

Food Safety Service Plan 2019-2020 Review of Plan 2018-2019

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1.0 Service Aim, Objectives, Key Tasks and Targets

1.1 Objective, Aims and Key Tasks

- To meet statutory responsibilities in respect of national and European requirements concerning official controls of food in a cost effective and responsible manner in accordance with statutory guidance.
- To encourage best practice and publish advice on Food Safety to businesses and voluntary groups.
- To discharge food safety inspection and enforcement responsibilities in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice Regulators Code and the enforcement policy for Environmental Health and Licensing.
- To implement national and local food sampling programmes and to promote Food Safety.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Targets

The food inspection service is relevant to several of the current key priorities and core values.

Supporting Business and the Local Economy

By ensuring a level playing field through appropriate and proportional regulatory interventions and providing a degree of trusted technical advice in the fields of food safety, health and safety and pollution control.

Supporting our Community

By ensuring a minimum standard of hygiene in business to reduce the occurrence of ill health through food borne disease and by promoting good hygiene practice in the home.

2.0 Background

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

The Borough of Epsom & Ewell is situated in the North East of Surrey, with an area of 3,411 hectares, of which over half is open space, particularly to the South and West. The Borough has a population of approximately 79,500 predominantly in suburban areas. There are in the region of 30,250 households in the Borough and the average household size is 2.41 people.

2.2 Organisational Structure

A chart is attached showing the structure of Housing and Community and with the elements involved in food hygiene delivery highlighted.

Specialist services, when required, are provided as follows

- (i) Public Analyst: Public Analysis Scientific Services, 28-32 Brunel Road, Westway Estate, Acton, W3 7XR
- (ii) Microbiological testing: Public Health England, Food, Water and Environmental Laboratory, Manor Farm Road, Porton Down Salisbury Wiltshire SP4 0JG

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Food Safety Service exists to ensure that all food produced, purchased, stored or distributed in the Borough is fit for human consumption. Delivery of the service is principally centred on the delivery of Official Controls such as inspections and audits in compliance with statutory requirements followed by appropriate enforcement action as necessary. By providing this service, the Council actively contributes to the maintenance of high standards of hygiene in processes of production, preparation and sale of food throughout the Borough. Advice is given to food businesses and handlers to ensure they meet legal requirements and observe best practice designed to protect public health.

The Service also undertakes occasional food sampling, a service which complements and reinforces the overall objective of protecting public health.

The Environmental Health Service, in certain circumstances, works in association with Public Health England in relation to the investigation of notifications of infectious disease and food poisoning.

In addition to programmed food hygiene inspections, and the investigation of complaints related to food and food premises other services are delivered in commercial business premises. These include health and safety interventions, infectious disease investigations and pollution emanating from premises where food is prepared, processed or sold. The full range of the environmental health service includes the varied elements of pollution control, conditions in private sector housing and other public health and public protection obligations.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

As at April 2019 there were 487 food premises in the Borough Of these 379 were restaurants, cafes, canteens or other caterers, and 94 were retailers. The remainder are made up of small scale producers and distributors. 138 premises fall into the higher risk categories of A to C. Category A requires inspection at 6 month intervals, category B at 12 month intervals and category C at 18 month intervals in accordance with Food Safety Code of Practice issued by the Food Standards Agency. Presently there are no approved establishments operating within the Borough. The service advises and inspects the in-house and external catering provision at the Derby but no longer routinely attends during the Derby festival itself.

Environmental Health Services is based at the Town Hall, and the service is available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday although a substantial proportion of premises now only open in the evening necessitating out of hours visits. In the event of a major incident or an outbreak of food poisoning, there are arrangements for contacting senior officers outside of normal office hours.

A significant proportion of catering establishments are operated by people whose first language is not English. In rare circumstances arrangements are in place for professional translation of necessary documentation and use of interpreters.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

The Environmental Health Enforcement Policy was revised in 2014 to reflect the national Regulators Code.

3.0 Service Delivery

3.1 Food Premises Inspections

Food premises are inspected in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice (England) published by the Food Standards Agency.

Other premises e.g. childminders are not routinely inspected other than at their request or by referral from OFSTED. The Council, in line with other Surrey local authorities have reached an agreement with OFSTED whereby any food hygiene concerns from OFSTED inspectors will be referred to the local authority for follow up.

Additional to programmed inspections, the service also carries out a proportion of revisits during the same period. These are necessary to check whether informal action has been successful, where compliance with notices needs to be assessed and where a formal request has been made by a food business operator as part of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Any significant increase in the numbers of food related complaints or incidents would place additional demands on the service. Without additional resources this demand could only be met at the expense of the premises inspection programme and/or other areas of environmental health.

3.2 Food Complaints and requests for service

Procedures exist to deal with food complaints which allows for working with Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards when necessary.

Enforcement of food safety is undertaken in accordance with the Food Safety Act 1990, EU Regulations 852/2004, the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and associated legislation. Enforcement decisions and decisions to bring legal proceedings in appropriate cases are made in accordance with the Service's Enforcement Policy and the Scheme of Delegated Authority to Officers.

3.3 Primary Authority

The Council is committed to the Primary Authority principle whereby, in order to ensure consistency of enforcement, a business can form a partnership with a local authority, often, but not always the authority where its head office exists and enforcement issues can be moderated by that authority.

Epsom & Ewell have no formal partnerships with any food business at this time.

3.4 Advice to Business

Businesses are encouraged to consult the Council's website in the first instance or else the advice displayed on the website of the Food Standards Agency. Enquiries of a specific and/or technically complex nature will normally be dealt with by telephone. However officers frequently advise business during programmed inspections.

3.5 Food Sampling

The authority undertakes occasional planned food sampling in coordination with the Public Health England (PHE) and local initiatives.

Samples may also be submitted to the PHE laboratory or to the Public Analyst in support of food complaint investigations.

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

In respect of an outbreak of food poisoning or infectious disease, procedures are set out in the Surrey Outbreak Control Plan and the Environmental Health Service will act in conjunction with PHE under the guidance of the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC).

In 2018-2019 the Environmental Health Service received 151 notifications of infectious disease including food poisoning, actual or suspected and some notable instances of hepatitis, ecoli and legionnaire's disease which require careful handling.

3.7 Food Safety Incidents

Food Alerts are part of a national system of letting local authorities and consumers know about problems associated with food and, in some cases, provide details of specific action to be taken.

Where necessary a media release or high priority visits to premises are arranged.

Out of hours contact arrangements are in place whereby the Environmental Health Manager can be contacted by national authorities via the Mole Valley out of hours call centre.

The resource implications are very much dependent on the category of any given alert 'For Action' alerts can potentially involve a considerable amount of work contacting and inspecting food outlets, whilst 'For information' may involve less response. To date, all work relating to food alerts has been undertaken by Environmental Health Officers and resources are considered adequate. In the event of a large-scale warning, support staff will be drawn from other areas of the Council as required.

3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The authority has in place various arrangements to ensure that enforcement action taken in its area is consistent with that in neighbouring local authorities.

Epsom & Ewell is represented on the Surrey Food Liaison and Study Group that includes the other Surrey local authorities, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Public Health England and the Food Standards Agency.

Joint working with, in particular, Trading Standards will continue and where possible, inspections will be coordinated as will action on food alerts.

Epsom & Ewell is also represented on the Surrey Infection and Environmental Control Group, which is chaired by Public Health England.

The service responds to planning consultations involving new food premises or alterations to existing premises.

Applications received by the Borough's Licensing Service that includes food preparation or sales are individually screened for likely public risk on health grounds.

3.9 Food Safety Promotion

Resource constraints are such that food safety promotion is largely confined to the point of service delivery and mostly at the time of food premises inspection.

The service will seek to publicise any enforcement action which results in a fine or other sanction issued by the courts.

4.0 Resources

4.1 Staffing Allocation

The number of staff working on food law enforcement and related matters (including infectious diseases) is 1.2 officer full time equivalent. There are no dedicated administrative support staff.

All Environmental Health Officers are authorised in all aspects of Food Safety Enforcement with appropriate supervision as necessary. The service operates a competency checking procedure utilising document review and occasional shadowed visits.

4.2 Staff Development Plan

The Council operates a system of developmental one to one meetings with staff members and their manager. From this, learning needs are identified and provision made to fulfil them. The Food Law Code of Practice requires at least 20 hours of continuing professional development per authorised officer.

5.0 Quality Assessment

In line with the Food Law Code of Practice, monitoring measures are in place to assess performance of EHOs and adherence to standard working methodology.

Any newly recruited officer will be assessed in accordance with the team monitoring procedure involving shadowed visits and follow up. This also applies periodically for EHOs already in post and for consultant member of staff. Team meetings address consistency issues within the team and food service matters are discussed.

6.0 Review of 2018-2019 service plan

6.1 Interventions

There were 487 registered food premises by the end of the year. A summary of interventions planned and outstanding at the end of the year appears in the following table.

Interventions due/outstanding by the end of the year	Due	Outstanding
Premise Rating - A	7	0
Premise Rating - B	29	1
Premise Rating - C	77	24
Premise Rating - D	52	12
Premise Rating – E *	54	12
Premise Rating - Unrated	38	0
Totals	257	49

* An alternative intervention policy exists for category E (low risk) businesses.

A further 20 visits were made for the purposes of verification and surveillance

Performance of the service was directly monitored by the Environmental Health Manager. Not counting the low risk category E businesses, the service achieved 82 percent interventions achieved against planned.

The service monitored the number of businesses that are “broadly complaint”. Overall 92 percent of food businesses met this criterion, compared with 95 percent for England. This is broadly in line with previous years. The service is considering ways of improving this figure without disproportional resource expenditure.

6.2 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

2018-2019 was the ninth year the service operated the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), having been an early adopter. Official food hygiene ratings appear on a national website available for public information at www.food.gov.uk/ratings as well as various mobile device apps. The service took advantage of the option to charge for food hygiene re-inspections and undertook 10 such inspections and saw improvements in all but one.

The service continued to operate a scheme to utilise social media to publicise five rated premises. This publicity was consistently in the top twenty percent of liked, commented and shared on the Council’s various social media feeds.

6.3 Complaints

In total 49 complaints were received and investigated concerning both concerns about food and of food businesses. These ranged from allegations of food poisoning, complaints about foreign bodies in food, unfitness of food and hygiene of premises. Where valid, these complaints were investigated and action taken.

6.4 Sampling

In 2018-2019 the service took samples of food associated with a sudden reaction in an individual, thought to be allergic in nature. The samples were found to be contaminated

with several pathogens which after investigation were associated with plastic containers being used.

The financial allocation set aside for Epsom & Ewell in 2018-2019 was at £2800 and this was found to be adequate. This allocation facilitates bacteriological and qualitative sampling and analysis of food, water and environmental monitoring.

6.5 Education and information

The service does provide a degree of free advice to business who either make contact independently or request advice during inspections. Environmental Health Officers are also in the position to be able to refer potential new businesses to the Economic Development Support Officer, the local Growth Hub and for Epsom – the Business Improvement District.

6.6 Partnership working

Representation was made on the Surrey Food Liaison Group which includes trading standards officers to develop joint working relationships such as sampling initiatives and procedural guidance.

6.7 Document review

The majority of documentation now exists on the internet and the service no longer carries hard copies of leaflets. The Council's website contains information for businesses and the consumer whilst the Food Standards Agency website contains more technical information for those involved in food production and catering.

6.8 Enforcement

119 written warnings were issued and nine improvement notices were served and two businesses were supervised under a voluntary closure as an alternative to formal emergency prohibition.

6.9 Risk Management Approach

The service continued to operate an alternative enforcement policy for low risk food premises involving a self assessment process. The aim of this policy is to free up time to focus attention on those businesses which present the greatest risk to consumer safety and/or who are failing to meet their statutory obligations whilst relieving low risk businesses from a formal inspection. Examples of the types of businesses subject to this alternative approach are sweet shops, small scale newsagents, home caterers and gift shops selling confectionary.

7.0 Plan for 2019-2020

7.1 Programmed inspections 2019-2020

In 2019-2020 177 premises interventions are due broken down as follows.

Category	Number
A	6
B	16
C	55
D	62
E	38 (Alternative approach)

Additionally it is planned to complete the outstanding inspections from the previous year. It is expected a degree of evening and possibly weekend visits will be required to complete this workload. Category E interventions will be achieved in batches as per the Alternative Enforcement Strategy.

It should be noted that addition to the due inspection programme additional inspections are also required for new food premises and business premises that close and re-opened as a different category operation and those that change management. This number is largely unpredictable as is the number of business who request a re-inspection as part of the safe guards employed under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

7.2 Accuracy of database

The accuracy of the commercial premises database will be ensured by the following means:

- Liaison with OFSTED regarding childminders in the borough
- Liaison with the Care Quality Commission regarding care homes in the Borough
- A periodic cross check against web based directories for changes to businesses in the Borough
- Updating of details via intelligence gathered during other Council visits and reported to the Environmental Health team.
- Use of local knowledge

7.3 Sampling

A budget of £300 has been allocated for chemical sampling of food and water. Where this is insufficient, underspends will be looked for to supplement the budget. An allocation of around £2,500 is expected from Public Health England for the routine microbiological sampling of food and water.

7.4 Complaints

Complaints and enquiries from members of the public will be assessed and priority given to situations representing immediate or urgent public health risks. In some circumstances it will be appropriate to follow the matter up at the next routine inspection.

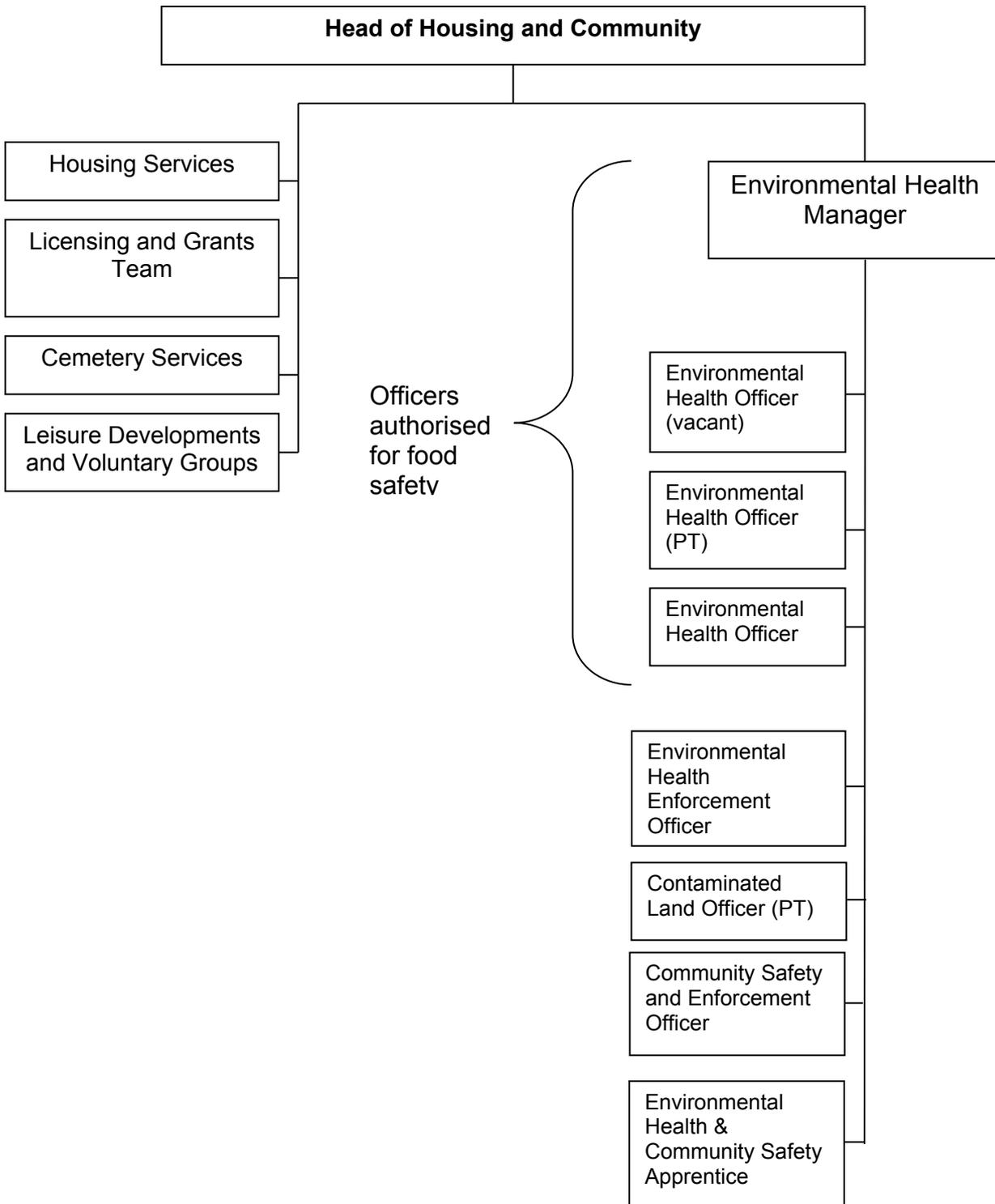
7.6 Publicity

The Service will seek to publicise successful initiatives which are of benefit and interest to the public. In particular the service will utilise the Council's social media channels to inform, advise and alert the public to issues pertaining to food safety and reward food

businesses which score the maximum five out of five. It will also publicise any prosecutions and sentencing of businesses who have broken the law and been taken to court by the Council.

7.7 Young Report

Lord Young published his report “Common Sense, Common Safety” on 15 October 2010 and called for, amongst other things, food hygiene interventions to be coordinated with health and safety inspections. At Epsom & Ewell since the same team deal in both it is intended that the existing system be continued and food interventions as far as possible be combined with health and safety interventions.



Structure of Housing and Community Services