

Food Safety Service Plan 2023/24

Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee – 22 February 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For decision

Also considered by: Cabinet – 14 March 2024
Council – 23 April 2024

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of: Meeting a statutory duty of the council.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. McArthur

Contact Officer: Glenys Shorrick, Ext. 7158

Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee:

That it be recommended to Cabinet, that it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the 'SDC Food Safety Plan 2023/24' and support the adoption of this document.

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To note the contents of the 'SDC Food Safety Plan 2023/24' and agree the adoption of this document.

Reason for recommendation:

This food safety plan details how the Environmental Health Team intend to meet and discharge its statutory obligations in respect of Food Safety. This document is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency and if approved will be shared with them.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council recognises the importance that the provision of an effective Food and Safety team plays in ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of those who live, work and visit our district. This Service Plan sets out how Sevenoaks District Council intends to provide an effective food safety service that meets the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement. It covers the functions carried out by authorised officers of the Food and Safety Team and provides a clear strategy to ensure that resources are targeted towards front line services and high risk food activities.
- 2 The objective of this plan is to ensure that a program of food enforcement activity is carried out providing public confidence that food is produced and sold under safe and hygienic conditions in the Sevenoaks district. The layout of the plan is dictated by the Framework Agreement between the Food Standards Agency and Local Authorities.
- 3 The Plan sets out our priorities and what they will be going forward ensuring that resources are targeted where they add greatest value in providing safeguards for public health and consumer protection in relation to food.
- 4 We have worked hard as a team to ensure that all of our higher risk establishments (A and B rated) have received an inspection by the due date and all of our non-compliant establishments (awarded a 2 hygiene rating or less) have received a revisit to check compliance.
- 5 We are a busy team and have been carrying a part-time Food Safety Officer vacancy since April 2023. To ensure we meet and exceed our performance target for inspecting medium risk premises due within the inspection programme we have occasionally used an experienced contractor to help us manage variances in demand and fluctuations in the programme.
- 6 The team aims to successfully balance service delivery between education, encouragement and enforcement.
- 7 To ensure that the food safety service operates as efficiently as possible we continue to invest in technology and systems to assist us and we have re-configured processes and procedures. We have developed a more effective strategy which has enabled us to focus more closely on our lower risk food businesses which were not a priority as we were emerging from the pandemic eg home bakers, childminders and pharmacies. Officers continue to undertake electronic food hygiene inspections utilising iPads and custom built iAuditor forms and we have developed additional templates and other food safety documents improving the accuracy and transparency of our service.
- 8 Wherever possible, administration tasks have been moved from qualified Food officers to our technical administrators generating additional capacity. We are working to increase the knowledge and experience of these officers so that

they are able to respond to basic enquiries and requests improving the speed of our responses to customers. We work with our Customer Solutions colleagues to ensure that 'Frequently asked questions' are accurate and informative and with our Communications team to ensure that the content of our website is accurate and a good source of information for residents and businesses. We encourage customers to provide feedback on the service they have received via an emailed customer feedback survey.

- 9 The service remains on track to deliver this year's food programme in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Plans.
- 10 We will carry out a review of our Food Safety service annually and this will be based on performance and resources available over the previous 12 months, feedback from local businesses and the community, observations from Members and the team and guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency.

Key Implications

Financial

Minimal cost as undertaken within existing resources.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Food Safety Plan is a document required by the Food Standards Agency and its format is dictated by the Framework Agreement between the FSA and local authorities.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sevenoaks District Climate Change Strategy 2023/24

Background Papers

None.

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning and Regulatory Services