

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel –

17 September 2025

Food Safety Performance Report 2025 – 2026

Purpose	For Housing and Communities Panel to consider the report on the performance of the Food and Safety Team for the past 2024-25 year and work plan to deliver food controls for 2025-26.
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires Local Authorities to produce a plan on how it, as a Competent Authority, intends to deliver and resource official food controls.</p> <p>This report sets out the mandate for local authorities to undertake food controls, details the performance of the food and safety team in undertaking these duties in the previous 2024 - 2025 year, and sets out the work plan for 2025 – 2026 year.</p>
Recommendations	That the Housing and Communities Panel notes the performance of the Food and Safety Team in delivering Food Controls over the past year and supports the work plan for the forthcoming year.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	It is a statutory duty for local authorities to undertake food controls in food businesses in their area. It is important for EMT to have confidence that these statutory obligations are being fulfilled, whilst understanding the challenges to delivery.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Dan Poole
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Strategic Director of Housing & Communities
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Introduction

1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Law Code of Practice for England dated June 2023 requires Local Authorities to produce a plan on how it, as a Competent Authority, intends to deliver and resource official food controls and how it will work towards addressing variances where the outcomes in the plan may not be met.
2. The Code of Practice also requires the performance of the authority to be reviewed at least once a year and for it to be documented.
3. This report meets these FSA requirements by providing the Executive Management Team, and Members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel with a summary of the Food and Safety Team's performance during 2024-25 and identifying how food law controls will be delivered in 2025-26.
4. The work plan takes a risk-based approach to food interventions, which ensures that resources are targeted where they will have greatest impact in protecting and improving the health of residents and visitors to the New Forest.

Background

5. The Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice sets out a framework and guidance that Local Authorities must follow when enforcing food law.
6. It requires the Council as a Competent Authority to set up, implement, maintain and carry out food controls in accordance with documented plans, policies and procedures. These documents ensure that the Authority appoints competent, authorised officers to carry out the full range of official food controls including an intervention programme, investigation of incidents, alerts, complaints, outbreaks, undertaking sampling and taking follow up action or enforcement when required.
7. The intervention programme which is part of the work plan has been drawn up in line with the Code of Practice to ensure that inspections and other interventions are effective, appropriate and consistent. All food businesses are categorised and given an inspection frequency,

based on the size and scale of the business, types of food handled, and the standards observed during the inspection.

8. Following inspection, food businesses receive an inspection category which is used to determine the frequency by which they are inspected. This category is based on several factors, including types of food, scale, and business compliance. A category A business is classed as high risk, due to a combination of poor standards observed at inspection, high risk foods being handled or a sizeable scale of operation. These businesses receive frequent inspections every 6 months. A category E business is classed as low risk, due to a combination of, small scale, low risk foods, and higher standards. An example is a home-based cake maker which will receive less frequent 3 yearly inspections.
9. Following an inspection, most businesses also receive a food hygiene rating, between zero (0) and five (5), which is a measure of the food safety standards found during the inspection. This rating is available on the Food Standards Agency website and is designed to allow the public to make informed choices on where they may wish to eat and shop.
10. Whilst most businesses receive an inspection, the code of practice provides some flexibility of approach to interventions, enabling targeting of resources at businesses of greatest risk, whilst providing a lighter touch approach to lower risk businesses.
11. An example of this light touch approach is the strategy for contacting low-risk businesses and gathering sufficient information to confirm that the business operator is competent, and that since the previous inspection, the activities have not changed. This prevents the need for a physical inspection at such premises.
12. The Food Standards Agency is currently developing a new modernised food hygiene delivery model to assist Local Authorities in undertaking their role. This is considering options such as National level regulation for the largest food businesses, enhanced registration of businesses, the extension of the roles of regulatory support officers, as well as the use of remote inspections and triaging certain types of businesses. Once this approach has been tested and agreed nationally, it will be implemented into future work plans.

Work Performance in 2024 – 2025

13. Whilst the Food and Safety Team is responsible for the food controls discussed in this report, it is also responsible for a wide variety of other functions including health and safety enforcement, animal welfare licensing, skin piercing and caravan site licensing. In 2024/25 the team consisted of four full time Environmental Health Officers,

assisted by one part time Environmental Health Apprentice. There were two vacant posts within the food team during the majority of the year.

14. The total time devoted to food safety work last year was equivalent to approximately 2.6 full-time equivalent staff. This was supported by a food safety contractor funded for 6 months by the vacancy savings.
15. The team has successfully recently recruited into the two vacant posts following a review of the service structure and creating career graded posts. It is anticipated that the team will be up to full strength by September 2025.
16. The team carried out a total of **718** food hygiene inspections in 2024/25 which were prioritised on risk, compared to **636** inspections in 2023/24. In addition to these, **438** low risk premises were reviewed via visit, telephone call or email, (of which 157 were still trading and 281 had closed) compared to 125 in the previous year.
17. The ability of the team to undertake more inspections and other interventions than in the previous year, is due to a number of factors including utilising our two apprentices to support the wider team, employing the contractor for a longer period of time, improved systems for capturing data for low risk businesses and the continued flexible approach to interventions as detailed in the Food Law Code of Practice.
18. All 84 (**100%**) high risk due inspections were completed. These high-risk businesses may have a risk category of A or B (typically food manufactures, businesses undertaken complex activities, care homes and children's nurseries) or be poor performing businesses, which are those with a food hygiene rating of 0, 1 or 2.
19. **98%**, (184 of 188) due category C medium risk inspections were completed. Two premises had permanently closed and the other two were not inspected as they were closed based on being seasonal businesses.
20. In addition, **80%** (270 of 338 due) category D lower risk inspections were undertaken.
21. A total of **68%** (486 of 709 due) lowest risk E rated interventions were undertaken – some were inspections of new low risk businesses, some a review of existing businesses, and some the closure of businesses which have ceased trading. This is a significant improvement on 26% undertaken in the previous year. This improvement can be attributed to the development of improved IT to make the process more streamlined for businesses and the team alike.

22. During the year, 268 new business registrations, across all ratings, were received, and of those 169 (**63%**) received an inspection. This is broadly similar to the 65% reported the previous year. Upon registration, all newly registered businesses are sent a questionnaire which is used to determine the priority schedule of inspection, based on the food safety activity taking place. The team aim to inspect lower risk businesses within 4 months of operating, where resources allow.
23. A total of **328** food related complaints and requests for service were received during the year, as well as **397** notifications of infectious disease to investigate. This is comparable to the previous year when we received 436 food related complaints and 345 infectious disease notifications.
24. A total of **161** food samples were taken during the course of the year. Sampling is carried out in manufacturers where there may be higher risk processes, in premises where an inspection has revealed potential concerns, at some new businesses to verify the food safety management system, or as part of national and local campaigns based on emerging issues.
25. A total of 5 hygiene improvement notices were served in 2024/25. The notices were served due to various failures identified during inspections such as food businesses not implementing food safety management systems, poor hygiene, and out of date food. Food business operators are given a set time to comply with the notice and officers revisit after this time to ensure the work has been completed. Further formal action would be considered if the work had not been undertaken, but this was not the case with these premises.

Work Plan For 2025 – 2026.

26. The Food Safety Service priorities for 2025-26 are detailed in Appendix 1. This aligns closely with priorities set within the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice and the Council's Corporate Plan objective - to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, through implementation of the Food Service Plan.
27. The work plan prioritises high priority enforcement work according to risk, which will protect the consumer but also support trade and the export of goods.
28. All due high risk or poor performing businesses will be inspected in the year; approximately **3** A and **69** B category businesses, and **15** businesses with a poor 0, 1 or 2 food hygiene rating. (see appendix 2) These are similar numbers to the previous year.

29. All high priority newly registered businesses will be inspected promptly. It is anticipated that we will undertake about **134** new business inspections.
30. If a business does not agree with the rating awarded following the inspection, they can apply (following payment of a fee) for a re-inspection. This is undertaken within 3 months of the application. It is anticipated that we will undertake approximately **30** re-inspections in the year.
31. All due category C food businesses (**207**) are required to receive an inspection or audit. This is significantly more than the previous year (122) and is in part due to the use of a contractor to undertake these inspections 18 months ago. We are again looking at appointing a contractor (funded from previous vacant posts) to assist the team in completing this work.
32. We will systematically work through the **329** D rated premises undertaking an appropriate intervention and the newer member of the team who is due to start in mid-September will initially focus on this work.
33. A total of **328** E rated food businesses are due intervention in 2025/26 as part of the backlog. Whilst the priority is the highest risk premises the FSA's Code of Practice still requires these interventions to be undertaken. Alternative strategies have been used in the past to assess these premises, which include questionnaires and intelligence gathering visits, rather than inspection; and significant headway has been made over the past 12 months with the total due falling from 749 to 328. It is expected these will be completed during the year.
34. Appendix 2 highlights the strategy being employed to effectively and flexibly deliver the food safety controls and what measures are being implemented to review and where possible, increase resources.
35. The work plan will be monitored by the Service Manager on a quarterly basis and will be reported to the Strategic Director of Housing and Communities and the Portfolio Holder for the Service during briefings.
36. The Food Standard Agency also continues to monitor local authorities' delivery of food controls against expectations set out in the Code of Practice through bi-annual data returns and where required, local authority audits.

37. The FSA will intervene where local authorities are not delivering official food controls in line with their statutory duties. They have previously written to Chief Executives and Finance Officers setting out concerns about resourcing and delivery, reminding them of the statutory role when setting budget allocations. Performance managers are allocated to underperforming local authorities, to develop improvement plans to address the issues.

Corporate plan priorities

38. **Theme:** Prosperity
39. **Corporate Plan Objective:** supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow.
40. **Service Objective:** Implementation of the Environmental and Regulation Service Plans.

Consultation undertaken

41. The Food Service Plan has been reviewed by the Executive Management Team and the Portfolio Holder for Communities.

Financial and resource implications

42. The delivery of a food service is a statutory duty. There are costs associated with the operation of the service the work proposed within the service plan is based on the annual budget provided. Costs are recovered when permissible, through the re-inspection of food businesses.

Legal implications

43. The Food Service Plan is written in accordance with the nationally agreed Framework Agreement with the FSA and the Plan sets out how the authority will meet its statutory obligations.

Risk Assessment

44. Risk assessments are in place for premises inspections by officers.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

45. There are no direct climate implications.

Equalities implications

46. The service supports all applicable businesses across the district, providing varying levels of support to businesses as appropriate and

required. The Council does not wish for local businesses to fail and therefore will provide support to any proprietor to carry out necessary actions.

47. Interventions by the team ensures all members of the public interacting with food businesses remain safe.

Crime and disorder implications

48. There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

49. There are no direct implications.

Conclusions

50. The report and appendices explain the strategy that the service will take in delivery of food controls to safeguard the health of residents in the New Forest. This will be achieved by targeting resources to ensure that appropriate action is taken to support and control poor performing and higher risk food businesses, whilst making full use of flexibility provided in the Food Law Code of Practice to address lower risk food businesses.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Service Plan Priorities
Appendix 2 – Service Workplan
Appendix 3 – Full Service Plan

Background Papers: