



Northumberland

County Council

The Cabinet

Date: 11th September 2018

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2018/19

Report of the Executive Director of Place: Paul Johnston

Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Resilience: Councillor John Riddle.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet, for its consideration and endorsement, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2018/19.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 1) Receive and adopt the content of the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2018/19,

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is linked to the Living and Thriving parts of the Corporate Plan 2018-21 that have the objectives 'We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for' and 'We want to attract more and better jobs'.

Key Issues

1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has produced a framework agreement on Local Authority food law enforcement. The framework sets out the FSA's expectations of Local Authorities in relation to the planning and delivery of food law enforcement.
2. The framework agreement requires Local Authorities to take account of the Government's better regulation agenda when planning, resourcing and delivering their services. This means that resources need to be targeted where they will be

most impactful and in the areas of highest risk in order to provide the public with an effective service.

3. This report presents the proposed Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan 2018/19 in accordance with the requirements of the current framework agreement which requires a specific format for food service plans and for plans to be approved at a relevant level with the Local Authority in order to ensure local transparency and accountability. The report sets out the Council's 'Farm to Fork' approach to the safety & standards of the food chain. The Plan is attached as Appendix One to the report. It also provides a review of performance against the previous 2017/18 plan.
4. There are 5,555 food & feed premises in Northumberland. They are risk assessed in accordance with prescribed schemes in both the food law and feed law codes of practice, which specify inspection intervals based on the risk category of the premises. The inspection programme is delivered by the Public Health Protection Unit and Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit within the Housing & Public Protection Service. The Plan shows the delivery structure and required staff resourcing.
5. The review of performance in 2017/18 has found that the Food Service plan was largely delivered. The service standards for high and medium risk premises were all met fully or exceeded. However the target of 90% for low risk Category D food hygiene inspections was not met with an 83% inspection rate. This was due to significant long term sickness absence within the inspection team during Q2-Q3 of 2017/18 that could only be partially covered by agency staff. However benchmarking has shown that 83% was actually still significantly above that achieved by two other North East councils and the same as achieved by two others.
6. The percentage of food businesses in Northumberland with a food hygiene rating of satisfactory to very good (3 to 5 stars) is 98.2 % which continues to compare favourably with both the national average of 94.6 % and regional average of 96.4%.
7. Following requests from members of the Communities and Place OSC and Cabinet last year, for the first time, the report contains both customer experience statistics and benchmarking results. The customer experience survey found that following food hygiene and food standards inspections 92% of businesses either strongly agreed or agreed that they had received a high level of service.
8. A benchmarking process was carried out involving all of the seven North East councils and managed through the NE Food Liaison Group that is chaired by Northumberland. This showed that the number of food premises per officer was highest in Northumberland. Even so the Service achieved comparable results for inspection rates.
9. As well as programmed inspections, Public Protection provides a reactive response to a wide variety of food safety, food standards & animal feed safety

issues. These include complaints about food which does not meet legal standards or which is thought to have caused illness, or premises deemed to be unhygienic. Numerous requests are also made by new businesses for advice on food hygiene requirements and matters such as composition and labelling. Officers also work in partnership with Public Health England to investigate notifications of infectious disease outbreaks.

10. As well as being protective of public health and providing a fair trading environment through its regulatory function the service also proactively provides business support to help to further contribute to Northumberland's economy.
11. The Public Health Protection Unit continues to deliver the 'Produced in Northumberland' food source verification scheme. This voluntary food verification scheme (that was launched in February 2016) covers any food manufacturer, retailer and caterer within Northumberland who applies and meets the requirements of the scheme. This includes passing an annual verification audit carried out by lead auditor trained officers. At May 2018 the scheme has a membership of 77 businesses. The value of the scheme to businesses is shown by the fact that we had a 95% retention of membership in 2017/18. The Unit currently has 40 recent expressions of interest in the scheme from food & drink businesses in Northumberland.
12. Working in partnership with other Council teams the Unit also contributed to the promotion of the scheme. The innovative and unique nature of 'Produced in Northumberland' has now started to receive national as well as regional recognition. In 2018 it is being regularly promoted at events in Northumberland, including the County Show and Great Northumberland events. On the 13th June 2018 it was promoted during an event at the UK Parliament in London. It was well attended by Northumberland MPs, other MPs from across the UK, together with members of the House of Lords and Government Ministers. As a result the scheme received extensive positive media coverage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Give the implications

Policy:	None
Finance and value for money:	Costs are given consideration in the plan. It is intended that performance management of plan delivery will increase the value for money provided.
Human Resources:	Staff resourcing is identified in the plan.
Property:	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached)	The proposal contained in this report does not present potentially-significant equality issues.
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	Adopting the plan will assist in providing a framework to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.
Crime & Disorder:	The adoption of the proposed plan will assist in ensuring the enforcement of statutory regulations.
Customer Considerations:	The plan would be delivered in such a way as to ensure that a consistent and proportionate approach is taken in all circumstances.
Carbon Reduction:	None
Consultation:	None
Wards:	All

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that relevant officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

Finance Officer	AM
Monitoring Officer/Legal	NM
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a

I.T.	n/a
Portfolio Holder(s)	JR

Appendix 1

Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2018/19

Report Author: Peter Simpson, Public Health Protection Unit Manager. (01670) 623695
peter.simpson@northumberland.gov.uk