

Executive – 6 December 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2007-2008

Report of Head of Environmental Health

Statutory Powers: Food Standards Act 1999 Section 12

Financial Implications:

There are no significant financial implications associated with this Report, but the Report does set out key delivery issues and provides a link to financial planning for this Council's statutory food safety service.

Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to seek Members' approval of the Council's Food Safety Service Plan 2007/2008. It is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency that such Plans receive approval so as to ensure local transparency and accountability.

The Plan links to council priorities CP2 'creating the conditions for the growth and maintenance of quality economic activities' and CP5 'improving core services performance in a cost-effective way'.

Recommendations

That the Executive RESOLVES the Food Safety Service Plan 2007-2008 forming the Appendix to this report be adopted.

Background

1. Food Safety Service Plan outlines the Council's food safety enforcement function and seeks to ensure that national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally along with those needs identified with the Council. It examines key delivery issues and sets objectives for the future.
2. The Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement sets out key requirements that local authorities must adopt for delivering their Food Safety Service. The service plan that forms the Appendix to this Report follows the requirements and structure set out in the Agreement guidance.
3. The Food Standards Agency was created by virtue of the Food Standards Act 1999. The Agency is an independent Government department set up to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food and has amongst other matters, the function of monitoring the performance of local authorities in enforcing relevant legislation. This also includes the setting of standards.

4. The Council's Food Safety Service Plan examines all areas of this particular area of work and compares current and past performance, our ambitions for the future and resources available. It also indicates various changes currently subject to consultation with the Food Standards Agency that are scheduled for implementation in April 2008. The Service Plan is a public document and will be made available on the Council's website.

Summary of Key Points to Service Plan

5. The Plan reflects the demands and pressures on the Food Safety Service and acknowledges the requirements on local businesses and adopts a customer focus on service delivery so as to enable food safety laws to be complied with and, at the same time, protecting the consumer.
6. It embraces the concept of partnership working both with other local authorities in Devon and other agencies and the importance of this in providing an effective service. The document gives an example of successful partnership working with the delivery of the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business initiative with Teignbridge District Council.
7. The special nature of many diverse local food producers is acknowledged and the role they play in our local economy including fish, shellfish and dairy product manufacturers. It also shows the need for officers to have specialist knowledge in these discrete areas of work.
8. The Plan provides details of the depth and breadth of service and links to local and national initiatives, priorities and service standards. This includes our risk rated inspection programme for the year and the food premises profile showing performance against previous inspection targets and indicators and demands in associated areas of food safety work.
9. The importance of maintaining a professional, competent and focussed inspectorate is raised so that officers can continue to have the tools to maintain current high standards and be fit for the future. The training of officers, their appraisal and quality monitoring processes is included in the Plan.
10. Areas for further development and improvement are shown and, in particular, the proposed changes by the Food Standards Agency in 2008 to food law enforcement which includes the implementation of the 'scores on the doors' initiative and alternative enforcement strategies for lower risk premises. The need to embrace the greater national and local health and agendas is also identified as are performance management initiatives so that we can continue to operate a cost effective and efficient service.

Risk Assessment

Opportunity	Issues/Obstacles	Benefits
The Food Safety Service Plan, when published, will allow a clear and greater opportunity to demonstrate to our stakeholders, the breadth and depth of service and show that we are fit for purpose.	The Council has a statutory requirement to enforce food safety legislation and satisfy standards set by Government. By not carrying out this function in the prescribed manner, the Council would be in breach of its duties.	The Service Plan makes it clear to all stakeholders how the Council intends to discharge its statutory responsibilities and meet targets in key areas. In addition, it allows us to ensure that there is no possible discrimination in the provision of this Service.
The Plan will show that the Food Safety Service is able to meet corporate priorities in a joined up manner.	The Council does not currently have a clear and transparent policy about how its food safety function links to Council priorities.	The Food Safety Service Plan links Council priorities and national initiatives to its statutory responsibilities and demonstrates continuity in service delivery.

Conclusion

11. The adoption of the Food Safety Service Plan will demonstrate local transparency and accountability and enables the Council to promote this significant aspect of the Environmental Health Service.

Peter Wearden
Divisional Environmental Health Officer

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6 December 2007

Ian Bollans
Head of Environmental Health

Background Documents:

The Food Standards Agency Act 1999
The Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement