

**The Highland Council**  
**Community Services Committee**  
**15 May 2014**

Agenda Item	<b>5</b>
Report No	COM/ 02/14

**Food Safety Team Plan**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report invites Members to approve the Food Safety Team Plan for 2014/15.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 When providing the Food Safety function the Council must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency. This includes the 'Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities' and the 'Code of Practice for Scotland' issued under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990.
- 1.2 The Framework Agreement requires each food safety service to document and implement a food team plan in accordance with a specified standard. A documented performance review of the plan requires to be carried out at least once a year. Both the plan and the review have to be submitted for Member approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.

**2. 2014/15 Food Safety Team Plan**

- 2.1 The Team Plan for 2014/15 is provided in **Appendix 1**. The plan follows a set format set out in the Framework agreement and provides background information on the team along with specific targets for the period.
- 2.2 A further document containing the review of the 2013/14 period will be submitted to the Committee later in 2014.

**3. Implications**

- 3.1 Legal/resource implications: In the current Framework Agreement and Code of Practice, the Food Standards Agency indicates that full compliance with all inspection frequencies will be expected. As stated in previous reports to the Committee, the food safety service cannot achieve this standard with current resources. Premises inspections are currently risk assessed and carried out on a priority basis, targeting higher risk premises before lower risk premises.
- 3.2 Risk implications: the food safety team plan specifies targets and priorities to manage risk 'TECS4' on the Councils Risk Register. TECS4 is the Consequences of serious food and water borne disease outbreak.

- 3.3 There are no equalities, climate change/carbon clever or Gaelic implications arising from these proposals.

**Recommendation**

Members are invited to approve the Food Safety Team Plan for 2014/15 as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 6 May 2014

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Background Papers:

- Food Standards Agency 'The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities', Amendment Five, April 2010  
<http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/frameworkagreementno5.pdf>
- Food Standards Agency 'Food Law Code of Practice for Scotland', March 2009  
<http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/copscotland0903.pdf>



**Community Services**  
**Environmental Health**

**Food Safety Team Plan 2014/15**

Ref: EH/FS/A1
Version: 0.1
Issued: 28/4/14
Status: DRAFT
Review Date: ----

**Contents**

**Introduction**

**1. Team Aims and objectives**

- 1.1 Aims and Objectives**
- 1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans**

**2. Background Information**

- 2.1 Profile of Local Authority**
- 2.2 Organisational Structure**
- 2.3 Scope of the Food Safety team**
- 2.4 Demands on the Food Safety team**
- 2.5 Enforcement Policy**

**3. Service Delivery**

- 3.1 Food Premises Inspections**
- 3.2 Food Complaints**
- 3.3 Home Authority principle**
- 3.4 Advice to Business**
- 3.5 Food Sampling**
- 3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**
- 3.7 Food Safety Incidents**
- 3.8 Liaison with other Organisations**
- 3.9 Food Safety and Standards Promotion**

**4. Resources**

- 4.1 Financial Allocation**
- 4.2 Staffing Allocation**
- 4.3 Staff Development Plan**

**5. Quality Assessment**

- 5.1 Quality Assessment**

**6. Review**

- 6.1 Review policy**
- 6.2 Review of the Food Safety Service Plan 2013/14**
- 6.3 2014/15 Priorities and Targets**

## **Introduction**

The Environmental Health team within Community Services carries out the statutory role of Food Authority within the Highland Council area. This Food Safety Team Plan outlines the Environmental Health approach to delivering all aspects of food regulatory and advice functions for the 2014/15 financial year. The plan forms an important part of the Service's processes to ensure national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally. A sub-document 'Food Safety Team Plan – 2013/14 review' will be issued later in 2014 reviewing the previous year's plan.

## **1. Service Aims and Objectives**

### **1.1 Aims and Objectives**

1.1.1 The Food Safety Service operates within the framework of the Services' Goals:

- To provide customer orientated and responsive high quality, cost effective and efficient services;
- To develop and implement strategies that promote and enhance social inclusion, public safety, public health, protect the environment, and encourage public and community and economic well-being;
- To encourage and promote sustainable and best value practices and procedures;
- To undertake our statutory duties and discretionary powers working in partnership with statutory and voluntary bodies where appropriate;
- To encourage and develop staff to deliver a high quality, safe and efficient service.

### **1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and plans**

1.2.1 This plan is the 'lowest rung' in the set of plans the Council has created to ensure its corporate objectives and the Programme for the Administration and Single Outcome Agreement are fulfilled. As such it provides practical implementation information for the Food Safety team. The plans integrate as follows:



## **2. Background Information**

### **2.1 Profile of the Local Authority**

2.1.1 In geographical terms the Highland Council is the largest Council in Scotland, spanning an area of 26,000 square kilometres – one third of the landmass of Scotland, one eighth of landward Britain.

2.1.2 Only 4% of the population of Scotland live within the Highland Area and the overall density is the lowest of any region of the EC. There are only eight persons to the square kilometre compared to an average of 66 for Scotland as a whole. The population of the area is 232,910 (2012 data).

### **2.2 Organisational structure**

2.2.1 The Council operates through five directorates:

- Care and Learning
- Finance
- Corporate Development
- Development and Infrastructure
- Community Services

2.2.2 As previously mentioned the Food Safety function lies within the Environmental Health team of Community Services. Community Services embraces environmental health, roads and community works, waste management, housing, building maintenance and emergency planning.

2.2.3 There is no single officer with special responsibility for food hygiene and food standards, with the roles being shared amongst the management team and 2 designated lead EHOS who cover Food Hygiene and Food Standards respectively in addition to their general duties.

2.2.4 The three Area Environmental Health Managers (AEHMs) have line management responsibilities for the Field Officers carrying out the specific food safety activities.

2.2.5 This Service Plan does not address Feedingstuffs as responsibility for this aspect of food legislation lies within the Trading Standards Service.

### **2.3 The Scope of the Food Safety Service**

2.3.1 Operational responsibility for food safety and food standards enforcement in premises subject to local authority enforcement currently lies totally with Highland Council Community Services. No duties are currently outsourced. Field staff include EHOs and technical Officers (Food Safety). Many of these Officers carry out other functions in addition to food safety and food standards work, e.g. several of the EHOs involved in food safety and food standards work also carry out the full range of environmental health duties e.g. health and safety inspections and investigation of public health complaints.

### **2.4 Demands on the Food Safety team**

2.4.1 The team has responsibility for 4110 food premises in the Highland area. This breaks down as follows:-

Primary producers	271
Manufacturers & packers	315
Importers/Exporters	2
Distributors/Transporters	54
Retailers	697
Restaurants and caterers	2771

2.4.2 It can be seen from the above that the majority of premises (67%) are restaurants and other caterers. Food hygiene inspections of these types of premises make up the bulk of the inspection workload.

2.4.3 The numbers given in 2.4.1 include premises that have been formally approved. Food Hygiene Legislation requires premises that manufacture and wholesale products of animal origin to be formally approved by their local Food Authority before they start trading. In Highland, these premises include:

Approved for Dairy Products (e.g. cheese producers, milk processors, ice cream producers)	8
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Approved for Fish and Shellfish (e.g. fish processors and smokers, shellfish dispatch centres)	61
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Approved for Meat and Minced Meat (e.g. manufacturing butchers)	6
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2.4.4 Food Hygiene Information Scheme: In 2010 the Council approved the development and implementation of the national Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS). The scheme is designed to provide further information to the public on outcomes of hygiene inspections and two ratings are available 'Pass' or 'Improvement Required'. The display of such information at the business is voluntary but all outcomes will be displayed on the web.

The rollout of the scheme was completed in June 2013 and now the inspection results for inspected premises are listed on the internet at [ratings.food.gov.uk](http://ratings.food.gov.uk). A searchable mobile phone app is also available.

2.4.5 E.coli O157 – cross-contamination strategy: In 2013, officers started undertaking pro-active inspections to implement FSA guidance on controlling the risks from E.coli O157. The guidance requires all businesses dealing in raw and ready to eat foods to review their processes to ensure the risks of cross contamination are eliminated. This will work will continue in 2014/15.

2.4.6 The Service recognises its responsibilities for the hygiene inspection of shipping, aircraft and trains. Shipping includes international cruise vessels, merchant shipping, and ferry services that visit or operate in the Highland area.

2.4.7 Highland Council has approximately 44 sites classified for shellfish harvesting. In addition to carrying out routine enforcement work on these sites, the

Council successfully bid to secure a 3 year contract to carry out Official Control sampling of these sites on behalf of the Food Standards Agency from 2012 through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. As a consequence, officers in the Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland areas will carry out a considerable amount of shellfish sampling. These samples are outwith the routine chemical and microbiological sampling programme covering general foodstuffs produced in the Highlands. Negotiation has commenced with the Food Standards Agency to extend the current contract through to 2017.

2.4.8 The Service recognises its responsibilities for general surveillance work on imported foods at retail and catering level. This is carried out during routine inspections.

2.4.9 There is one Border Inspection Post (BIP) in the Highlands at Invergordon. This permits the import of animal feedstuffs from countries outwith the European Community.

## **2.5 Enforcement Policy**

2.5.1 The Highland Council has formally adopted a Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

## **3. Service Delivery**

### **3.1 Food Premises Inspections**

#### **3.1.1 Food Hygiene**

Food premises have been risk assessed and categorised in terms of the Code of Practice. All premises are entered onto the Flare database and inspection programmes have been generated.

3.1.2 **A 100% 'inspection on time' target has been set for premises in categories A, B.** Performance Indicators for the A and B categories in recent years have shown virtually 100% compliance.

3.1.3 Due to the Cross-contamination strategy no specific target will be set for C premises for 2014/15. Current resources do not permit the inspection of all premises in category D in terms of the minimum frequencies specified in the Code of Practice.

#### **3.1.4 Food Standards**

Food Standards work is concerned with composition and labelling of food. Food premises have been risk assessed and categorised in terms of the Code of Practice. All premises are entered onto the Flare database and inspection programmes have been generated.

3.1.5 **Premises in the highest risk category (High) have been prioritised for 100% inspection.** A 100% target for food manufacturers in 'medium' category has been set.

3.1.6 Current resources do not permit the inspection of all premises in category 'Medium' in terms of the minimum frequencies specified in the Code of Practice.

3.1.7 In the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, the Food Standards Agency indicates that full compliance with **all** inspection frequencies will be expected. Current resources do not permit full compliance with these requirements.

### **3.2 Food Complaints**

3.2.1 The Service has a policy for dealing with complaints raised regarding food premises enforced by the Service. This would cover complaints from the public such as poor hygiene of premises, foreign body contamination, out of date food, food poisoning, pests in premises and poor personal hygiene practices. Statistics on complaints received in the 2013/14 period will be covered in the document 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2013/14 review'.

### **3.3 Home Authority Principle**

3.3.1 Environmental Health supports the Home Authority Principle, and will assist any other food authority in the UK with an enquiry about food produced in the Highland area.

### **3.4 Advice to Business**

3.4.1 Although Environmental Health act for the Council as the enforcement authority, we still treat food businesses as our customers. Officers are encouraged to attend and provide advice to any food industry meetings in their areas. In addition to offering advice during inspections and on request at our offices, Environmental Health also carries out customer satisfaction surveys throughout the area. Amongst other aspects, these questionnaires assess the advice given by Officers to businesses.

### **3.5 Food Sampling**

3.5.1 For 2014/15 Environmental Health has contracts for bacteriological examination and chemical analysis of foodstuffs with Dr. AC Mackie, Public Analyst, City of Edinburgh Council.

3.5.2 Food sampling target figures (on which the contracts with the laboratories have been agreed) are **500 bacteriological** samples and **500 chemical** samples (composition and labelling).

3.5.3 Environmental Health also participates in sampling surveys organised by the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee and in European food surveys, usually co-ordinated by the FSA. Figures for these samples are included in those at 3.5.2 above.

### **3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**

3.6.1 Environmental Health is party to the NHS Highland and Highland Council Joint Major Incident Plan for the Investigation of Foodborne and Waterborne disease. The plan is designed to deal with any actual or threatened major



outbreak within the Highland Council area. Procedures for investigating sporadic cases of foodborne diseases are outlined in the Council's Protocol for Investigation of Enteric Disease. Appropriate action for dealing with incidents, where it appears that a food business may be implicated in a case of foodborne disease, is addressed in the Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

- 3.6.2 Standard infectious gastro-enteritis questionnaires are used by all Officers for investigation purposes and procedures are in place for the investigating officer to forward the completed forms to the Consultant in Public Health Medicine at NHS Highland. A copy is also sent simultaneously to the Environmental health manager. There is on-going close liaison between Environmental Health and the NHS Highland including joint infectious disease outbreak exercises.

### **3.7 Food Safety Incidents**

- 3.7.1 Food Alerts are currently brought to the attention of Environmental Health by email. The Food Standards Agency is aware of the procedure for contacting relevant Officers outwith normal working hours via Council's emergency planning out-of-hours number.

### **3.8 Liaison with other organisations**

- 3.8.1 Environmental Health takes measures to ensure that enforcement action taken in its area is consistent with that in neighbouring authorities. The lead EHOs are members of the North of Scotland Food Liaison Group (NSFLG) which comprises members of all food authorities in the north of Scotland, i.e. Highland, Orkney, Shetland, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen, Moray and Western Isles. This group meets regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern and seeks to ensure uniform enforcement action across the entire area. Minutes from all meetings are forwarded to Environmental Health Area offices.
- 3.8.2 The NSFLG also acts as a forum for organising joint sampling programmes throughout the entire area.
- 3.8.3 The Environmental Health Manager is also a member of the Environmental Health Liaison Group which has representatives from NHS Highland, Animal Health, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Health Protection Scotland, Scottish Agricultural College and Scottish Water. This group provides a forum for discussion of various environmental health matters including food safety and the presence of NHS Highland and HPS officials provide regional and national perspectives respectively.
- 3.8.4 Environmental Health Officers currently liaise with the Council's Planning and Building Control Service with regard to examining planning applications and building warrant applications which may relate to food safety activities, including discharges to shellfish growing areas. This provides opportunities for advising planning or building control officials of any relevant problems and also for contacting applicants/agents to discuss proposals and offer advice and guidance.

### **3.9 Food Safety and Standards Promotion**

3.9.1 The resources available to Environmental Health are limited and hygiene inspections of high risk food premises have been given priority. Consequently food safety promotion has to be very focussed.

3.9.2 Officers will promote the Food Hygiene Information Scheme in 2014/15. Officers will continue to promote the Eatsafe awards in 2014/15. These awards for excellence in hygiene were launched in 2005 and a number of awards have been already been given in the Highland Area.

## **4. Resources**

### **4.1 Financial allocation**

4.1.1 Community Services is a multi-skilled Service that combines Environmental Health, with a number of other functions. It is not possible to extrapolate costs relating to food safety specifically. The total Environmental Health budget for 2013/14 was £1.92 million. This included all staffing costs, training, travel and subsistence and overheads. The complete TEC Services revenue budget for the same period was £66 million.

### **4.2 Staffing allocation**

4.2.1 The number of staff working on food law enforcement is currently 15.13 FTE officers. This includes:

- 10.18 FTE food safety enforcement officers
- 4.5 FTE officers dedicated to shellfish
- 0.45 FTE officers carrying out primary production inspections

Detailed information on levels of authorisation as per the Codes of Practice is included in the Service's Authorisation Procedure.

### **4.3 Staff Development Plan**

4.3.1 In line with the Service's Training Policy, officers are and will be encouraged to identify courses in which they have a particular interest. In particular:

- Regular Food Working Group meetings provide a focus for discussion of training needs.
- Every Officer has received in-house training in the operation of the Civica APP database system.
- Officers shall be permitted to attend external training courses and seminars
- The Service has access to online food hygiene training courses

## **5 Quality Assessment**

5.1 Performance monitoring against the FSA Framework Agreement and the Service's own policies and operating procedures is carried out by the AEHMs in respect of quality and consistency of inspections as outlined in the Food Safety and Standards enforcement policies. As also outlined therein, AEHMs are responsible for the monthly monitoring of inspections and sampling carried out.

## **6. Review**

### **6.1 Review Policy**

**6.1.1** The Food Safety Service Plan will be reviewed annually and will include information on the previous year's performance against the Food Safety Service Plan and any specified performance targets.

## **6.2 Review of Food Safety Service Plan 2013/14 Targets**

**6.2.1** A sub-document 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2013/14 review' will be issued later in 2014 reviewing the previous year's plan.

## **6.3 2014/15 Priorities and Targets**

**6.3.1** **It must be noted that investigations, or enforcement action, significant to public health will take priority over the targets specified below.** The targets have been adjusted to respond to the FSA guidance on E.coli O157 and the control of cross-contamination.

### **6.3.2 Food Hygiene Premises Inspections Targets**

A 100% 'inspection on time' target has been set for premises in categories A, B in 2014/15. An alternative enforcement strategy will be used in 2014/15 for the low risk category E premises.

### **6.3.3 Food Standards Premises Inspections Targets**

Premises in the highest risk category (A) have been prioritised for 100% inspection in 2014/15. 100% of food manufacturers in the medium category (B) will be inspected. Other premises in the medium category will be inspected where resources permit. An alternative enforcement strategy will be used in 2014/15 for the low risk category 'C' premises.

### **6.3.4 Food Sampling Targets**

Target figures for 2014/15 are 500 bacteriological samples and 500 chemical samples (composition and labelling). Environmental Health will also participate in sampling surveys organised by the Scottish Food Co-ordinating Committee and in European food surveys, usually co-ordinated by LACORS. Figures for these samples are included in those above.

### **6.3.5 Priority projects**

A number of key projects have been set for the food service for the 2014/15 period. These are detailed below:

1. Work with Scottish Government and the Food Standards Agency Scotland on the introduction of the new Scottish Food Safety Body 'Food Standards Scotland'. The current proposals are for Food Standards Scotland to be established in April 2015.
2. Review progress on cross-contamination initiative
3. Engage with FSA on the EC review of official controls in 2014/15
4. Conclude review of unrated premises & unregistered premises
5. Conclude review of export certification procedures and charges in line with proposed national guidance that will be issued in 2014.
6. Implement and close Action Plan agreed with FSAS following audit of shellfish sampling activities in 2013.
7. Provide targeted training sessions for local business sectors on new regulatory requirements.

8. Continue working with colleagues in Education services on food standards and school meal procurement.
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