

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The appended Food Safety Service Plan is submitted to Members for approval.
- 1.2 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) started to require local authorities to produce an annual plan from 2001.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In March 2001, the FSA issued a "Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement", which consists of four main elements:
 - Service Planning Guidance
 - The Standard
 - Monitoring Form and Guidance Notes
 - Audit Scheme
- 2.2 The Service Planning Guidance and The Standard set out the FSA's expectations on the planning and delivery of food law enforcement.
- 2.3 The Monitoring Scheme builds on existing arrangements under which local authorities have to submit returns on food law enforcement activity to the FSA.
- 2.4 Under the Audit Scheme the FSA will be conducting audits of the food enforcement services of selected local authorities taking in account information generated by existing and new monitoring arrangements. Local authorities selected for audit will be assessed against the criteria set out in the Standard. The audit programme came into operation on 1st April 2001.
- 2.5 Powers to enable the FSA to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the Food Standards Act 1999.
- 2.6 The appended Plan, which is for 2006/2007, refers to documents 1 to 3. These are not appended because they are the following corporate documents: Housing, Health & Community Care's Enforcement Policy (1); Enforcement Concordat (2); the Constitution (3).

3 FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

- 3.1 The FSA sees Service Plans as an important part of the process to ensure national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally. They consider that plans will also:
 - focus debate on key delivery issues;
 - provide an essential link with financial planning;

- set objectives for the future, and identify major issues that cross service boundaries; and
- provide a means of managing performance and making performance comparisons.

3.2 The Framework Agreement provides local authorities with a service plan template to ensure that all the areas of the food enforcement service covered by the food law enforcement standard are included in the plan, whilst allowing scope for the inclusion of any locally defined objectives.

The template ensures that local authorities will include in their service plans:

- Information about the service they provide;
- the means by which they will provide those services, including the various requirements of the standard;
- the means by which they will meet any relevant performance targets or performance standards set out under, for example, Best Value;
- a review of performance in order to address any variance from meeting the requirements of the service plan.

3.3 The FSA needs the plans in a common format to assess and compare local authorities' delivery of the service. A common format also greatly facilitates comparisons made by local authorities, including during a Best Value Review. The Best Value framework is recognised as playing a central role in helping local authorities to plan and deliver their services.

3.4 Service plans are considered an expression of local authorities' own commitment to the development of the food service. It should demonstrate that local authorities are providing a balanced service in terms of enforcement, education, advice, assistance and guidance.

3.5 A copy of the service plan has been sent to the Chambers of Trade and Federations of Small Businesses for comment.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 In addition to preparing an annual Service Plan, the FSA require local authorities to produce documented procedures for every part of their food law enforcement service and to have internal and third party peer review systems to verify its conformance against the Standard. In an attempt to minimise the adverse effect of this requirement on other work (including programmed inspections and response to complaints and applications), it is planned that all documents will be complete and the review systems will be in place by December 2006.

4.2 The Budget Book 2006/07 includes all the financial requirements for the Service Plan, apart from the audit which will be financed from funds carried forward from last year.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The FSA have default powers should a local authority fail to comply with their requirements.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To approve the Food Safety Service Plan and the plan to complete the production of all food law enforcement documents and to implement a peer review system by December 2006.

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Background Papers:

The Food Standard Agency's Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.

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