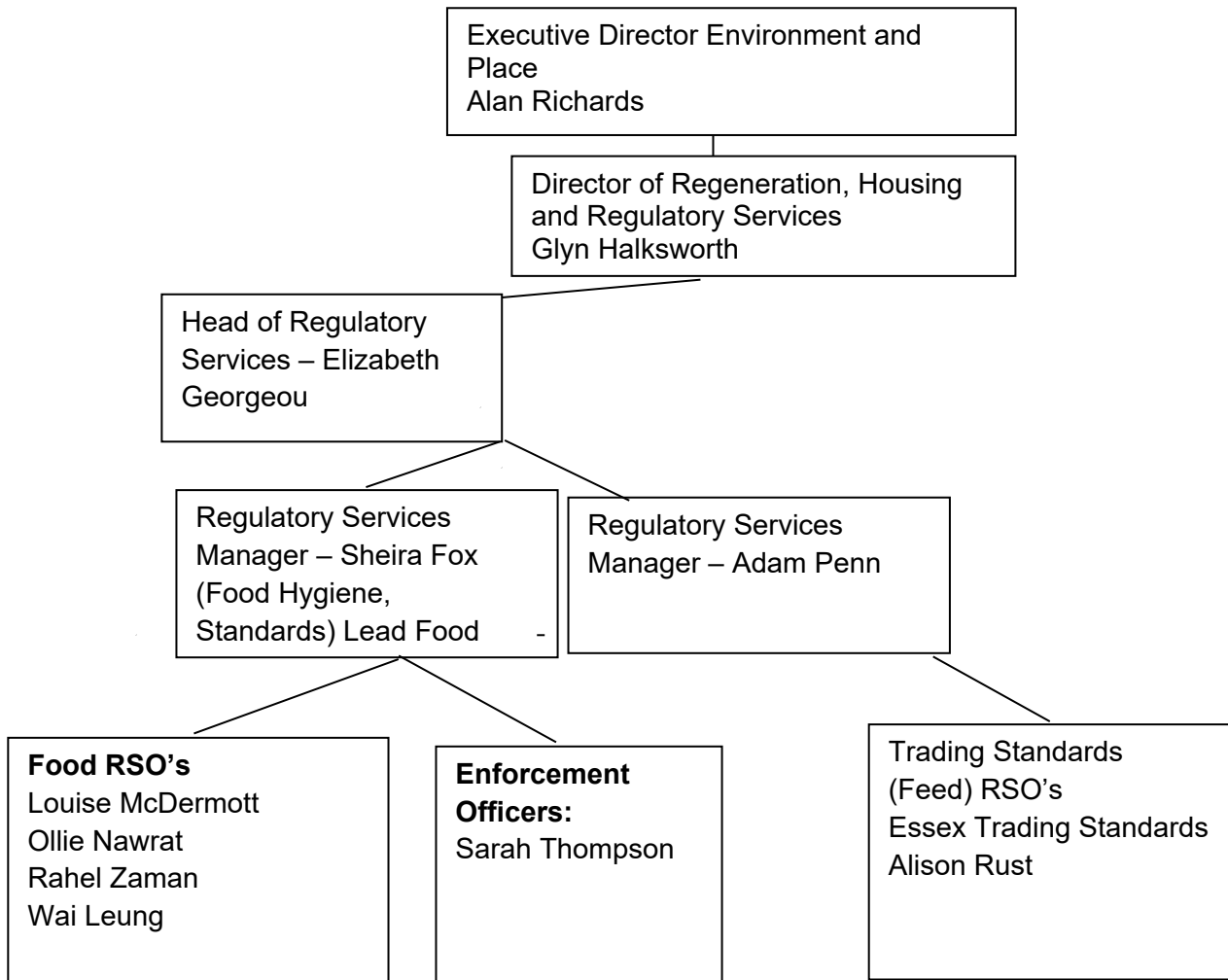
Annex 1

Leader and Cabinet Portfolio for Regulatory Services:

Leader Cllr Daniel Cowan

Regulatory Services Cllr Ian Gilbert

Food Service – Officers undertaking food work only:



**SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL
SAMPLING PROGRAMME; 1 April 2024– 31 March 2025**

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 2024-25	Cockle season (TBC)	Food Standards
1	17/04/24	In house Scooped and machine ice cream		Food supplement compliance check (all year)
2	01/05/24	In house Scooped and machine ice cream		
3	15/05/24	In house egg products - scotch eggs, egg sandwich, boiled egg, egg salad etc. (National Egg month)		
4	29/05/24	In house egg products - scotch eggs, egg sandwich, boiled egg, egg salad etc. (National Egg month)		
5	12/06/24	In house sushi (International Sushi Day)		
6	26/06/24	In house sushi (International Sushi Day)		
7	10/07/24	In house Loose ready to eat seafoods		
8	24/07/24	In house Loose ready to eat seafoods		
9	07/08/24	In house Listeria and environmental swabs including dishwasher		
10	21/08/24	In house Listeria and environmental swabs including dishwasher		
11	04/09/24	In house Listeria and environmental swabs including dishwasher		
12	18/09/24	National sampling project – TBC		
13	02/10/24	In house Vegan/ Vegetarian ready to eat foods including vegan ice cream (National vegetarian week)		
14	16/10/24	In house cakes - fresh cream, synthetic cream, chocolate coated (National Baking Week) including European shops		

15	30/10/24	In house cakes - fresh cream, synthetic cream, chocolate coated (National Baking Week) including European shops		
16	13/11/24	In house Chicken products (World chicken Day)		
17	27/11/24	In house hot held chicken, pies, gravy - including large supermarkets		
18	11/12/24	In house Christmas theme foods - nuts, dried dates, chocolate coated products		
19	25/12/24	NO SAMPLING ACTIVITY		
20	08/01/25	In house fermented/ preservation foods - Kimchi, fermented bean curd etc		
21	22/01/25	In house raw foods - biltongs, raw juice, raw nuts etc		
22	05/02/25	In house Independent Grocers - biltong, pork cracklings, sandwiches, soft cheese etc		
23	19/02/2025	In house Independent Grocers - biltong, pork cracklings, sandwiches, soft cheese etc		
24	05/03/2025	Emerging Risks - To be confirmed		
25	19/03/2025	Emerging Risks - To be confirmed		