



Regulatory Committee

Thursday 6th June 2024

Subject: Food and Health and Safety Work Plan 2024/2025

Report by:

Director - Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To provide Committee with the Food, Health and Safety Work Plan 2024/2025 for approval.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Committee are asked to:

- a) Approve the Food, Health and Safety Work Plan as detailed at Appendix 1.
- b) Approve that an update on progress against the plan is brought to Regulatory Committee at its December 2024 meeting.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The Council is required to produce and approve a work plan that is in line with both the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement, and the Statement of Commitment agreed nationally between Local Authority Representatives and the Health and Safety Executive.

The Food Act 1990 as amended by the Food Safety act 1990 provides the legal background for the provision of these services by the Council.

Financial: FIN/23/25/SSC

There are no financial implication arising from this report.

The table below summarises the Medium-Term Financial Plan budget for Food Safety approved by Committee in March 2024.

Ledger Code Food Safety	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	Base Budget	Base Budget	Base Budget	Base Budget	Base Budget	Base Budget
Employees	255,300	262,600	271,200	277,500	284,600	293,500
Supplies & Services	12,000	12,100	10,000	10,500	11,100	11,100
Support Services	67,600	68,100	70,300	70,900	72,000	72,000
Transport	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
Income & Fees	(7,300.00)	(7,400.00)	(7,400.00)	(7,400.00)	(7,400.00)	(7,400.00)
Grand Total	327,800	335,600	344,300	351,700	360,500	369,400

Staffing :

The report identifies the staffing resource available to the service and how they are deployed in order to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities.

The report also outlines the resourcing challenges that may arise as a result of the number of routine food hygiene inspections required.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

There are no implications noted.

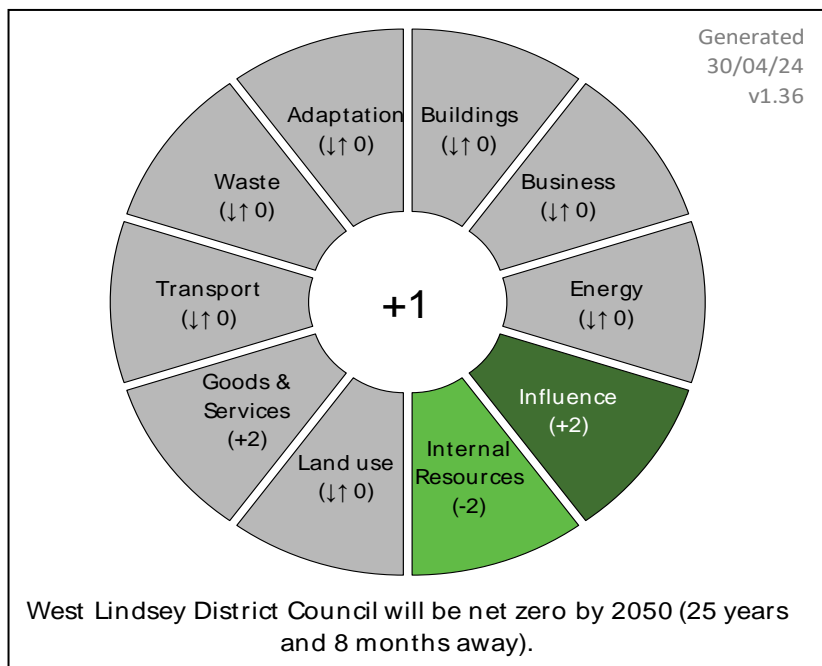
Data Protection Implications :

There are no implications noted.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

In relation to the climate, this work plan seeks to deliver a number of the Council's statutory obligations focussed on food and health and safety. Within this there are opportunities to positively impact climate related risks through advice and engagement that can be provided to food businesses. Officers will also provide advice and guidance in regard to minimising food waste.

This mainly relates to advice and guidance in regard to waste and the appropriate practices for its disposal and storage.



Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :

There are no direct implications within this report. In line with the Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy this work area seeks to ensure that other agencies are engaged where necessary to address specific concerns.

Health Implications:

The delivery of an effective Food and Health and Safety Work Plan has a clear and direct impact on the health of the Districts residents. The plan seeks to ensure that Food Hygiene Standards are maintained in line with legislation and that Health and Safety incidents are investigated accordingly.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

None noted.

Risk Assessment :

Maintaining Food Hygiene Inspection Requirements – the ability to deliver statutory obligations will continue to be impacted by Covid-19 and the Council will continue to work to the FSA guidance in relation to this.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Introduction

1.1. The Council is required to produce and approve a work plan that is in line with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement and the Statement of Commitment agreed nationally between Local Authority Representatives and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This plan covers all work undertaken within the Housing and Environmental Enforcement work area relating to Food and Health and Safety.

1.2. The purpose of the work plan (shown in appendix 1) is to set out how the Council delivers its official controls and fulfils its duties under food, health and safety, public health and drinking water legislation.

2. Context

2.1. There are currently 978 food businesses registered within the district, an increase from 937 in 2023. Since 2010/11 the average number of registered food businesses annually has been 955.

2.2. This slight increase sees the overall number of food businesses return to pre-covid 19 levels, whereby it had increased to over 1,000 mainly due to the increase of “home based” businesses and takeaway style food during this period. It is generally seen as a positive sign that the numbers have returned to these levels and have not reduced further given the current economic challenges that businesses and customers are facing.

3. Service Demand in 23/24

3.1. The table below shows the demand placed on the service over the last 4 years.

Service Provision	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total Routine Planned Food Hygiene Inspections (A to D, & Unrated)	291	198*	447	228
Completed Food Hygiene Inspections	18 n/a Covid 19	172 (87%)	418 (91%)	229 (100%)
Food Inspection Visits (inc. abortive)	39	210	542	355
Food Inspection Revisits (additional)	4	26	131	50
Request for Revisit (FHRS)	0	2	17	3
Health & Safety Intervention Visits	n/a	n/a	32	5
Health & Safety Targeted Interventions	n/a	n/a	20	0
Food / H&S Complaints and Service Requests (NB: note 2020/21 figure includes Covid related complaints and service requests)	875	395	247	247
Service Requests Requiring a Premises Visit (additional)	5	28	39	51
Service Provision	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24

Accident Investigations	12	2	1	0
RIDDOR Reports (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations)	50	64	50	51
Infectious Disease Reports	23	50	47	29
Sampling Undertaken	4	0	24	1

3.2. The figure of 228 total routine planned food hygiene inspections (A to D) reflected the number of inspections required from the FSA within the 23/24 period. The higher volume delivered in 2022/23 reflects the increased inspections that were required in order to return to the normal food hygiene inspection regime following on from the Covid-19 pandemic, which generated a significant backlog.

3.3. There is a level of uncaptured demand that relates to general advice and queries that arise as part of the day-to-day work relating to food and health and safety. The total number of visits in 23/24 was 355. The offering of advice provides additional value and support to businesses in the district and help to ensure that strong relationships are in place and maintained.

4. Approach to Food Hygiene Inspections in 24/25

4.1. The Food Law Code of Practice (March 2021) provides opportunity for a range of interventions in relation to food premises. The approach that the Council takes regarding these interventions is linked to its Corporate Enforcement Policy, which officers have regard for when making any decision. The planned programme of intervention is shown in the table below:

Category	Inspection Frequency	No. of Premises
A	6 months	1
B	12 months	24
C	18 months	89
D	24 months	214
E	36 months	74
UNRATED		48

4.2. The above table represents the scheduled normal routine inspection program for the 24/25 financial year of 450. Of these, 376 require a physical food hygiene inspection, and 74 category E are inspected via an Alternative Enforcement Strategy. The alternative enforcement strategy is a paper based exercise for premises that do not require a physical inspection due to their E rating.

4.3. Food hygiene inspections undertaken, which do not form part of the routine inspection program, are estimated to increase this number by 20 to 30% to these figures.

Non-routine inspections include: -

- Paid for food hygiene inspections undertaken as part of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Food hygiene inspections undertaken as part of a complaint investigation.
- New food businesses opening after 1st April 2024.
- Changes to the risk rating, resulting in more frequent inspection.

4.4. Therefore, the true food inspection program, comprising of both the routine planned and unplanned inspection program's is estimated at between 451 and 489 food hygiene inspections required in the current financial year 24/25 which would be between a 27% to 38% increase on 23/24

4.5. With the existing staffing resources in place, which when compared to 22/23 where an additional 1 FTE was in place, the number of scheduled inspections of 450 is a significant increase.

5. Resources

5.1. There are currently 5 officers authorised to undertake food and/or health & safety related work within the Council. Four directly employed by the Council and 1 on a temporary agency contract. This equates to 3.2 FTE to deliver the food and health & safety service plan. This translates to:

- 1 FTE Senior Environmental Health Practitioner
- 2 FTE Food and Health and Safety operational inspecting officers
- 0.2 FTE fixed term contract food and health & safety inspection officers (until July 2024)

A further 0.3 FTE, towards delivery of the food and health & safety function, is provided by administrative support.

5.2. The 0.2 FTE fixed term contract is an inspecting officer who picks up a small number of out of hours or hard to reach inspections on behalf of the Council and they are currently scheduled to remain with the Council until the end of July 2024. This arrangement could continue beyond July depending on the remaining available budget.

5.3. The service has successfully recruited to an Environmental Health Officer post within the last year, which was made vacant due to an existing staff member leaving the organisation.

5.4. There is sufficient resource within the Support Officer roles across the broader work area to assist with the administrative functions relating to food and health and safety.

6. Service Risks

6.1. As we have moved into the 24/25 inspecting year, there are a number of risks within the service, which are expected to have an impact on its delivery moving forward. These risks are outlined below:

- Increased likelihood that the inspection target of 90% may not be achieved within the current resources available.
- Additional demand on Senior EHOs reducing availability to complete inspections.
- Inability to complete proactive health and safety inspections.

7. Proposed Way Forward

7.1. It is believed that moving forward that additional resources will be needed to ensure that the Council's food hygiene requirements can be met. The volume of inspections required is unlikely to be achieved with existing resources available.

7.2. The service review work, completed in early 2024 is likely to bring about some efficiencies in relation to the systems and processing within the work area but is not expected to yield efficiencies that will immediately increase the resources available for food hygiene inspections and related work. The recommendations made within the review are as follows:

- Review effectiveness of Sugar CRM (functionality, development resource and timescale) as replacement system to deliver new ways of working requirements for FH&S processes.
- Review of Support Office function to support a proposed new way of working.
- Explore cost / benefit case for transferring manual print and post tasks (e.g., inspection follow up letter, infectious disease questionnaire) to virtual mail room.
- Short term review of 'planned inspections due' system report (Flare) to identify and undertake interim improvements.
- Short term review of inspection follow up letter template (MS Word via Flare) to identify and undertake interim improvements.

7.3. The service review recommendations are very much system and process based and are all in the process of being delivered, in line with the transfer of the currently used system to the new CRM. When this transfer occurs it is likely to have an impact on the teams ability to deliver inspections and this will need to be considered at that point in time within the project planning process.

7.4. A contingency budget to address this issue was identified as part of the ongoing service pressures for 24/25 and as the volume for inspections is increasing and a further report will be brought to the Council's Management Team to consider the utilisation of this.

7.5. This report commits to provide a mid-year update to Regulatory Committee, at which point a better understanding of the risks will be known. By September, a real sense of scale in terms of inspections will be in place and if required a plan to meet any shortfall can be implemented.

END