

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2008/2009

1. Service Aims and Objectives

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1.1.1. The objectives of the food safety service are:

- to ensure that food and drink intended for sale for human consumption, which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed within the Borough is without risk to the health or safety of the consumer;
- to investigate suspected and confirmed food poisoning incidents, to locate the source of contamination and to prevent it spreading to protect the health of the public;
- to provide information and advice on food safety matters for business and members of the public.

1.2. Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

1.2.1. This food safety service plan is the Council's expression of its commitment to the delivery of a continually improving food service, in line with the corporate vision and values to provide excellent services in a forward thinking and sustainable way.

1.2.2. The food safety service contributes to the Council's priority of promoting health and well being and to the Community Strategy priorities of improving access to information on health and preventing illness.

1.2.3. The plan provides information about the food safety services, the means by which they are provided and the means for monitoring and reviewing service performance against set standards.

2. Background

2.1. Profile of the Borough of Woking

2.1.1. The Borough of Woking covers 6,359 hectares and has an estimated population of 90,700.

2.1.2. The Borough is a major employment centre and Woking town a substantial shopping, commercial and entertainment centre.

2.2. Organisational Structure

2.2.1. The food safety service is delivered by officers within the Environmental Health Team, which is part of the Planning and Regulation Service. The food safety service reports to elected members via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee. The service is managed by the Environmental Health Manager, with a Senior Environmental Health Officer holding the specialist responsibility for food safety. Specialist services for food examination are provided by the Health Protection Agency (HPA), Eurofins Laboratories and Severn Trent Laboratories.

2.3. Scope of the Food Safety Service

2.3.1. The food safety service provides the following:-

- Inspections of food premises

- Authorisations for specific premises under European food hygiene regulations.
- Investigation of complaints regarding food and food premises
- Investigation of notifications of food poisoning
- Sampling of food and drinking water
- Promotion of good food safety standards through advice, education to the public and businesses.
- Enforcement action under the European food hygiene regulations.

2.3.2. The service is currently provided by officers of the Environmental Health Team with administrative support provided by the Business Support Team. A contractor is also used to carry out a proportion of the premises inspection programme. Depending on fluctuations in business need, officers will carry out food work alongside other Environmental Health work, including health and safety at work, pollution and private sector housing. Specialist knowledge will be retained by a lead officer but information and operational procedures will be disseminated throughout the Environmental Health team. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) competency criteria for food work are followed.

2.4. Demands on the Food Safety Service

2.4.1. There are 652 food premises in the Borough (figures as at 1st April 2007). The break down by primary food hygiene activity is shown below.

2.4.2. Profile of food premises in the Borough

Primary Food Hygiene Activity	Total
Distributors	5
Manufacturers	7
Restaurants and other caterers	418
Retailers	222
Total	652

2.4.3. There are currently no specialised or complex premises in the Borough, eg, high risk manufacturers, pasteurisation or canning plants etc.

2.4.4. The Environmental Health Team is based at the Civic Offices in Woking Town Centre, which is open to callers 9.00 to 16.45 Monday to Friday. The team are contactable in the office by telephone, fax, mail, e-mail, via the Council's website and in person and are contactable by mobile phone via the office whilst out in the field. In an emergency a member of the team can be contacted outside of office hours by means of the Environmental Health Call Out Service. Inspection of food premises are normally undertaken during office hours however the service is extended outside office hours as required, to ensure officers can assess food handling practices at all premises, regardless of their opening hours.

2.4.5. Woking has the highest ethnic population in Surrey at 8.7% and hence has a significant number of business owners and consumers whose first language is not English. The service endeavours to provide both verbal and written advice to businesses regarding the legal requirements and efforts are made to provide communication in the appropriate language. The Environmental Health service uses several means including correspondence in several languages and in cases with severe communication difficulties, interpreters are used.

2.5. Enforcement Policy

- 2.5.1. The service has a documented Enforcement Policy and Procedures which are in line with the relevant FSA Food Law Code of Practice (COP) and Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) guidance.
- 2.5.2. This has been endorsed by Members and made available to businesses and consumers on the Council's web site and as a leaflet.
- 2.5.3. The Council signed up to the Enforcement Concordat in 1998, and the enforcement policy embraces the required good enforcement principles.

3. Service Delivery

3.1. Food Premises Primary Inspections

- 3.1.1. There is a documented food inspection procedure in accordance with the FSA COP and LACORS guidance. The programme of food premises primary inspection is based on the priority risk rating and inspection frequencies set out in the FSA COP. Inspection records are maintained in a part computerised and part hard copy system which enables past records to be retrieved. In 2006/2007 100% of the high risk 216 primary inspections due were carried out against targets set by the service of 99%, and 89.5% of the 114 primary inspections due were carried out against a target set by the service of 97% for low risk.
- 3.1.2. In 2007/2008 312 primary inspections are due. 76 of these premises have a risk rating score of 30 or less and therefore, in accordance with the FSA COP, are not required to be inspected, but may be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy. The service has an Alternative Inspection Strategy Procedure for Low Risk Premises comprised of a self assessment questionnaire completed by the business and risk assessed by officers on its return. This leaves a total of 236 primary inspections currently programmed, and as in previous years approximately 30% will require revisits. The target for inspection in 2007/08 is inspection of 100% high and low risk, and it is expected that this will be met.
- 3.1.3. In January 2006, new EU Food Hygiene Regulations were introduced, under which new national legislation relating to food hygiene requirements, and consequently enforcement activity has come into force. This has had a significant impact on the service provided as officers familiarise themselves and local food business owners with the changes.
- 3.1.4. The most significant change has been the requirement for food business proprietors to have a documented food safety management system. In anticipation of this, the Council, together with the other Surrey local authorities (LAs) formed the Surrey Safer Food Partnership and successfully bid for funding from the FSA to train food business proprietors in the "Safer Food Better Business" (SFBB) food safety management scheme. A programme of training seminars by external consultants has been rolled out over the last 12 months and up to 150 Woking food businesses have received training. All training will be followed up by an on-site coaching session by the consultant for the individual businesses to help them comply with the legislation. Follow up visits by officers will be undertaken using existing resources within the inspection programme. Additional enforcement may be required for unwilling or non-compliant food premises and inspections could take much longer as new requirements are explained, implemented and checked.

3.2. Food Complaints

- 3.2.1. There is a documented food complaint investigation procedure in accordance with the FSA COP and LACORS guidance. All complaints are investigated with a local initial response time target of 3 working days or sooner, depending on the seriousness of the complaint.
- 3.2.2. In 2006/2007 43 food complaints and complaints about food premises were received. These complaint levels are likely to be similar in 2007/2008. It is not possible to report

the number of complaints dealt with within the target of 3 working days as the computer software system is currently unable to provide this data.

3.3. Home Authority Principle (HAP)

- 3.3.1. The Council supports the LACORS HAP and operation of the principle is included in the inspection and complaint procedures. Woking is Home Authority for Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) as their head office is in the Borough and resources are available for meeting and advising the company and responding to enforcing authority enquiries. There are no other companies currently seeking an HAP partnership with the Council and given the limitations on resources it would not be currently possible to support and establish other partnerships.

3.4. Advice to Businesses

- 3.4.1. The Council's approach to enforcement includes the offering of advice to businesses in the first instance to assist them in achieving a satisfactory standard of food safety and compliance with the law, where this does not compromise the safety of consumers.
- 3.4.2. In addition to the advice that is provided during inspections, revisits and investigatory visits to premises, advice is available to businesses through the SFBB training and on request at any time. The EH service works with trade groups such as Woking Chamber of Trade and Commerce and Business Link. Advice to businesses is also provided by means of direct mailings and press releases on particular food safety issues and new legislation. On occasion, free seminars are held for local businesses on new legislation/developments where there is a benefit in reaching a wider audience or to target a particular business sector to address a particular need.
- 3.4.3. The training of food handlers in food hygiene was reviewed and it was decided that it was no longer viable to provide these courses in-house. Businesses are referred to other local low cost training options to ensure that the training needs of local caterers are being met. This will be kept under review.

3.5. Food Sampling

- 3.5.1. There is a documented sampling policy in accordance with the FSA COP and an annual sampling programme is produced. The programme includes participation in the LACORS routine Food Sampling Programme, as well as sampling as part of the investigation of food complaints and food poisoning and the inspection of high risk food premises.
- 3.5.2. Additional routine and on-site environmental swab sampling is included within the existing inspection and sampling programme to check for hygienic conditions in premises in line with new EU legislation and the Microbiological Criteria Regulations 2005.
- 3.5.3. A sampling service level agreement has been drawn up with the HPA Sussex and Surrey Environmental Microbiology Service, based in Hayward Heath. Samples for microbiological analysis can be taken by officers to the laboratory directly or via use of a courier service from Epsom Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) depending on the urgency and likelihood of enforcement action. Public analyst services are provided by Eurofins Laboratories in Acton, and samples are taken there by staff by train as required.
- 3.5.4. Each year a quota is given to each LA to cover the cost of food sample analysis. In 2006/2007 a total of 21 food samples were taken, the cost of which was within our allocation. Should the number of samples taken cause us to exceed the allocation we would be required to fund the difference.
- 3.5.5. Routine drinking water samples are taken and analysed quarterly by Severn Trent Laboratories as part of the London Wide Drinking Water Survey.

3.6. Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

- 3.6.1. There is a documented infectious disease investigation procedure. All notifications (other than single *Campylobacter* notifications) are routinely investigated by contacting the affected person with a local initial response time of 3 working days or sooner, depending on the risk of spread.
- 3.6.2. *Campylobacter* notifications are reviewed by the officers and investigated further if there is potential for cases to be connected, or a food source is implicated or a person who is at a high risk of spreading the infection is affected. An investigation letter and *Campylobacter* fact sheet is sent to all sufferers. The investigations of outbreaks are carried out in accordance with the Surrey Health Protection Unit (SHPU) Outbreak Control Plan.
- 3.6.3. In 2006/2007 176 infectious disease notifications requiring investigation were received by the service and 94 required investigation. The number received is likely to be similar in 2007/2008.

3.7. Food Safety Incidents

- 3.7.1. There is a documented Food Alert procedure covering the issue of a warning arising from an incident within the Borough and the response to warnings issued by the FSA. This has been drawn up in accordance with FSA COP. Warnings are reviewed immediately on receipt by the officers and an appropriate course of action decided on. All warnings received by the service are logged as service requests and the action taken documented. Where appropriate, local press coverage will be sought.
- 3.7.2. In 2006/2007 69 food hazard warnings were received. All food hazard warnings require a decision to be made on what action is appropriate. Approximately 10% of warnings necessitate some type of action which may include press releases as well as visits, letters and telephone advice to premises. This figure is likely to be similar in 2007/2008.

3.8. Liaison with other Organisations

- 3.8.1. The service has various liaison arrangements in place to ensure that enforcement action taken in its area is consistent with those of neighbouring local authorities (LAs).
- 3.8.2. The service has a representative on the Surrey Food and Health Promotion Study Group which meet quarterly and is attended by the eleven Surrey LAs. The initial part of these meetings constitutes the Surrey Food Liaison Group which in addition to the Environmental Health representatives from the LAs, has representatives from Trading Standards and the HPA. This Group is attended by a champion from the Surrey Chief Environmental Health Officers Group enabling consistency issues to be discussed by the managers of the different food services in Surrey. The Surrey HPU and Environmental Health Infection Control Group meets three times a year with representatives from Surrey Health Protection Unit, the HPA, the PHLS, local water companies and the Surrey LAs.
- 3.8.3. The Council is part of the Surrey Safer Food Partnership to administer the smooth running of the SFBB scheme and share best practice with the other Surrey authorities and the private sector training providers.
- 3.8.4. Attendance at the meetings of these groups is a worthwhile activity and where demands on the service permit an officer will attend. Arrangements for referring cases to the relevant enforcing authority e.g. another LA or Trading Standards are covered in the food inspection and complaint/infectious disease investigation procedures.

3.9. Food Safety Promotion

- 3.9.1. Resources are focused on meeting our statutory food safety functions and therefore any promotional activities are limited. However the value of promotional work is recognised and events will be selected to ensure maximum impact with minimum use of resources. In 2007/8 a local school was visited to advise pupils on the correct way to wash hands

using an UV hand wash cabinet. The light in the cabinet shows up a dye on hands if it hasn't been washed off properly. They were also given a talk on the importance of good hygiene, and were given information/fun packs to take home. Approximately 90-100 children benefited from this activity.

- 3.9.2. In 2008/2009 it is intended that we will arrange and promote a food safety event in a local school in National Food Safety Week. The aim of this is to educate school children in good hygiene and provide them with advisory information to take home to spread the food safety message wider.

4. Resources

- 4.1. The resources allocated to the food safety service are currently felt to be sufficient to meet the demands on the service outlined in this plan.

4.2. Financial Allocation

- 4.2.1. The budget for providing this service is contained within the appropriate Service Plans.

4.3. Staffing Allocations

- 4.3.1. There are currently 2.75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts plus a contract EHO working on food law enforcement and related matters. They are appropriately qualified for the work undertaken in accordance with FSA COP. These posts are as follows:
- 2 x Senior EHO - Competent and authorised to inspect all categories of food premises (1 FTE in total)
 - 2 x Contractors - Competent and authorised to inspect all categories of food premises (0.75 FTE in total).
 - Contractor - Competent and authorised to inspect all categories of food premises (0.5 FTE)
 - Contractor - inspects 100 premises and carries out associated revisits as required
 - Business Support Officer - Provides administrative support to the food safety service (0.5 FTE)
- 4.3.2. In 2007/2008 contractors have been used to provide temporary cover for the food service due to maternity leave and staff vacancies.

4.4. Staff Development Plan

- 4.4.1. All members of staff are subject to ongoing appraisal by interview with their line manager which includes discussions on personal development and the production of a learning and development plan (LDP). This provides the opportunity to identify any training needs and the arrangements can then be made to meet those needs. A record of training is made on the LDP or the record of Continuing Professional Development of the member of staff. Team meetings held on a monthly basis provide an ongoing opportunity for staff development to be discussed and training to be delivered. There is an adequate budget for staff training for the food safety team and attendance on external courses will be arranged as appropriate to maintain their competency. Training provided by FSA, LACORS, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and other LAs is recognised as usually good value for money and such courses are most likely to be attended.
- 4.4.2. A food safety reference library for officers is maintained which contains the relevant legislation, COPs, Best Practice Guidance, Industry Guides and other reference material. Officers also have access to online reference material including the FSA and

LACORS websites. One officer has responsibility for ensuring the library remains up-to-date. Woking Borough Council holds the Investors in People Award.

5. Quality Assessment

- 5.1. There is a documented quality monitoring procedure for this service. This details the mechanisms in place to ensure that the service is delivered in accordance with the FSA Food Law Enforcement - The Standard. Monitoring activities include:-
- on-going staff appraisals
 - monthly team meetings
 - document review by SEHO/EHM
 - accompanied inspections
 - statistical performance monitoring e.g. response times; inspection numbers; number of written warnings issued
 - peer review benchmarking activities co-ordinated by the Surrey Food Study Group
 - customer complaints procedure – 0 complaints about the food safety service have been made in 2007/2008
- 5.2. The outcome of monitoring activities are fed back to staff to ensure that any appropriate corrective action is taken. Where possible the outcome and action taken is documented. The improvement plan produced following the FSA audit of the service was completed and signed off in 2006.

6. Review

6.1. Review Against the Service Plan

- 6.1.1. Performance is monitored against the objectives and standards set in the Service Plan and supporting policies and procedures at monthly team meetings. A full review of performance against the plan takes place annually when the next year's plan is being drafted.

6.2. Identification of any variation from the Service Plan

- 6.2.1. Where the review process identifies variances in the service delivered from that set out in the plan, the reasons for this will be documented. The service plan for the subsequent year will take account of the findings of the review and any relevant changes in circumstances.

6.3. Areas of Improvement

- 6.3.1. New computer software is now used to hold the food premises database and complete statutory returns to the FSA, which is part of the new corporate Land and Property based system. The accuracy of the premises database is constantly reviewed as the business map of Woking evolves. A lot of time has been put into ensuring accuracy of data entered onto the system so that we can report fully and correctly to the FSA. Training is to be carried out to further this work over the coming 12 months.
- 6.3.2. In addition work is ongoing to promote increased electronic delivery of services, by increasing the availability of food safety information/documents on the Council's website and to facilitate easier communication with the public and food businesses via the internet. On the website, there are now pages on food safety, infectious diseases and food poisoning.

- 6.3.3. A Business Process Review of the Environmental Health Service was carried out in 2006 by external consultants. This has resulted in a structural reorganisation and revision of job roles to facilitate a more generic style of working, which in turn will ensure that the fluctuating demands on the service as a whole can be best met. It is anticipated that this will enable more resources to be targeted at the priority food safety work areas highlighted in this plan. This way of working has been put in place during 2007/08. However, staff members leaving posts has had an effect on the numbers of staff suitably qualified and competent to carry out food safety work. In the coming year staff training and guidance will be necessary to ensure there are enough staff members available once current contract staff leave.
- 6.3.4. A new food law COP is to be introduced in 2008/09. This may outline new ways of working in the enforcement of food safety, such as new intervention measures in addition to inspections and investigations. It is currently not known what changes are expected or what impact that may or may not have on provision of services with existing resources.
- 6.3.5. It is proposed that the feasibility of a Scores on the Doors scheme is examined during 2008/09. This is a scheme whereby risk ratings following a food hygiene inspection is translated into a score which is then published on-line. Members of the public are then able to look at the score of a food business before they choose where to eat out. As well as being a good service to the public, it has also been shown to be an effective incentive for food business operators to improve food hygiene and safety in order to improve their scores.

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