



Report to Cabinet

Date:	21st March 2023
Title:	Food and Health and Safety Service Plan and Policies
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Mark Winn, Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services.
Contact officer:	Ian Snudden
Ward(s) affected:	All wards
Recommendations:	1.1 To approve the joint Food and Health and Safety Service Plan 1.2 To approve the food Policy and Health and Safety Enforcement Policy
Reason for decision:	The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Code of Practice and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) require local authorities to produce and publish an annual service plan that demonstrates how the authority will work to deliver its food safety and health and safety service. The Office for Product Safety and Standards also requires local authorities to produce and publish their enforcement policies and to ensure that they comply with The Regulators' Code.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Food and Health and Safety Service Business Plan details how the food and health and safety enforcement services are to be delivered within Buckinghamshire Council for the period 2022/24.

- 1.2 The Service Plan is divided into the issues covered by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement and the key priorities identified by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Strategy Document. The Service Plan and Enforcement Policies are appended.

2. Content of report

Food Safety Service Plan 2022/24

- 2.1 Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has set out a timetable (Recovery Roadmap) to bring local authorities back on track with their inspection programmes following a cessation of the inspection programme during the pandemic. We have been able to achieve the current milestones in inspecting our category A, B and non-compliant C and D businesses and were able to get a rolling start on the inspection of the compliant Cs as well as triage 927 new businesses. However, the Service has experienced a continual increase in the number of new food business registrations which, together with other work, has meant that we may not be able to achieve the final milestone of all compliant C businesses inspected by the end of March 2023. The Food Standards Agency has identified this as an area of concern for the authority. This will continue to be the team's focus for 2022/24.
- 2.2 Whilst an annual plan is expected by the FSA, on this occasion due to the above the first plan for Buckinghamshire Council covers a period of two years. At this point last year we were still under restrictive arrangements and focus was heavily aimed towards the regulatory response to Covid-19
- 2.3 In addition to the FSA Recovery Plan, as part of an ongoing programme of service transformation, improved and more efficient and effective ways of working and delivering the service are being explored. These will include the inspection processes, schemes of delegation and procedures for the assessment of officer competency and authorisation, streamlining the export health certificate process and the harmonisation of sampling equipment and calibration of thermometers.
- 2.4 The Service actively participates in the Primary Authority Partnership scheme, with seven established partnerships and two new partnerships formed in 2022. The primary authority acts as a point of contact and advice for food businesses that have a number of outlets nationally and local authorities who inspect them. This is a paid for service.
- 2.5 There has also been a noticeable decline in hygiene standards which has resulted in an increase in enforcement action and revisits. There has also been an increase in requests for FHRS re-inspections as businesses move to a more online presence.

Health and Safety Service 2022/24

- 2.6 The Health and Safety Executive has set out a 10-year strategic plan 'Protecting People and Places' which sets out its key objectives and national priorities. In 2022/24 we will identify projects which will aim to raise health and safety awareness and improve standards in a particular sector or topic. It is likely that these will focus on workplace transport in warehouses and distribution centres following a number of reported accidents this year and gas safety in catering establishments.
- 2.7 In 2021, the Environmental Health Service took on the responsibility for the issue of the General Safety Certificate for the Designated Sports Ground at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club. In addition, the team has also taken on the administration of the registration for skin piercing establishments and operators and as part of this, will look to harmonise the registration process and fees from legacy areas and adopt a single set of byelaws covering safe and hygienic arrangements for skin piercing.

Food Policy and Health and Safety Enforcement Policy

- 2.8 Both policies reflect the principles set out in the Regulators' Code issued by the Office of Product Safety and Standards. The key principles are to supporting growth, engaging with businesses, having a transparent and risk based approach to activities, sharing information between regulators and providing clear information and advice to businesses. The Regulators' Code applies to local authority regulatory services such as: environmental health, licensing, housing standards, planning enforcement, building control and revenues and benefits. A corporate enforcement policy has been developed and the policies have been drafted in accordance with this overarching policy.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 As the food service plan and enforcement policies are requirements of central government, there are no other options available to their publication.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 The Food Standards Agency requires local authorities to produce and publish a food service plan, as does the Health and Safety Executive for health and safety and local authorities may be audited by these government bodies for compliance against the statutory guidance. The FSA audit reports are public documents and published on the FSA website.
- 4.2 The service plan aims to be delivered within existing budgets.
- 4.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no adverse implications have been identified.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 The food service strongly contributes towards the Council's corporate aims and objectives in all four key areas of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 and the service plan details how this will be achieved. Additionally, the food and health and safety policies set out the principles that will be adopted when undertaking investigations and enforcement action in creating a 'level playing field' for businesses to trade and supporting businesses to prosper.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report are not specific to any one area in Buckinghamshire and so no specific local councillor or community board engagement has been carried out.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 The approved plan and policies will be published on the council's website.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 The approved action plan will be implemented across the whole Buckinghamshire Council area.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 None

Appendix 1 Food and Health and Safety Service Plan

Appendix 2 Food Policy

Appendix 3 Health and Safety Enforcement Policy

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.