

South Cambridgeshire Food Plan 2023

Introduction

This Service Plan sets out how the local authority intends to provide an effective food safety service that meets the requirements of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Framework Agreement. It covers the functions carried out by authorised officers of the Environmental Health and Licensing Services (EH&L) under the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990, and all relevant Regulations.

Service aims and objectives

- To ensure that all food and drink intended to be placed on the market for human consumption is produced, stored, distributed, and handled in a safe, hygienic manner and in line with all relevant food hygiene legislation.
- To provide a first class, robust service which gives consumers confidence.
- To support business through the continuing Brexit process and ensure food safety is not compromised.

Links to corporate aims and objectives

- Growing local businesses and economies – We will support businesses of all sizes, including rural enterprise and farming, to help create new jobs and opportunities near to where people live and support the local economy.
- A modern and caring Council – We will provide our customers with high-quality services, strive to reduce costs, build on what we are good at, and make decisions in a transparent, open, and inclusive way.

Background information

- The area served by the Council is approximately 350 square miles, much of which is farmland given to primary production of food, mainly cereals and vegetables. Villages range from small rural settlements to new village settlements and new towns.
- A growing economy and new housing have led to the population expanding to approximately 154,660. New settlements will take the population to circa 200,000 by 2031. A Local Plan was adopted in 2018 which includes options for the further expansion of new towns Northstowe and Cambourne and new developments at Bourn Airfield, Waterbeach and the Cambridge city fringes.
- With this projected growth, it is anticipated that there will be a steady increase in the number of food businesses in the district and in the associated work.
- All interventions with businesses and members of the community are carried out with regard to the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity for local people as stated in the Equal Opportunities Policy and the Council's Corporate Enforcement and Inspection Policy.
- The Council's food safety service is delivered from South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridgeshire, CB23 6EA. The office is open to residents and businesses between 8am and 5pm. However, opening times are varied in light of the ongoing Pandemic. The EH&L Team can be contacted by Commercial.Envhealth@scambs.gov.uk or by calling 01954 713 000.

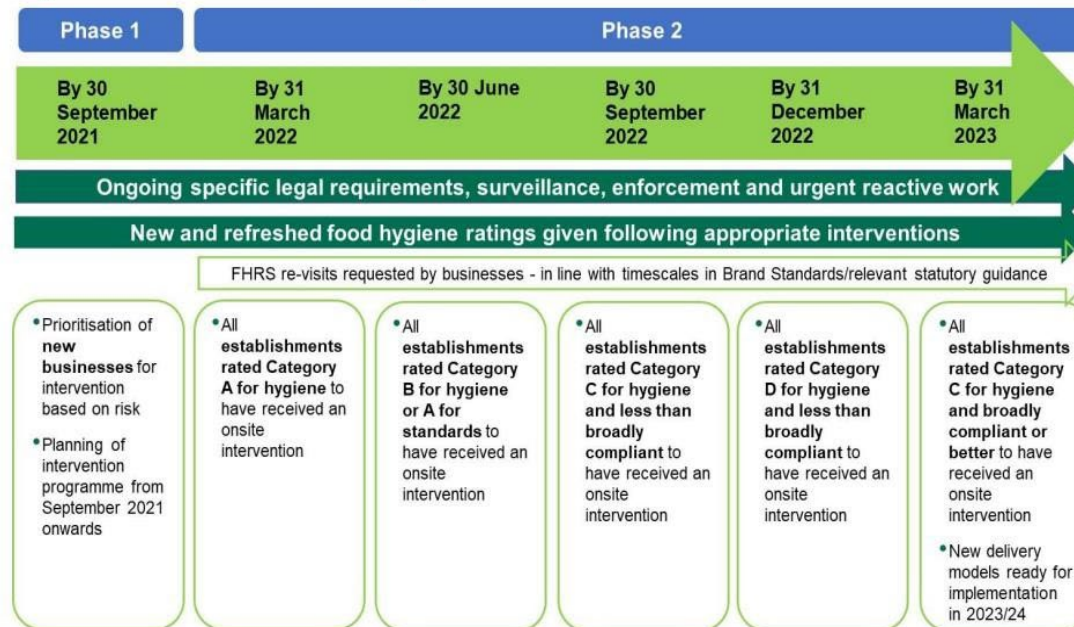
Organisational structure

The EH&L Team is part of the Waste and Environment Service led by Bode Esan, who reports directly to the Chief Executive.

Scope of the service

- The EH&L Team is responsible for the enforcement of the Hygiene Regulations. Qualified and competent EH&L officers undertake proactive work through completing an inspection programme based on the FSA's Code of Practice - Food Hygiene Intervention Rating Scheme. The service is delivered proactively through programmed inspections and other interventions.
- The service recognises the FSA COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan: guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023/24 as shown below.

Figure 1: Outline of the Recovery Plan



- Service delivery can take place at any premises, including commercial operations and private residential properties, where food is being prepared, stored, handled, or processed before placing onto the market.
- Officers also carry out reactive work relating to complaints/intelligence or requests received by the service.
- Other areas of work covered by the team include Infectious Disease, Health and Safety, Public Health, Safety Advisory Group (SAG) Licensing, and Health Promotion.
- Officers may undertake dual food safety and health and safety inspections of relevant sector specific Local Authority enforced premises. Where appropriate this is based on an intelligence-led, risk-focused inspection programme. Premises are inspected at times when businesses are open / operational.
- The Service does not have a formal out of hours service.

- In the event of a food poisoning outbreak, the UK Health Security Agency, Joint Communicable Disease Outbreak Management Plan would be invoked to coordinate an appropriate response.
- The Council carries out all functions relating to food safety matters as highlighted in the FSA Code of Practice, including:
 - Interventions that are official controls:
 - Inspections.
 - Monitoring.
 - Surveillance.
 - Verification.
 - Audit.
 - Sampling.

Other interventions, i.e., those which do not constitute official controls include:

- Education, advice, and coaching
- Information and intelligence gathering (including using sampling for information gathering purposes)
- Alternative enforcement strategy (AES) (e.g., intelligence gathering questionnaires)

Other tasks undertaken are:

- Implementation of the national food hygiene rating scheme
- Revisits to poor performing businesses
- Approval and inspections of approved establishments
- Enforcement action (where necessary)
- Investigation of complaints
- Investigation and control of infectious diseases

- Responding to food alerts and incidents
- Registering of food businesses
- Dealing with imported food and its origin
- Dealing with food export certificates
- Good hygiene and safety advice to food consumers
- Promotional events and campaigns e.g. FSA campaigns and awareness projects
- Attendance/inspections at temporary events, shows and festivals (including pre-event meetings and debriefs)
- Primary authority advice and consultancy
- Undertaking peer reviews and training to maintain competency and staff development

Demands on the food enforcement service as of January 2023.

Food premises are subject to programmed food hygiene interventions as per the table below.

Risk Category	A	B	C	D	E	Outside	Unrated	Total
Number of premises	9	49	237	456	335	145	41	1272

- Those classified as unrated are new businesses awaiting a rating inspection.
- There were approximately 145 businesses within the district where the nature of the operation is temporary, so low as to present little or no public health risk or unlikely to be viewed as a food business by the public. These premises are excluded from the scope of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Registered food businesses by type

The below table shows the number of registered and approved businesses for each FSA category type within the district.

Type of Premises	Number
Distributors/Transporters	38
Manufacturers and Packers	54
Primary Producers	61
Small Retailers	140
Retail - Other	7
Restaurants, cafe and canteen	184
Importers/Exporters	3
Supermarket/Hypermarket	22
Hotels/Guest House	30
Pub/Club	116
Caring Establishments	150
Take-away	72
School/college	103
Mobile Food unit	110
Restaurant/caterer - Others	182
Total	1272

- Currently there are four food businesses approved under Regulation (EC) 853/2004. There is also a large production plant making preserves and jellies for the national and international market and an international trading chocolatier.
- The notification of complaints and enquiries regarding food safety and hygiene is an important area of work for the EH&L Team. The Council takes a risk-based approach to assessing and investigating food safety and hygiene complaints. The Council has a response target of 10 working days for complaints and enquiries. In 2022 the Council dealt with a range of incidents and enquiries. These are set out in the following table.

Type of Incident / Action	Number
Food hygiene complaints (hygiene and structure)	29
Food complaints (food, other)	50
Food Export Certificate	80
Food registration enquiry	38
FHRS Request a Revisit	21
FSA Food alerts for action	0
Advisory visits (including new businesses & chargeable business advice)	1
Infectious disease notifications	1

All food premises are rated according to their level of risk, as defined by the FSA's Code of Practice. The risk rating determines the frequency and nature of the interventions that are classed as official controls. The table below provides a summary:

Category	Score	Minimum intervention frequency
A	92 or higher	At least every 6 months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	52 to 71	At least every 18 months
D	31 to 51	At least every 24 months
E	0 to 30	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every three years

The Council implements the FSA's national food hygiene rating scheme, whereby a business is provided a hygiene rating based upon three criteria:

- Level of (current) compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures (including food handling practices and procedures, and temperature control)
- Level of (current) compliance with structural requirements (including cleanliness, layout, condition of structure, lighting, ventilation, facilities etc.)
- Confidence in management/control procedures (CIM).

The scheme is designed to provide information about business hygiene standards to members of the public but is also a useful tool to drive up performance standards of food businesses.

During delivering the food safety service, officers may need to resort to formal action in some circumstances. Details of formal action taken in 2022 are set out in the following table:

Type of formal action	Number
Hygiene Improvement Notice	12
Remedial Action Notice	1
Suspension/withdrawal of Approval status	0
Emergency Prohibition Notice / Prohibition Order	0
Seizure/detention of food	0
Simple Caution	0
Prosecution	0
Prohibition of people following prosecution	0

Corporate Enforcement & Inspection Policy

The EH&L Team adopt the principles laid down in the Enforcement Concordat, which states that enforcement must be fair, consistent, and equitable. The Council's current Corporate Enforcement outlines the enforcement options available for dealing with problems relating to non-compliance with the legislation, is available on our website and a copy is available on request.

Primary and home authority principle

The Home Authority Principle was developed by food and trading standards authorities to aid consistent enforcement. The scheme provides businesses with a home authority source of guidance and advice and provides a system for the resolution of disputes.

Alternatively, businesses can form a 'Primary Authority' statutory partnership with a local authority to assist with consistent enforcement. The guidance and advice the local authority provides must be taken into consideration by officers carrying out inspections and dealing with instances of non-compliance.

The Council endorses and supports the Home Authority Principle. Officers give advice to companies and other food authorities on either a 'Home Authority' or 'Originating Authority' basis. The Service will liaise with the Home and or Originating Authority of a company whose premises have been inspected to pass information, and if necessary, take enforcement action. The EH&L Team currently has no Home Authority arrangement but is an Originating Authority and as such receives requests for information and advice from other Local Authorities investigating complaints or wishing to find out details of processes and refer food complaints for investigation and comment.

Advice to business

The EH&L Team provides advice and support for all food businesses. Information is available on the local authority website at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/business/food-hygiene>.

The EH&L Team signposts food businesses to relevant information for their business activities.

The Council also offers a chargeable consultancy service, whereby food businesses can receive bespoke advice. Details of this service can be found at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/business/food-hygiene/business-advice/>.

Sampling

In 2022 food sampling activity increased in line with our sampling plan /programme as part of our sampling strategy and approach to specific local and national demands. The plan incorporated priorities identified by UK Health Security Agency and the FSA, as well as being used as a relevant intervention measure during routine inspections or investigations.

Food and environmental samples are sent to an appropriately approved UKAS laboratory for testing. The analysis can include testing for food composition, microbiology, and contamination. Samples from food complaints may be submitted for analysis. In 2022, a total of 119 samples were taken (13 official and 106 informal).

Control and investigation of outbreaks and food-related infectious disease

The EH&L Team will investigate and respond to food-related infectious disease notifications in accordance with procedures agreed with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) and UK Health Security Agency current Joint Communicable Disease Incident/Outbreak Management Plan.

No notified cases of food-related infectious diseases were confirmed in 2022.

Please note public health were not sending through notifications, due to ongoing Covid / Strep A workloads.

Food safety incidents

Food incident notifications are issued by the FSA regarding national food issues to local authorities, the majority being for information only. Food alerts for action require officers to undertake a wide variety of actions dependent upon the issue at hand.

Liaison with other organisations

The EH&L Team engages with a number of stakeholders regarding the supply and operation of its food hygiene services including:

- Food Stands Agency
- The Cambridgeshire Food and Health Liaison Group
- Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
- Cambridgeshire County Council Public Health
- The Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Board and South Cambridgeshire Local Health Partnership.
- The Cambridgeshire Obesity Group and the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Locality Obesity Group.
- UK Health Security Agency
- The UK Health Security Agency Port Health Group.
- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards
- Other LA's nationally
- Local Crime and Disorder Partnership

Note: this is not an exhaustive list of stakeholders

Food safety promotions

Food safety promotion work examples include:

- Business newsletters, social media campaigns, magazine articles, etc.
- Participation in FSA campaigns.

- Participation in business events, including Better Business for All (BBfA).
- Participation at Council organised events
- Email/letter mailshots of updated food legislation/guidance.

Resourcing of EH&L - Financial

The budget for 2022/2023 can be found in Appendix 1

Resourcing of EH&L –

The number of full time equivalent (FTE) officers deployed in food safety and hygiene from April 2022 to March 2023 is set out in the following table:

Officer Post	FTE
Operational Manager	0.4
Principle Commercial Officer	0.6
Environmental Health Officer/ Higher Food Officer	3.95
Support Resource	1

Official controls due on the service

The chart below shows the approximate number of food premises that will require an intervention, inspection, or official control over the coming year.

	A	B	C	D	E	Unrated	New business (est)	Total
Total	6	40	138	237	20	30	120	591

Officer development

All staff have an annual personal and development review which results in a performance agreement and personal development plan. These are reviewed at monthly one to ones. This framework aims to identify and track training and development needs. Food safety training needs are prioritised in the context of wider Environmental Health requirements identified within the service wide training plan.

All staff complete a training record log to further assist in identifying development and training needs and for monitoring the competency of individual officers. The officers undertaking specific duties, such as dealing with approved premises, are identified and the training requirements assessed accordingly. Less formal training opportunities such as webinars and internal training (cascade) are provided to encourage shared learning and expertise across the team.

In accordance with the Code, a competency assessment against the FSA 'Knowledge and skills for the effective delivery of official food and feed controls and other activities' (the Competency Framework) will only be required for officers whose authorisation is dated on or after 1 March 2021 and for existing officers (which includes regulatory support officers) who were authorised prior to this date, but whose authorisation needs to be extended to new activities on or after 1 March 2022.

Quality assessment and performance management

The role of EH&L Officers when undertaking food safety and hygiene duties is to provide advice to businesses to get it right, and to identify and remedy matters that might pose a risk to food safety.

The EH&L Team reports performance measures which demonstrate food safety compliance of businesses and the overall performance of the EH&L service.

The Council has introduced a set of service standards that aim to put customers first, deliver outstanding services and provide easy access to services and information. They place the customer at the centre of its service delivery and the EH&L Team shares these standards.

The council contact centre acts as a first point of contact for food safety enquiries. Staff are trained to answer basic questions on food and hygiene issues. The service is available 8.00 am to 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday.

To ensure consistency, the EH&L Team undertakes the following:

- Regular team meetings
- 1:2:1's
- Cascading of learning and information
- Peer review of visits, correspondence, notices, and prosecution files
- Consistency exercises
- Regular liaison meetings with the Cambridgeshire wide Food Liaison Group (FLG)

Review

A review of this plan will be undertaken in Jan 2024 where the team's performance will be reported.



