

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 11 JULY 2023
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD)

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2023/24

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 It is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency that each local authority prepares, documents and implements a food safety service plan which is approved by members.
- 1.2 This report sets out (in Appendix A) the food safety service plan for 2023/24 and the food sampling plan in Appendix B.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the service plan in Appendix A and the proposed food sampling plan in Appendix B.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has overall responsibility for the official control of food law enforcement in England. This involves co-ordinating, monitoring, setting standards and auditing local authority food law enforcement activities. This includes a requirement that all local authorities produce a food safety service plan which has been agreed by their members. The plan for 2023/24 is shown in Appendix A and the food sampling plan is in Appendix B. The plan has been written having regard to the format prescribed by the FSA.
- 3.2 It should be noted that all local authorities were instructed to make changes to their food service delivery during the pandemic which resulted in a backlog of interventions, these have all been completed in 2022/23. The service is now in a strong position to complete the due interventions for the forthcoming year, along with further improvements to the standards of business compliance.

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 Mandatory guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency requires Welwyn Hatfield Council to have adopted a food safety service plan which meets the format prescribed by the Food Standards Agency.
- 4.2 In carrying out this work officers may carry out enforcement of the legal provisions in order to ensure the public are not put at risk and there is compliance with the law. This can range from provision of advice through to formal enforcement notices and prosecutions.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 None directly arising from this report. There is a budget in place for this work, however it is not possible to predict what enforcement actions may be required during the year, and specific enforcement cases may incur additional costs (for example in respect of legal fees).

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The main risks related to this the plan are:
- 6.2 The Council is at risk from public criticism from the Food Standards Agency if it cannot show it has produced and obtained Member approval of a food safety service plan which is written in accordance with the Food Standards Agency guidance.
- 6.3 The public are at risk if the council does not provide an effective and adequately resourced food hygiene function.
- 6.4 As with any enforcement activity there is a risk of incurring costs, some of which may not be fully recovered.
- 6.5 Our work with local business, especially small and medium sized enterprises helps the local economy and business growth, thereby mitigating associated risks.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 Food security is a recognised risk¹ and environmental health work and the council's role as a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act can assist with the mitigation of this risk.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report however at periods of high demand appropriate contractors may be procured to assist with food hygiene inspections.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 None directly arising from this report, although there are links between climate change, food hygiene, food security, and availability.

10 Human Resources

None directly from this report. Existing resource is in place to deliver the contents of this service plan. External contract inspectors may be sought where there is existing budget and only when absolutely necessary.

11 Health & Wellbeing Implications

- 11.1 The work of the Food Safety Team contributes significantly towards the health of the borough's residents and visitors. The Food team inspect businesses to ensure that food is prepared safely through a managed programme of risk rated

¹ See for example <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pas96-2014-food-drink-protection-guide.pdf> accessed 10/03/2016

inspections and investigation of complaints that may arise. This protects public health through prevention of food poisoning incidents and outbreaks.

- 11.2 As a competent authority our role is to educate, advise and utilise the full range of official controls available to ensure that food made available for sale within the borough is safe to eat. Food safety is essential for good health of the consumer. We also support businesses to comply and thrive as the food and drink sector provides significant employment in the UK. Employment is key to improved health outcomes within the local community.

12 Communication and Engagement Implications

- 12.1 The Food Safety Plan will be published on the Council's website for access by the public and businesses.

Where food alerts involve food manufactured, imported or sold within the borough the team will work to ensure food safety messages are communicated to those affected. Proactive food safety messaging is communicated to residents and businesses to support the Food Standard Agency communication plans.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's corporate priorities of a commitment towards, *Evolving, vibrant town centres and a growing economy; A sense of community where people feel safe; and A well run council which puts its customers first* and is linked to statutory provisions under food safety and hygiene legislation.

14 Equality and Diversity

- 14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Food Safety Service Plan 2023/24

Appendix B – Sampling Programme 2023/24