

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Monitoring Report on the Delivery of the Food Law Enforcement and Health and Safety Service Plans
Meeting/Date:	Licensing and Protection Committee – 30 June 2021
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Communities – Cllr Keith Prentice
Report by:	Acting Operational Manager (Business) – Myles Bebbington
Ward(s) affected:	All.

Executive Summary:

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan and Health and Safety Service Plan 2019-20 were approved by committee on 11 March 2020.

This monitoring report covers the Q4 figures from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021. In general terms the monitoring report accounts for work undertaken by the Business Team within the defined period and compares this to the service plan to ensure that the service is on target to deliver the programmed work.

Programmed work is delivered alongside reactive work, the volume of which by definition is impossible to predict. This work is carried out according to risk. Complaints and accident investigations are prioritised using risk-based selection criteria, and the volume of work is reported here to attempt to identify any emerging risks in terms of resource provision.

The period January to March has been, once again, totally dominated by the current Covid 19 outbreak, complicated by the national lockdown and the continued suspension of inspections by the Food standards Agency. Inspections have only been permitted for high risk premises that have been permitted to operate i.e takeaways and only where a complaint has been received. Inspections have taken longer than normal due to the need for officers to be Covid compliant and extra checks to ensure businesses are covid compliant that has doubled the time to undertake any inspection.

Appendices 2 and 3 contain detailed information about the delivery of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan. Appendix 4 contains detailed information about the delivery of the Health and Safety Service Plan.

Government has indicated that food safety inspections may re-commence in late June 2021. a plan of action targeting Category A & B along with risk rated premises that have been identified during lockdown is in place. However it will be impossible to meet the targets set for the year 2020/21, with this in mind a broader programme of inspections will be developed once the FSA have given clearer direction.

Recommendations:

Note progress and provide any comments considered appropriate, on the delivery of the two Service Plans for the period 1 January to 31st March 2021.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The report provides information about the delivery of the two Service Plans for the cumulative figures for the year between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY

- 2.1 Members have asked to be kept informed about the delivery of the work in the approved plans.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES COVERED BY THE REPORT

- 3.1 Food Law Enforcement consists of the following areas of work:

- Planned activities such as routine inspections of food businesses, food and environmental sampling and the provision of food hygiene training courses;
- Unplanned (reactive) work such as the investigation of customer complaints, dealing with requests for compliance advice and following up notifications of food poisoning and Covid related matters.
- Liaison with other departments in the interests of coordinated service delivery: in particular licensing and planning;
- Supporting national strategies and the wider public health agenda.
Text.

- 3.2 Health and Safety regulation consists of these areas of work:

- Planned activities such as unannounced inspections of high risk businesses and targeted interventions in line with the HSE's strategic aims;
- Unplanned (reactive) work such as the investigation of notifiable accidents, prescribed diseases, complaints and dealing with serious risks that are identified during other activities (Matters of Evident Concern) and Covid related matters;

- The provision of compliance advice to businesses.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Under normal circumstances the failure to monitor the delivery of the approved Service Plans could invite criticism from the Food Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive in their capacities as the national regulators.
- 4.2 Members have asked to be kept informed about the delivery of the approved Service Plans in order that they can comment on the way in which the service is provided as well as the available resources.

5. ACTIONS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE APPROVED PLANS

- 5.1 Appendices 1 and 2 relate to the delivery of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 compares the recorded activity in each of the programmed work service areas with the predicted activity in the approved Service Plan. The key activities of compliance visits, approved premises inspections and other proactive visits are all Red due to the suspension of all inspections earlier in the year. However a programme of remote “virtual” inspections were rolled out so that when physical inspections resume we can re-assess the risk status of premises to identify better which premises need to be inspected most urgently. The FSA agreed to physical inspections to recommence in late June, but these were suspended in November following increase in Covid infections. We have now reverted back to remote inspections only. All inspections done remotely will still require a form of physical inspection once inspections recommence in June or July 2021.
- 5.3 The alternative enforcement strategy is currently at red; this remains a lower priority, second to Food safety inspections and Covid compliance work as these are our very low risk premises that are assessed by means other than visits, but have been forced to give way to Covid related matters being undertaken by officers including increase in Health and Safety complaints and track and trace activities.
- 5.4 The focus in Q4 was initially to relaunch food safety inspections, Health and safety work as well as target new business registrations and interventions remotely which was successful and is Green. Additional work directly related to Covid has meant that officers have been taken away at short notice to deal with Covid related matters.
- 5.5 Appendix 2 refers to the unplanned (reactive) work undertaken by the service. The number of customer complaints and service requests is driven by demand which has been reduced due to the current situation, these figures will prove volatile in 2020-21 as a result of Covid 19 due to

most reports of food poisoning traditionally being from food consumed at home. At present all indicators are green.

5.6 The food hygiene training programme remains suspended, likely for the rest of the financial year, but there is a commitment by the team to resume these as soon as possible.

5.6 The Health and Safety Service Plan would normally contain a mixture of programmed work, reactive work and the provision of compliance information and advice. However as planned inspections have also been suspended due to Covid 19 and work has only been reactive, which due to the number of business closures has been limited. The reopening of a range of businesses from June 2020 led to queries around social distancing which is expected to occupy most of our Health and Safety work for the foreseeable future. Health and safety work has increased significantly, which is to be expected and is forecast to remain high for the foreseeable future due to Covid 19

5.7 During Covid the main health and safety queries have been around social distancing in the workplace and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which has resulted in a steady stream of advice and from July onwards and enforcement visits by the team, at the time of writing the report the food and licensing teams have dealt with over 550 complaints since March and/or requests for advice.

5.8 The team have been heavily involved in producing guidance and information relating to reopening our town centres, providing guidance for Food business reopening, along with businesses such as Barbers, Tattooists, Nail bars etc.

5.9 Further work has and continues to be done around track and trace work as required but has reduced in Q4 due to the effect of the national lockdown.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

6.1 These reporting arrangements support the wider corporate objectives to

- Create, protect and enhance our safe built environment
- Support people to improve their health and wellbeing
- Accelerate business growth and remove barriers to growth

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 No consultations required as part of this report

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The failure to report the delivery of the approved Service Plans may prejudice the Council's ability to provide the necessary resources.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

11.1 To keep Members informed about the delivery of the approved Service Plans.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Food Safety Service Plan: programmed (proactive) Activity

Appendix 2 – Food Safety Service Plan: Reactive Activity

Appendix 3 - Health and Safety Activity

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