



# Northumberland

## County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 October 2023

### **Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24**

**Report of Councillor(s)** Gordon Stewart, Portfolio Holder for Looking After our Communities

**Responsible Officer(s):** Chief Executive

#### **1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

The food service strongly contributes towards the Council's corporate vision and objectives in all three key priority areas within the Corporate Plan 2023-2026 and the service plan details how this will be achieved. Additionally, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2023/24 sets out the principles that will be adopted when undertaking investigations and enforcement action in creating a 'level playing field' for businesses to trade and supporting businesses to prosper.

#### **2. Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet, for its consideration the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2023/24.

#### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet receives and adopts the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2023/24

#### **4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

Report appeared on the forward plan 31/08/23, with over the minimum 28 days before cabinet

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 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.

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The framework agreements requires that the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2023/24 (attached) sets out the Council's 'Farm to Fork' approach to the safety & standards of the food chain and a review of service performance in 2022/23. It also requires that the plan:
- be approved at a relevant level with the Local Authority in order to ensure local transparency and accountability,
  - be produced in a specific format.
- 5.4 There are 3894 food premises in Northumberland subject to food safety and food standards regulation and in excess of 1700 businesses, mainly farm premises subject to the Animal Feed (Hygiene, Sampling etc. and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2015. 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 Public Protection Service. The Plan shows the delivery structure and required staff resourcing.
- 5.5 The review of performance in 2022/23 found that the service completed the targets set out for the end of March 23 within the FSA recovery plan, meeting all key performance measures.
- 5.6 The percentage of food businesses in Northumberland with a food hygiene rating of satisfactory to very good (3 to 5 stars) is 98.6% which continues to compare favourably with both the national average of 96.9 % and regional average of 98.1%.
- 5.7 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. Officers also work in partnership with Public Health England to investigate notifications of infectious disease outbreaks. In 2022/23 a total of 125 infectious disease investigations were carried out and 142 complaints regarding food hygiene, 115 complaints about food premises were received and 69 complaints about food composition, labelling or quality. 99% of these received an initial response within 3 working days in accordance with Service Standards.
- 5.8 The Public Health Protection Unit continues to deliver the 'Produced in Northumberland' (PIN) 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. The aim moving into 2023/24 is to continue to support and progress the scheme. The service is re-introducing the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits. Along with a planned increase in its promotion and visibility. In line with this, to unlock the full potential of the scheme we are also working closely with other services and teams as part of the development of the county food strategy, where PIN will play an integral role. As part of this process, we will be part of the food strategy working group to provide input into the strategy

as its developed, along with regular meetings with the Rural Growth team to review progress. The long-term goal being to continue the development of PIN and take it even further.

## 6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 Option 1 -To accept and adopt the Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24.
- 6.2 Option 2 - Not to accept and adopt the Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24. However, this would mean the council would not be fulfilling its requirements under the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement.

## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	None
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Costs are given consideration in the plan. It is intended that performance management of plan delivery will increase the value for money provided. There are no new financial implications arising from this report. All costs for providing these services within the agreed service standards are included within the existing budget.
<b>Legal</b>	None, statutory provision
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - no equalities issues identified The proposal contained in this report does not present equality issues.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	Adopting the plan will assist in providing a framework to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	The adoption of the proposed plan will assist in ensuring the enforcement of statutory regulations.
<b>Customer considerations</b>	The plan would be delivered in such a way as to ensure that a consistent and proportionate approach is taken in all circumstances.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None

<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	Will contribute to the protection and improvement of health through a safe food and drinks sector. Also contributing to a fair & safe trading environment.
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**8. Background papers**

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24

**9. Links to other key reports already published**

Not Applicable

**10. Author and Contact Details**

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