

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
COMMITTEE – 18 March 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

**SUMMARY**

This report invites Members to approve the Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 When providing the Food Safety function the Council must have regard to the 'Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement' which sets out the standards agreed with the Food Standards Agency.
- 1.2 The Framework Agreement requires each food safety service to document and implement a food service 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.
- 1.3 The Food Safety Service Plan for 2010/11 is contained in **Appendix A**. Further documents containing specific targets and the review of the 2009/10 period will be submitted to the TECS Committee in May.

**2. Resource Implications**

- 2.1 In the Framework Agreement the Food Standards Agency indicates that full compliance with **all** inspection frequencies will be expected. As stated in previous reports to the Committee on Performance Indicators, 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 the higher risk premises.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Members are invited to approve the Service Plan 2010/11 contained within this report.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 5 March 2010

Authors: Alistair Thomson, Head of EH&TS; Alan Yates, Principal Food Safety Officer

Background Papers: FSA 'Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement'



## TEC Services - Environmental Health

### **Food Safety Service Plan 2010-2011**

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## **Introduction**

The Environmental Health Service within Transport, Environmental and Community Services (TEC Services) carries out the statutory role of Food Authority within the Highland Council area. This Food Safety Service Plan outlines the Environmental Health approach to delivering all aspects of food regulatory and advice functions for the 2010/11 financial year. The plan forms an important part of the Service's processes to ensure national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally. Sub-documents 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2010/11 targets' and 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2009/10 review' will be issued in May 2010 setting specific targets for 2010/11 and 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 TEC 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 closely linked to 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 Service. 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 219,400 (2008 data).

### **2.2 Organisational structure**

2.2.1 The Council operates seven services:

- Chief Executive's Service
- Education, Culture and Sport
- Finance
- Housing and Property
- Planning and Development
- Social Work
- Transport, Environmental and Community Services

2.2.2 The Council has three operational management areas:

- Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross
- Ross, Skye and Lochaber
- Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey

2.2.3 The Strategic Committee Structure is: -

- Resources Committee
- Education Culture and Sport Committee
- Housing and Social Work Committee
- Transport Environmental and Community Services Committee
- Planning Environment and Development Committee
- Audit and Scrutiny Committee
- Gaelic Committee

Strategic or policy reports concerning the Food Safety Service will be reported to the TEC Services Committee.

Planning Applications and Review Committees operate in each of the three operational areas. Licensing Committees (dealing with wider licensing issues such as taxi licensing) and Licensing Boards (dealing with liquor licensing and betting offices) also operate in each of the three operational areas.

2.2.4 As previously mentioned the Food Safety function lies within the Environmental Health Service of TEC Services. TEC Services embraces environmental health, trading standards, roads and community works, waste management, transport and infrastructure, and emergency planning.

2.2.5 The Officer with special responsibility for food hygiene and food standards is the Principal Food Safety Officer (PFSO) who reports direct to the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards. The role of the Principal Food Safety Officer is to:

- Create and implement policies and procedures to ensure effective delivery of the food safety function
- Provide field Officers with operational advice, guidance and instruction
- Monitor quality and performance of food safety staff
- Co-ordinate the Service's response to Food Safety Incidents and Foodborne disease outbreaks.

2.2.6 The PFSO has direct line management responsibility for 5 shellfish sampling officers. Direct line management responsibility for other field staff lies with three Area Environmental Health Managers (AEHMs). In practice the Principal Food Safety Officer is in daily contact with Field Officers and AEHMs, and issues operational advice, guidance and instructions to them as a matter of course and acts with the authority of the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards.

2.2.7 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 TEC 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 Service**

2.4.1 The Service has responsibility for 4408 food premises in the Highland Area (figure from February 2010). This breaks down as follows:-

Primary Producers	242
Manufacturers & packers	239
Food Importer	1
Distributors	62
Retailers	767
Restaurants and other caterers	3097

2.4.2 It can be seen from the above that the vast majority of premises (70%) 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)	10
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Approved for Fish and Shellfish (e.g. fish processors and smokers, shellfish dispatch centres)	56
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Approved for Meat and Minced Meat (e.g. manufacturing butchers)	6
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2.4.4 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.

2.4.5 The Service recognises its responsibilities for general surveillance work on imported foods at retail and catering level. Arrangements are being made for these to be carried out at ports and airports. This is in line with the Food Standards Agency's Step Change Initiative which aims to improve the co-ordination and delivery of local-authority inspection of foods and products of animal origin at seaports and airports.

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. Work is progressing to co-ordinate the inspection of the appropriate vessels in partnership with home authorities. Inspection frequencies will be calculated having reference to the Code of Practice and any guidance produced by LACORS or the local food liaison group.

2.4.7 Highland Council has approximately 50 sites classified for shellfish harvesting, the highest number within a local authority area in Scotland. As a consequence, officers in the Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland areas carry out a considerable amount of shellfish sampling. Samples are regularly sent to the laboratories in Oban and Weymouth for examination. These samples are outwith the routine Chemical and microbiological sampling programme covering general foodstuffs produced in the Highlands. The Food Standards Agency has provided funding to employ 4.5 sampling officers on a temporary basis to assist with meeting these requirements.

2.4.8 Environmental Health have been awarded funding from the FSA to employ an officer to carry out inspections at agricultural premises. An animal health and welfare officer has been employed to ensure

effective inspections and minimum disruption to operators. The officer has been trained to cover food hygiene, feed safety and animal health and welfare activities during a single inspection. The area has approximately 5300 agricultural holdings.

## **2.5 Enforcement Policy**

2.5.1 The Highland Council TEC Services Committee 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. The numbers below were produced in February 2009.

#### **Food Hygiene**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Inspection frequency (minimum)</b>	<b>Number</b>
A	Every 6 months	30
B	Every year	290
C	Every 18 months	1428
D	Every 2 years	662
E	Alternative Strategy	1670
Unrated	New premises awaiting risk calculation	322
Outwith	No set inspection frequency	6

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

3.1.3 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.

#### **Food Standards**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Inspection frequency (minimum)</b>	<b>Number</b>
High	Every year	23
Medium	Every 2 years	1038
Low	Alternative Strategy	2874
Unrated	New premises awaiting risk calculation	448

Outwith	No set inspection frequency	6
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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 2009/10 period will be covered in the document 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2009/10 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 Environmental Health have provided food safety training to businesses in partnership with Local Enterprise companies and with training providers. 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 carry 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 2010/11 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 Co-ordinating Committee and in European food surveys, usually co-ordinated by LACORS. 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 are 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 PFSO. There is ongoing 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 Principal Food Safety Officer is a member 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 Principal Food Safety Officer is also a member of the Environmental Health Liaison Group which has representatives from NHS Highland, State Veterinary Service, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health, Scottish Agricultural College and North of Scotland Water Authority. This group provides a forum for discussion of various environmental health matters including food safety and the presence of NHS Highland and SCIEH 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. Environmental Health do not receive any proportion of the application fees.

### **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 continue to promote the Eatsafe awards in 2010/11. 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 TEC 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 2009/10 was £1.8 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 **16.23** officers. This includes 4.5 FTE officers on temporary contract for shellfish sampling and 1 FTE officer on temporary contract for farm inspection. Detailed information on levels of authorisation as per the Codes of Practice is included in the Service's Authorisation Procedure.

The FSA Audit in 2005 found that an insufficient number of officers had been appointed to carry out the food service function. Work will progress in 2010/11 to ensure resources are effectively prioritised.

#### **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 FLARE 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 PFSO 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 2009/10 Targets**

- 6.2.1 A sub-document 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2009/10 review' will be issued in May 2010 reviewing the previous year's plan.

##### **6.3 Areas of Improvement – 2010/11 Targets**

- 6.3.1 A sub-document 'Food Safety Service Plan – 2010/11 targets' will be issued in May 2010 setting specific targets for 2010/11.