

Food Service

Delivery Plan

2014/2016



South Bucks
District Council

1. Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Aims and Objectives

To work with partners and businesses to minimise risks to the health of residents of, and visitors to, South Bucks from foodstuffs purchased within the district

To provide a comprehensive food advice and inspection service to businesses and residents in line with the Foods Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement and the Food Safety Act Codes of Practice.

1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans

A comprehensive and targeted Food enforcement Service helps the Council to achieve its aims of delivering good value customer focussed services and working towards safer and healthier local communities.

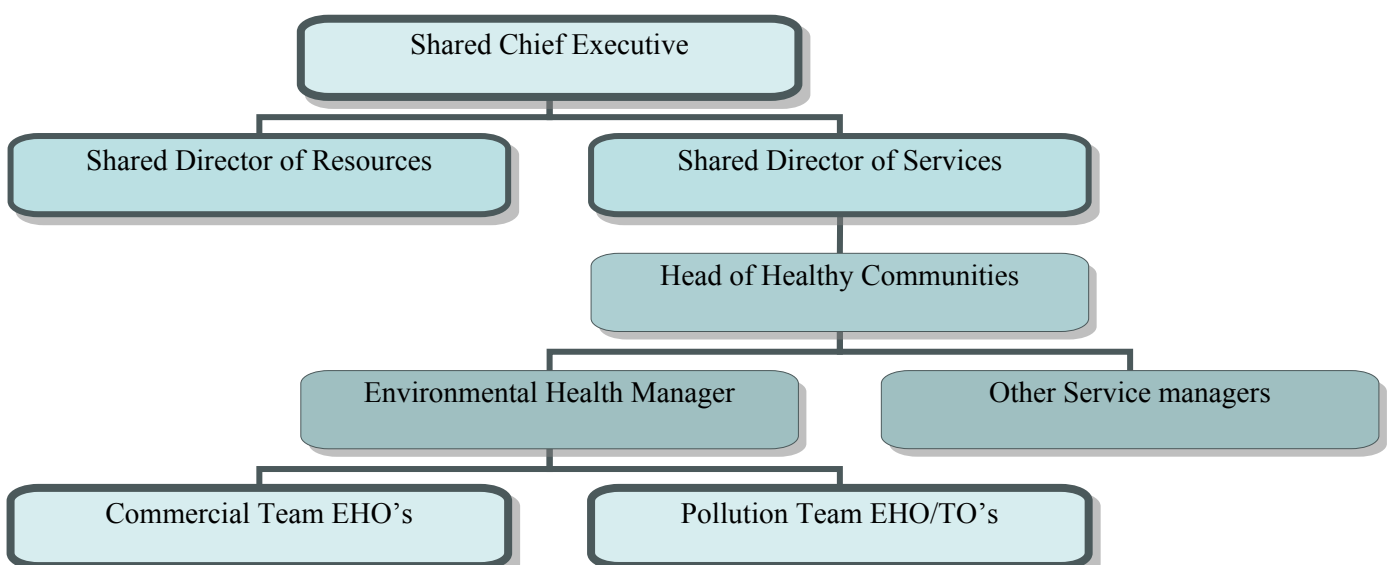
2. Background

2.1 Profile of the Authority

The authority is within a shared services project with Chiltern District Council its neighbour to the North therefore the service model is changing all the time. South Bucks covers an area of 14,150 hectares immediately to the west of Greater London with a population of approx. 62,000. The district is mainly residential/rural in nature and large areas are within the Greater London Green Belt. The main towns in the district are Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross Denham, Iver and Burnham.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Service delivery within the Council is the responsibility of the Director of Services with the Head of Healthy Communities reporting directly to him. Responsibility for the food service is held by the Environmental Health Manager and the function is carried out by a small team of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).



The Head of Healthy Communities reports to the Cabinet on behalf of Director of Services on food service matters through the Health and Housing portfolio holder.

Specialist services are provided by Public analysts Colindale Laboratories

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Food Service carries out food hygiene interventions in all food premises within the authority.

In addition the Food Service investigates all complaints relating to the safety of foods and hygiene conditions at premises arising within the district for which it is responsible under the Code of Practice.

Officers in the Environmental Health team who are responsible for the delivery of the Food Service also have responsibility for carrying out inspections under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 as well as for implementing the Council's duties in other respects relating to commercial activity. In addition the Environmental Health Manager has responsibilities for all pollution and public health related functions of Environmental Health including Public Health, Nuisance, Pest Control, Dog Control, Infectious Disease and Accident investigations as well as Street Trading, Emergency Planning, Flooding, High Hedge complaints and liaison with partners in the emergency services and related sectors.

The authority is a shire district food standards and animal feeding stuff controls are carried out by the Trading Standards Department of Buckinghamshire County Council although there is significant information sharing through Bucks Food Group meetings.

The authority does not have any formal Primary Authority agreements in place at the moment, both previous agreements have lapsed. South Bucks is the home of a number of head offices including Sacla foods as well as numerous small enterprises run from private homes and larger businesses such as Jung's currently of Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

The authority operates the national 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' launched in October 2011 with FSA support. We have continued to roll out Safer Food Better Business as a means for SME's to comply with the requirement for a documented food safety system.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

There are currently 549 food premises registered with the authority and 502 appearing on the FHRS website the breakdown is as follows:

3	Primary Producers
13	Manufacturers and Packers
2	Importer/Exporters
4	Distributors and Transporters
112	Retailers
415	Restaurants and other caterers

There are currently no premises approved under specific EC Regulations.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

All enforcement work carried out by the authority is carried out in accordance with the enforcement concordat and the Council's adopted Food Safety Enforcement Policy revised and approved in January 2009.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Food Premises Inspections

The authority targets food premises inspection of food premises in its area in accordance with the risk rating system set out in the Code of Practice. A programme of inspection is achieved through the Uniform Database system used to maintain records relating to all premises. High risk premises category C and above will normally be subject to a primary intervention whilst low risk category premises may be contacted by alternative means sufficient to make a judgement regarding the standards of management.

At present the number of premises in each of the risk categories is as follows:

5	Category A	(Inspected every 6 months)
51	Category B	(Inspected every 12 months)
252	Category C	(Inspected every 18 months)
155	Category D	(Primary inspection by inspection or alternative every 2 years)
86	Category E	(Primary inspection by inspection or alternative every 5 years)

(NB this split is subject to some change as a result of revised scoring guidance)

Inspections carried out and due between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014:

268	Programmed Initial Inspections
100	Revisits (Estimated)
91	Sampling visits
35	Verification and education visits (Estimated)

The staffing resource directly allocated to carry out these inspections is 1 Full Time Equivalent EHO. This is calculated by the 2EHOs spending 40% of their time on food safety inspections plus the management functions. Staffing levels have been retained in the section by reallocating officers across teams following the retirement of one of the existing EHO's in the food team in March 2014.

Every year we host an event for food safety week and allocate time to health promotion activities such as awareness of hand hygiene initiatives and promotion of Safer Food Systems as well as healthy eating initiatives such as the allergy awareness campaign or the halt the salt campaign supporting Trading Standards. It is estimated that this work will entail approximately 2 man weeks.

3.2 Food Complaints

The authority will investigate all food complaints arising from premises in its area for which it has responsibility under the Food Law Code of Practice.

Action in respect of food complaints will be taken in accordance with the principles of good enforcement set out in the Enforcement Concordat and the Council's Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

In addition to relevant enforcement the authority recognises that it has a responsibility to provide pertinent advice to both food business operators and consumers alike.

Based on previous year's figures it is estimated that approximately 20 food complaints will be received per annum. The estimated annual resource required to investigate these complaints is the equivalent of 1 officer for 1 week.

3.3 Home Authority Principle

The authority previously supported the Home Authority and will fully support the Primary Authority Principal introduced by the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008. As and when undertaking work at premises with such an agreement in place contact will be made with the primary authority.

The authority does not formally act as Home or Primary Authority to any locally based businesses. Therefore there is no requirement for resources to maintain these arrangements. However a number of national and international firms choose to base their head offices in the district for whom we are a relevant authority committing up to one officer week per year.

3.4 Advice to Businesses

Officers will at all times be encouraged to give support and advice to businesses in order to help them to comply with food safety legislation and to improve their food safety and hygiene performance. Advice will be given during routine inspections and on other occasions upon specific request as well as by targeting businesses for alternative interventions such as SFBB or other training opportunities.

Advice will always be given on the basis that it is for the person carrying on the food business to comply with the legislation. It is not the responsibility of the Council's officers to do this on their behalf e.g. advice will be given on food safety principals and recommended practice but officers will not prepare or implement risk assessments food safety systems on behalf of businesses.

The majority of the requests for advice are provided during routine inspections.

Additional training courses are provided from our offices by Safety Made Simple at South Bucks DC offices under an informal agreement by Safety Made Simple.

3.5 Food Inspection and Sampling

The authority will carry out food sampling as part of programmes organised by the Buckinghamshire Food Liaison Group, the Berkshire Food Sampling Group, LACORS, HPA and the FSA. In addition samples will be procured as part of a weekly shopping basket and ad hoc/complaint sampling will be carried out as required as a result of routine food hygiene work.

Samples from food complaints received by the authority will be submitted for relevant examination when it is considered to be in the interests of public health or when legal action is likely in accordance with the Enforcement Policy or if there are wider food safety issues or multiple complaints at hand.

Samples for microbiological examination (including unfitness from decomposition, mould etc.) will be submitted to Colindale Laboratories.

The estimated resource for carrying out the sampling programmes and preparing samples for collection by the courier is 0.5 to 1 officer days/week which is the equivalent of approximately 1 officer for 1 week per annum.

Samples will normally be procured at retail cost therefore resources are required to reimburse the relevant officer for expenses, approximate value £500/an.

Samples are entered on to the National Food Sampling Database- FSSNET.

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

Outbreaks and sporadic cases of food related illness are investigated in accordance with the protocol agreed between the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control of Buckinghamshire HPU and the five local authorities in the Health Authority area. Major outbreaks are investigated in accordance with the Buckinghamshire HPU Major Outbreak Plan.

In 2013/14 the authority received 50 notifications, and investigated 4 outbreaks in Residential care facilities and around a local restaurant. It is estimated that going forward the authority will receive approximately 75 sporadic cases of food borne disease and will investigate at least 2 major outbreaks. The estimated annual resource for this will be:

Sporadic Cases	Administration Staff	4 days
	EHO	4 days
Outbreaks	EHO	7 days

3.7 Food Safety Incidents

Food Alerts are dealt with in accordance with Food Law Code of Practice.

Food Alerts are received by the authority primarily by way of e-Mails automatically forwarded to the relevant officers and admin staff as they arrive.

The responsible commercial team EHO receiving the notification will first check what type of alert it is Food Alert For Action (FAFA) or Food Alert For Information (FAFI), if any action is recommended and whether we are the relevant authority. If necessary, local businesses will be contacted by letter, telephone or personal visit as appropriate.

Administration staff will maintain a log and printed record of each FAFA and the action taken to deal with it reviewing the file on a monthly basis.

The estimated annual resource for dealing with FHWs is:

Administration Staff	1.5 days
Commercial Services Manager/EHOs/TO	3 days

3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The authority is committed to ensuring that enforcement action with respect to food safety in its area is consistent with that of neighbouring local authorities.

To ensure this consistency the authority is represented on the following groups which meet regularly to discuss matters relating to food safety:

Buckinghamshire Food Liaison Group
Buckinghamshire HPU/Local Authority Liaison Group

In addition to those liaison groups listed above the authority also liaises with bodies such as BIS, the Food Standards Agency and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health as and when required.

The estimated annual resource on formal liaison with other bodies and authorities is:

Environmental Health Manager and EHOs	7 days
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3.8 Food Safety Promotion

The authority operates the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

We participate in annual events such as National Food Safety Week by organising events related to the chosen theme of the week.

Promote Food Standards Agency resources such as Safer Food Better Business.

The estimated annual resource on food safety promotion is:

Environmental health Manager and EHOs	7 days
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4. Resources

4.1 Financial Allocation

The accountancy systems do not allocate resources in such fine detail to enable an exact figure for this part of the service. Resources are allocated generically to Environmental Health and the Commercial Premises Team accounts for approximately 50% of the total allocation £133,870 in 2015/16 which covers all Public Health, Health and Safety and Food Safety enforcement activity split on the basis set out below. The budget allocation can be split broadly into:

Food Safety	Regulation and enforcement	60%
	Advice and guidance	10%
Public Health Work		15%
Health and Safety	Regulation and Enforcement	5%
	Advice and guidance	10%

Resources are allocated flexibly to the areas of greatest concern. Currently the primary focus is to maintain the food safety enforcement service including FHRS and the Public Health Agenda. Health and Safety Services remain important and sufficient resources are being maintained day to day with flexibility to change priorities quickly.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The number of staff working on food law enforcement in terms of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) has not changed as competent officers have been reallocated across disciplines to maintain the necessary levels of competency with reference to Food Law Code of Practise is:

Managers (EHOs Fully Competent)	0.4 FTE
EHOs (Fully Competent)	1 FTE
Admin Staff	0.2 FTE

It is not envisaged that additional contractors will be used unless for contingencies to ensure that the Council meets its obligations.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

In April-May each year all officers undergo a staff appraisal. As part of that appraisal the training needs of the individual officer for the forthcoming year are assessed.

Training plans for individual officers will be drawn up to comply with the CPD requirements of Food Law Code of Practise and the Council's Investors in People (IIP) scheme. Individual training records & plans can be found in appraisal documents and are held separately by the Environmental Health Manager.

5. Quality Assessment

- 5.1 The Environmental Health Manager will review the documented monitoring system. This will include assessment of the officer's compliance with COPs, the Council's Enforcement Policy and any guidance issued by bodies such as LACORS, BIS and the Food Standards Agency.
- 5.2 In order to assess the competency of officers the Environmental Health Manager will accompany each officer on an inspection at least once per year and officers will carry out 4 shadow inspections together. Findings of all monitoring visits will be recorded on the sheet included with the procedure. Following the inspection the outcome will be discussed and copies of any notes or records will be available.
- 5.3 At least once per year the Environmental Health Manager will audit the Council's food service against the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement. Any non-compliance with the Standard will be reported to the Head of Health and Housing.
- 5.4 The food service will be subject to audit from time to time by the Council's internal auditors.

6. Review and communications

6.1 Review Against Service Plan

After 31st March each year the Environmental Health Manager will carry out a review of the previous year's performance against the Service Plan.

6.2 Identification of Variations from the Service Plan

As part of this review the Environmental Health Manager will identify any areas where the authority was at variance from their Service Plan and, where appropriate, the reasons for that variance including any additional work undertaken which was not in the Service Plan.

6.3 Areas of Improvement

Any relevant Improvement Plan or service development identified by the review or the quality assessment will be documented.

6.4 Reporting

Achievement of targets and objectives as well as any reasons for failure will be reported through Covalent, additionally a report will be brought to the attention of the Portfolio Holder outlining the services achievements and issues as well as recommending a revised plan for the subsequent year.

6.4 Customer involvement and communications

As an organisation the authority is committed to including the views of our customers into the way we deliver our services. Food safety enforcement like other regulatory functions entails a balance between formal enforcement and informal intervention and guidance.

Officers work closely with businesses on a daily basis and our informal role allows us to provide advice and seek direct feedback on our services. Initiatives such as the planned introduction of Scores on the doors and by hand delivering packs of information such as the FSA toolkit 'Safer Food Better Business' we are able to communicate directly with food businesses and ensure that we adapt our services to meet their needs.

We currently seek the views of service users through the use of customer survey questionnaires and feedback from business. Our aim is always to identify means to improve the collection and use of information to be used to identify achievable service improvements through increased customer focus and promoting two-way communication. A range of options is utilised including involvement with local parish councils, businesses forums and community events.