



**South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council**

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

### **Health & Environmental Services**

### **Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11**

**This plan links to the Corporate Aims and Approaches and also the service objectives, which are provided in the Health and Environmental Services Plan**



**THE RED FORT RESTURANT IN SAWSTON WENT FROM ZERO STARS TO 4 STARS AND THEY ARE HOPING TO ACHIEVE 5 STARS AFTER THEIR NEXT INSPECTION**

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Approved:

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKING TO SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD BUSINESSES AND PROTECT THE COMMUNITY

## 1. National statistics released on the performance of council food services

On 10 March 2010, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) released national statistics on the performance of every council food service in the UK for 2008/9. These statistics show the huge amount of work carried out by councils across the country to support businesses and keep our food safe.

The FSA figures show that during the last financial year councils in the UK:

- Carried out over 0.5 million visits to help UK food businesses comply with the law
- Supported 86% of UK food businesses to achieve broad compliance with food hygiene legislation
- Responded to 72,562 complaints from local residents about food businesses
- Carried out 169,980 enforcement actions, including warning letters and notices, to ensure that consumers were adequately protected

This Council's food service contributes directly to this national picture *and* makes a difference locally.

## 2. How does this Council contribute to the national picture and how does it compare to other councils?

### Visits to food businesses

Each year this Council produces a service plan that details its forecast visits to food businesses. Visits to food businesses are carried out in a risk based approach within a Framework provided by the FSA. Higher risk businesses receive more frequent visits and get more proactive support to drive up compliance.

### Minimum frequency of inspection laid down by the Food Standards Agency

Every 6 months	Category A
Every 12 months	Category B
Every 18 months	Category C
Every 2 years	Category D
Alternative enforcement strategy	Category E

Note: Category A represents the highest risk through to Category E, which represents the lowest risk.

In 2009/10 400 local food businesses were visited. The support this Council provides on such visits can be vital to businesses that are under pressure in the current financial climate. Officers make sure food businesses are aware of their legal obligations and help them ensure that the food they supply is safe.

Importantly, this council visited 100% (32 premises) of high risk businesses in the timescales outlined in the service plan. Officers also visited 100% (211 premises) of medium risk premises as planned. The authority carries out a range of alternative approaches to engage low risk businesses, which are aimed at minimising burden on the business while still ensuring that they have support from the Council. Contact was made with 330 category D and E businesses (other risks) and low hazard food businesses. This contact included questionnaires, letters and business surgeries.

A visit is a full inspection. 243 visits were made to category A to D (High risk and other risk) food businesses. 37 new businesses were given advice and inspected and 60 food sampling visit were made. Additionally 60 revisits were made to inspected premises. High risk visits (32) are categories A and B only.

### **Business compliance**

The food industry is regulated by a range of legislation that aims to keep our food safe. This Council's work with food businesses is focused on helping them to comply with food safety legislation and offering advice. This is seen as a critical area of our work by central government and the compliance levels of food businesses in the district are measured and reported on against National Indicator 184.

The FSA has stated that 74% of inspected UK food businesses were broadly compliant with food hygiene law. This figure excludes those that are not yet inspected and rated.

The figure returned for broadly compliant businesses against NI 184 for this Council was 95.94%. This figure includes unrated businesses.

SCDC is currently well above the national average and LACORS and the FSA believe this work encourages businesses to flourish and attract visitors to this area. The contributing factors to this are two separate amounts of FSA funding that the Council has been awarded to assist businesses to comply with legislation by having a food safety management system in place. The funding over the last two years have supported businesses in receiving a free 3 hour, 1-2-1 coaching session on the Safer Food Better Business pack (SFBB). In conjunction with this work, SCDC was the first local authority to operate a 5 star Scores on the Doors food hygiene rating scheme. This has also encouraged businesses to improve food hygiene and therefore this work is paying dividends in gaining good compliance with NI184 expectations.

### **Complaints**

In the last financial year officers responded to 86 complaints from local residents about food related matters. Such complaints are anticipated but their scale and nature place unplanned demands on the service, however, a timely and effective response does help to maintain consumer confidence in local food businesses and improve standards.

Food complaints provide a vital opportunity for the Council to show it is able to respond to the needs and concerns of the community. Complaints are also a key way in which the Council can gain intelligence about food businesses. Prompt follow-up action is therefore a high priority for the service.

In 2009 the FSA issued 1208 national food incident notifications. SCDC has a key role in supporting local businesses to respond to these and protecting consumers where necessary.

### **Prosecutions / Enforcement**

SCDC has a published enforcement policy, which focuses on providing advice and guidance for businesses to secure compliance. However, where businesses consistently fail to comply with the law or present a severe threat to public health it is important that action is taken to protect consumers.

During the last financial year, Environmental Services issued 243 warning letters and served 2 formal notices. No prosecution against food businesses was necessary in 2009/10.

### 3. **Linking SCDC food service to local strategic aims**

The statistics published by the FSA show how the food service delivered by this Council is integral to supporting the national food industry and keeping food safe for all consumers. However, our food service also makes a vital contribution to key local strategic aims.

#### **Community engagement**

This Council's food enforcement team is a **front line service** that provides a positive opportunity for the Council to interact with local businesses and protect its community. Food grown and manufactured in this area helps contribute directly to a sense of local identity.

*Contributes to NI 5 – Overall / general satisfaction with local area*

#### **Supporting the local economy**

Food production, its transport and sale at retail and catering establishments are very significant parts of the economy both nationally and locally. Nationally the food and drink supply chain accounts for 7% of GDP and employs 3.7 million people in everything from food retailing, to restaurants and canteens, to farming and fishing.

Whilst national returns indicate there has been a slight decrease in the numbers of food businesses last year, there was a notable increase in business activity and new business registrations, especially in relation to home catering and change in ownership. For SCDC there was an increase in the number of food businesses and the current total is 1258.

The Council's work helps the changing local food economy to remain vibrant and enables the Council to provide practical support to businesses in difficult economic times. It also helps maintain public confidence in the standards of the local food industry.

SCDC works to help businesses comply with food legislation, which helps ensure fair competition and allow well-run food businesses to flourish and contribute to the local economy. We offer specific support for new companies, which can prove vital to the longer term survival of a business.

*Contributes to NI 171 – VAT registration rate, NI – VAT registered businesses showing growth, NI 182 – Satisfaction of businesses with council regulator services*

#### **Preventing illness – food hygiene**

There are around 850,000 cases of food poisoning in the UK each year. Some of these can cause serious illness and permanent disability and some types can kill. The elderly and the very young are particularly vulnerable. Food poisoning in the UK is estimated as costing the country £1.5 billion each year.

Regular inspection of food premises from farm to fork by council staff helps to maintain compliance with the legislation on food safety and helps minimise and prevent food poisoning from occurring in the first place.

Officers also work with children, the elderly and other vulnerable groups to ensure they are aware of hygiene best practice when cooking and eating in the home. When food poisonings occur, officers become involved in investigating the cause and identifying any unsafe food that is still on the market to help prevent further cases of illness.

In this Council's area there were 216 cases of food poisoning. Officers work in investigating these cases and taking appropriate action helps reduce the numbers of food related illness in the community and minimise the number of secondary cases.

*Contributes to NI 119 – Self reported measure of people's overall health and well being, NI 121 - All Age All Cause Mortality, NI 139 - The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently*

### **Promoting a healthy diet and preventing obesity**

What we eat can make a big difference to the nation's health. Diet, especially excess saturated fat, salt and sugar, is thought to play a role in about one third of all deaths from cancer and heart disease. Almost 70,000 premature deaths could potentially be prevented each year if UK diets matched nutritional guidelines.

Last year work in this area focused on a pilot project called 'Tips for Chips', this encourages the use of sensible tips devised by the Food Standards Agency for the business to produce chips that are lower in saturated fats. Businesses are also introduced to a 5 hole salt shaker, therefore reducing the amount of salt put on to the chips and also offering a reduced portion size of chips to the consumer.

This work will continue in 2010/11 with the launch of the project and the public will also be able to find out which businesses are participating in the project through the Scores on the Doors website.

## **4. Inspiring local food projects**

### **Food Business Surgeries**

Early in 2010 the Food Safety Team introduced Food Business Surgeries to assist mainly new businesses on a 1-2-1 basis or hard to reach businesses that were failing in food hygiene. Proprietors and staff of businesses were encouraged to attend the surgeries to gain extra support and help with food safety issues that they faced. 1-2-1 support for Safer Food Better Business was also undertaken.

New businesses are also offered on site visits before they start up. These businesses are not rated for Scores on the Doors until 6 months after they've opened to ensure they are familiar with the process and have had the necessary training to ensure the score they receive is fair.

### **Sampling**

In September 2005 Wales had its largest ever outbreak of E Coli 0157. It was the largest ever in the United Kingdom, 31 people were admitted to hospital and a 5-year-old boy tragically died. The public inquiry that followed was the second chaired by Professor Hugh Pennington. The inquiry report was published in March 2009 and the Food Standards Agency has since issued a response. In line with the report SCDC's Food Safety Team have conducted sampling following LACORS guidance. All butchers shops received a primary inspection. In addition, butchers were then invited to a free workshop session, with free training to discuss and resolve issues that were found during the inspections. A desktop study of their hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) procedures was also undertaken.

## Service Delivery 2010/11

It is anticipated that there will be no significant growth in the response work required by the Food Service Team, although this is always a speculative statement to make. Current response work includes food complaints, food premises hygiene complaints, infectious disease control relating to food borne organisms, requests for service from new businesses opening and special food sampling requests.

This gathering of market intelligence is beginning to show a significant increase in the number of food businesses, especially food businesses operating from domestic premises and an increase in the number of mobile food vendors.

Due to a programme of food business inspections, scheduled by the Food Standards Agency, based on risk assessment, there has been a significant increase in the number of programmed inspections of the higher risk categories A-D for 2010/11 (last year 243 inspections), 317 inspections have been identified for April 2010 – March 2011. It is believed that these are appropriately allocated to officers and that all inspections will be carried out to the highest risk categories A - B and that a minimum of 90% of other category food businesses will also be completed. If food businesses in SCDC continue to increase then it is inevitable that we shall need to consider and develop further intervention strategies.

## Resources – Financial Allocation

Estimate 2010/11

Staffing	150,660
Supplies & Services	21,610
Support Services	38,180
Transport Costs	10,830
Income	-4,650

**New Expenditure** 216,630

Legal action is pursued within service budgets but with access to consultancy and contingency funds, if required. If and when the Courts award costs, these monies are transferred back to the Service budget headings.

## Equality and Diversity

SCDC values people from all backgrounds and supports their right to respect and equality of opportunity. The Council is working to eliminate discrimination and prejudice from all it does and ensure that equalities becomes a central and essential element of our service planning and delivery, both as an employer and provider of services.

The Council's Comprehensive Equalities Policy sets out specific principles and aims that will be followed in order to achieve its Commitment to Equality and the equality dimensions of its Corporate Objective and Values.

The Council has already adopted race and disability equality schemes and agenda equality schemes. A number of relevant Human Resource policies and a Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy have been adopted for 2010-2013. In addition, the Council is a member of the 'Stonewall' diversity champion programme.

## Food Safety Service Improvements 2010/2011

Service Improvement	Planned Outcome	Target date
Continue to embed and promote Scores on the Doors scheme (sotd's) with a view to continuing to drive up standards in food businesses. Review and update scheme as it becomes necessary in line with national Scores on the doors user group (NSOTDUG)	To have more businesses compliant with food law and improve general standard of hygiene. Continue to reduce the number of 0 to 2 star businesses	March 2011
Launch 'Elite Award' for scores on the doors to encourage businesses to maintain standards	To recognise and reward food businesses that scores a 5 star on their primary inspection on 2 or more occasions. They will be eligible to receive an 'elite' food safety and hygiene award	Food Safety Week June 2010
Expand the range of advice materials available via a range of media (radio, internet & leaflets).	Make information easily accessible to new businesses in order that they are better informed about food safety and hygiene issues.	March 2011
Undertake monthly food business surgeries to assist new businesses in start-up and provide assistance with SFBB	To provide a regular time when businesses can have time to discuss food safety issues and receive one to one assistance for SFBB	March 2011
To pilot on line food hygiene training with partners CIEH and Transparency data	To be able to provide food hygiene training to those sectors that are hard to reach for food hygiene training	September 2010
Launch tips 4 chips along with partners FSA and other LA's in the county and then to roll out to other outlets	To increase public awareness of saturated fat and salt and give consumers choice inline with FSA guidelines and to encourage the food business operator to adopt good frying practise	March 2011
Work with early years service to ensure that all childminders/child care providers are registered as food operators, provide advice and training and to encourage the use of the SFBB child care pack	On going dialogue with National Childminders Association (NCMA)	March 2011
Continue to run level 2 and level 3 food hygiene courses	Run a minimum of 6 course	March 2011
Undertake promotional activities at the county 'safety zone' event in conjunction with other partners	Promote the service through education	March 2011