

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**  
Date: **23 January 2020**  
Title: **Food Safety Plan progress report**  
Portfolio Area: **Wellbeing – Cllr Hawkins**  
Wards Affected: **Which Wards/all**  
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and **Y**  
clearance obtained:

Date next steps can be taken:

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Panel consider the progress made with the Food Safety Service Plan 2019/20.**

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 This Food Safety Service Plan has been produced in order to give clear details of the food safety services provided across South Hams District Council and how they will be carried out during the financial year 2019/2020. It also shows how the function contributes to the Corporate Themes and the Environmental Health Community of Practice Work plan.
- 1.2 This Service Plan attempts to show the variety, depth and complexity of the work carried out. Food safety is a statutory function and has serious implications to public health and wellbeing should food safety standards fail
- 1.3 The Food Safety Plan 2019/20 was accepted by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019
- 1.4 The Panel resolved that ; "The Food Safety Service Plan 2019/20 be approved, subject to, a six-monthly progress report being presented to the Panel that makes reference to opportunities available to the service to increase income and the areas identified for improvement and future development."

- 1.5 This report updates Members on the income opportunities and areas for improvement and future development.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Food safety plan presented to the Panel was discussed by Members.  
During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:-
- (a) the potential impact of a no deal Brexit. Whilst the implications were potentially very significant, officers did assure the Panel that the Council was fully prepared for this eventuality;
  - (b) the achievement of maintaining a 100% food safety inspection rate in each of the last two years. The Panel paid tribute to the team's performance and noted that very few local authorities achieve this level of performance. As a general point, a Member asked whether there was any scope to slightly reduce the inspection levels on the traditionally highest scoring establishments in order to release some time for officers to undertake alternative duties;
  - (c) areas for improvement and future development. In referring to the list of areas identified, the Panel did pay particular attention to the importance of 'continuing to integrate Case Managers, Specialists and Locality Officer roles into the related work streams, with a view to freeing up officers to deliver service at the appropriate level';
  - (d) working relationships with the NHS and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Officers advised that they were developing good working relationships with the NHS and local CCGs and it was recognised that there was significant opportunities for the Council in this respect;
  - (e) income generation opportunities. The importance of the service investigating all possible options to increase income was recognised.
- Indeed, such was the importance, that the Panel requested a six monthly update on this matter.

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 Specifically the Areas for Improvement and Future Development in the Food Safety Service Plan 2019/20 are;
- (a) Continue to integrate case managers, specialist and locality officer roles into the related work streams with a view to freeing up of officers to deliver service at the appropriate level.
  - (b) Critically examine the cost elements of our work and identify opportunities for greater business development and competitive within the marketplace.
  - (c) Identify further areas for cost saving within the service and the apportionment of work.

- (d) Develop key performance indicators, monitor compliance and individual officer performance.
- (e) Examine opportunities for greater engagement with business
- (f) Develop further with partners our role in the wider 'Public Health Agenda'.
- (g) Continue to benchmark with other local authorities as appropriate.
- (h) Develop more fully the alternative enforcement strategy for low risk premises

3.2 The following measures have been considered/taken;

- (a) The recent reorganisation of Case Manager team leaders has identified the requirement for an enhanced L6 case manager to take specific responsibility for the Case Manager elements of this area of work
- (b) The Council has secured 2 Primary Authority partnership agreements that will enable closer working with prominent food premises in the Council area. We also have a pending Agreement which we are waiting for the Secretary of State to approve. The current remote working arrangements enable flexibility for Officers to cover large geographical areas and therefore increase their cost effectiveness.
- (c) The opportunity to develop a fully integrated mobile working solution is pending the implementation of new software solution to replace the current software. It is hoped that lessons learned can be used in developing a mobile solution with a new supplier.
- (d) Officer performance is monitored monthly , with qualitative peer review taking place each year as a competency requirement of the Food Standards Agency.
- (e) The Council is part of the Better Business for All (BBFA) partnership with local Councils and businesses. This south west regional group develops best practice in business support through regulation. The Council is also part of the Primary Authority partnership (with DCC Trading Standards and the Fire Service) that offers an enhanced regulatory business support service to individual food businesses.
- (f) The wider public health agenda will be discussed as part of the wider "Wellbeing" theme of the Council. Alternative options for wellbeing interventions will be included in a discussion with Members to be arranged in the next few weeks.
- (g) Benchmarking with other Councils continues.
- (h) The enforcement strategy for low risk businesses has been developed according to Food Standards Agency Guidelines. Chapter 5.2.1 of the Food Law Code of Practice highlights alternative interventions that local authorities can undertake. There are specific requirements in the Code of Practice for using a different intervention.

3.3 With regards to BREXIT , significant officer time has been taken up dealing with preparations for BREXIT , notably with regards to the shellfish and fishery industry. Some provision has

been made to recover costs from central government , however the time taken has deflected from normal core duties, such as carrying out food safety inspections.

Officer time has been backfilled by using food safety consultants. This financial year to date we have carried out 706 inspections (compared to 594 in 17/18 and 489 in 18/19). The number of inspections due are significantly higher this year due to the risk rating system and due to a large number of new registrations being received during the year (160).

With regards to enforcement action, although no prosecutions have been taken the Council has investigated a number of serious cases in the last 6 months, including a member of the public having a severe allergy reaction in a hotel, a health and safety accident where a member of staff had a significant eye injury, amongst other food and health and safety concerns that we have investigated that have taken a significant amount of time to investigate and resolve.

With regards to income generation the shellfish export certification revenue is predicted to exceed the income target, despite some disruption at the country of destination.

Income from providing food safety/health and safety advice on a commercial basis has not achieved the revenue target of £5000. This is due to not being able to market the service and other pressures on the service meaning the resource to carry out the work is not available. Prioritisation has been given to other income generation opportunities in the Environmental Health Community of Practice. The income from this activity will cover any revenue deficit in food safety.

#### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1 The Council is providing a good level of service regarding Food Safety
- 4.2 Members have the opportunity to consider the food safety service as part of a wider discussion on the Council's wellbeing theme.
- 4.3 The significant revenue target associated with Food Export Certification (£30,000) is likely to be exceeded, but the smaller revenue target relating to food business advice is not (£5000)

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1 An updated Food Safety Plan will be prepared for 2020/21 period following a wider discussion by Members regarding the Wellbeing theme

## 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		The Food Safety service is a statutory requirement for the Council to provide. The Food Safety Service Plan is produced annually as a requirement of the regulating authority – the Food Standards Agency.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p>There are no financial implication in this report other than to report makes reference to predicted performance against revenue targets.</p> <p>For clarity; The significant revenue target associated with Food Export Certification (£30,000) is likely to be exceeded, but the smaller revenue target relating to food business advice is not (£5000)</p>
Risk		<p>The Food Safety Service is required to balance risks to health and wellbeing against available resource and to consider the most effective way of discharging its responsibility to enforce food safety legislation whilst being in compliance with the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice.</p> <p>The Council should also consider the wider opportunity to include Food Safety interventions in its wider responsibilities regarding its Wellbeing Theme.</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Wellbeing – good food safety is clearly beneficial to the health and wellbeing of our communities.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		There are no direct impacts on climate change arising from this report.
<b>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</b>		
Equality and Diversity		There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the report
Safeguarding		There are no safeguarding implications arising from the report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		There are no safeguarding implications arising from the report

Health, Safety and Wellbeing		
Other implications		

**Supporting Information**

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Papers:**

The Food Safety Service Plan