

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Health & Environmental Services

Food Safety Service Plan 2009/10

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



Wash your hands campaign at Chilford Hall March 2009

Corporate Manager: Dale Robinson
Portfolio Holder/s: Cllr Mrs S Ellington
Approved: 16th July 2009

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1.0 Introduction

The hygiene of food businesses is a national enforcement priority because of the high impact in terms of deaths and ill health caused by unhygienic food businesses and the high costs to the economy.

This Service Plan is dedicated to the food law enforcement function that is the responsibility of the Health and Environmental Services by virtue of the Food Safety Act 1990 and EU Directives. The Health and Environmental Services of South Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for food safety and food hygiene matters. Food standards and descriptions, and controls on animal feedstuffs are dealt with by the County Council Trading Standards Department.

This Service Plan is a comprehensive document covering the entire food hygiene enforcement function set out in accordance with the requirements contained in the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, published by the Food Standards Agency.

All businesses are treated in an equal manner in line with Council's guidance, policies and procedures.

In all our activities, account is taken of the ability of proprietors to understand written and spoken English. Where appropriate, written and verbal translations are provided. Contraventions and recommendations are always phrased in a clear manner.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Profile of the Authority

The area served by SCDC is approximately 350 square miles, much of which is farmland given to primary production of food, mainly cereals and vegetables. Villages range from small rural settlements to suburban and new village settlements such as Bar Hill and Cambourne. There are no large towns within the district, the largest village currently having a population of 7,060. (census 2001)

There is increasing pressure from development, particularly research and high technology industries and new housing. South Cambridgeshire is part of the Eastern development growth area. The population of approximately 138,000 is rapidly expanding. New build and new villages will take the population to an estimated 170,500 by 2021. The village of Cambourne is continuing to develop and will have a growing population of up to 10,000 persons. Additionally the preparatory work has commenced for the proposed new village of Northstowe. It is currently estimated that when completed the population will be about 15,000 people.

With this projected growth it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of food businesses in the District. This increase in business numbers has already started. South Cambridgeshire is one of the largest growth areas in the country at the present time.

2.0 Service Overview

2.1 The service aims and approaches and actions are included in the overarching Health and Environmental Services Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12, which was approved by the Portfolio Holder on 24 March 2009.

2.2 Profile of the Service

The food safety service contributes to the Health and Environmental Services Statement of Purpose through ensuring that risks to a person's health through food are properly controlled via education, advice and enforcement. It is the policy of the Authority to ensure that food produced, prepared or sold in South Cambridgeshire is safe and without risks to health and meets appropriate quality standards.

The Authority has regard to the Regulator's Compliance Code and subscribes to the Home Authority Principle, where we deal with food safety issues centrally for national food producers based within South Cambridgeshire.

2.2.1 The key tasks, which lead towards fulfilling these objectives, are:

- To maintain a register of all premises where the service enforces food safety legislation.
- To take the most appropriate action upon inspection of relevant food premises including the use of advice, informal correspondence, improvement and prohibition notices, formal cautions and the institution of legal proceedings.
- To educate proprietors of relevant food businesses in food safety matters and their legal responsibilities in relation to their business by the provision of advice, information and training courses.
- To advise on the design of relevant food business premises prior to and during alterations and construction.
- To comply with the FSA Code of Practice on food business risk rating in relation to inspection programmes.
- Consult and engage with food businesses on the service provided.

2.3 Service Delivery Points

Service is mainly delivered during office hours. The main offices are situated at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne. The service is delivered proactively through programmed inspections and reactively by responding to complaints and requests received by the Service. Service delivery can take place at any food business or at people's homes or place of work.

Businesses, which trade out of hours, at weekends or during evenings only, are inspected accordingly. An "Out of Hours" 24x7 emergency service exists for dealing with food hazard alerts and warnings and emergency food related issues. A 'Contact Centre Service' is provided which gives access for the public and businesses 8am to 8pm Monday to Saturday inclusive. A second contact centre based in Blackpool covers the remaining hours of the week. All direct telephone lines to the Food Safety Team are connected to answer machines out of hours which also give details of the out of hours emergency telephone number.

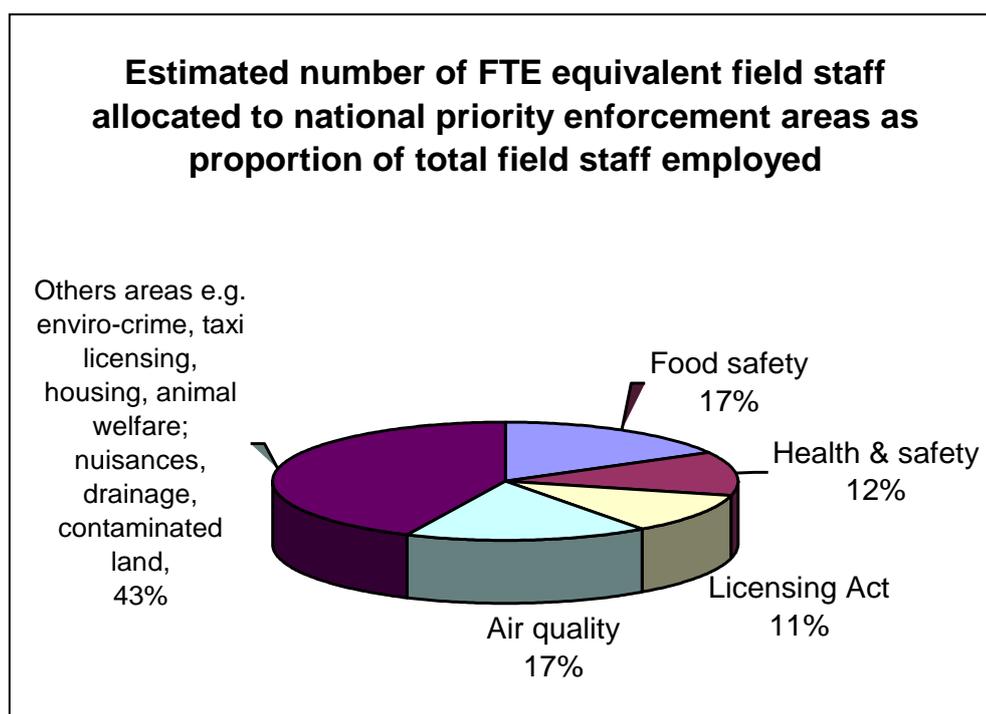
Emergencies such as outbreaks of infectious disease will be responded to on demand.

3.0 National and Local Drivers which shape the service

3.1 National Drivers

3.1.1 The Roger's Review – National Enforcement Priorities for Local Authority Regulatory Service

The Roger's Review clarified the priorities that central government considered mattered most in local regulatory services. Within the five priorities 'hygiene of food businesses' is a national enforcement priority due to the high risks posed to individuals, their families, damage to business and the costs to the economy as a whole. It also generates high levels of local concern and local authorities can have a significant impact either working in partnership or individually. This plan demonstrates that SCDC also recognizes the food safety service as a priority area within the total Environmental Health services provided.



3.1.2 Home Authority Principle

The Home Authority may be the local authority where businesses that manufacture or process food items are based, and where the head office of such companies is not at the same place as the manufacturing unit. The authority responsible for the location of the manufacturing centre is referred to as the Originating Authority. All Local Authorities are encouraged to liaise with Home and Originating Authorities for all relevant complaints and to consult them before taking any formal action.

In accordance with the Regulators' Compliance Code the District Council:

- Endorses the expectations laid down in the LACORS Home Authority Principle and the Regulators Compliance Code.
- Will act as the Home Authority for local businesses as necessary.
- Will consult the Home Authority or Originating Authority where enforcement action impacts on a business.

- The Home Authority will also be consulted or informed regarding local actions whenever such consultation/information may be helpful, or indicative of matters with potential national implications.

3.1.3 Primary Authority scheme

Where companies have a number of outlets throughout the country there is the danger of inconsistent enforcement occurring because of different environmental health departments being involved. This can put unnecessary burdens on businesses and councils alike, resulting in the public and the environment being exposed to unfair variations in the level of protection they receive.

On 6 April 2009, under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) came into force to resolve these problems. The scheme enables companies the right to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority. This authority then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take account of when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance.

The operation of the PAS will be the statutory responsibility of the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) whose role will be to register partnerships, issue guidance and resolve disputes.

Where companies are signed up to the scheme there will be an impact on the way councils work. Any authority may be asked to be a Primary Authority. Where a business cannot find an appropriate partner, LBRO can find one for them. The question of resourcing the partnership would need to be discussed between the council and business concerned and, where necessary, the council can recover costs from the business. On a day to day basis when other councils want to impose sanctions on a company, including formal notices and prosecutions, they will have to contact the primary authority to see whether those actions are contrary to appropriate advice that has previously been given. Any disputes will be referred to LBRO. The requirement to consult is waived if consumers are at immediate risk. To date South Cambridgeshire has not been asked to act as a Primary Authority.

Home authority schemes will continue however there is a persuasive case to transfer these into the PAS, due to its firm legal basis.

The most significant food manufacturer in the South Cambridgeshire District is Premier Foods (formally Chivers).

3.2 Local Drivers

3.2.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy for South Cambridgeshire

The Sustainable Community Strategy for South Cambridgeshire sets out what people in South Cambridgeshire want to happen here, and how we aim to make these things happen. It is a single document that will help to set the agenda for all agencies working in the district over the next three years. Its scope is set within the framework of national, regional and sub-regional strategies, including the Regional Planning Guidance and the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan and the national shared priorities for Local Government.

Cambridgeshire's five Local Strategic Partnerships have identified – through their Communities Strategies – the social, economic and environmental issues that matter to our residents. The Community Strategies have provided the starting point for the development of this Local Area Agreement in addition to other key plans and strategies setting out Cambridgeshire's priorities.

There are also cross cutting themes running across the four blocks of the LAA. These are areas where - although appearing under a specific block - partners recognise there is further scope for the LAA and partnership working to provide added value beyond the work of individual organisations. Community cohesion, public health, and culture and sport are examples of this.

3.2.2 Health and Environmental Services Service Plan 2009/10

In order to meet the key corporate goal and ensure continuous improvement the Health and Environmental Service has a Service Plan covering 2009/10. This incorporates key actions, improvements and performance indicators specifically for food safety.

In addition the Council has signed up to the Enforcement Concordat, has due regard for the Regulator's Compliance Code and has an agreed Health & Environmental services Enforcement Policy. The service operates to the principles of transparency, helpfulness, proportionality and consistency contained within these documents.

3.2.3 Enforcement Policy

The Food safety service follows the published Health & Environmental Services Enforcement Policy acknowledging the Enforcement Concordat and the Regulators' Compliance Code. The Cabinet Member responsible for food safety matters approved the policy.

3.3 Quality Drivers

3.3.1 Performance Measures

In order to achieve the stated objective the service has identified key performance measures as required in the Health & Environmental Services Service Plan:

- Achieve the 'Broadly Compliant' standard as laid down in the new NI 184 for 90% of businesses.
- The percentage of food safety inspections carried out for high risk premises and the percentage of other risk food businesses carried out including alternative intervention strategies.
- The percentage of complaints and requests for service, which are responded to within 3 working days.
- The benchmark score for the service against a Quality and Performance matrix (Hampshire Matrix).
- The percentage of food businesses which felt their business was treated fairly (NI 182).
- The percentage of food businesses which felt the contact the service had with them was helpful (NI 182).

3.3.2 Access to Quality Services

South Cambridgeshire has introduced a set of service standards that aim to put customers first, deliver outstanding services and provide easy access to services and information. They place the customer at the centre of its service delivery and the food service is required to comply with these standards.

The Contact Centre acts as a first point of contact for food safety enquiries. The staff are trained to answer questions on food and hygiene issues. The service is available 8.00 am to 8.00 pm six days a week.

Customer feedback is encouraged and welcomed. Each year the Environmental Health Service carries out a Customer Satisfaction Survey, the results of which are considered and acted upon to improve customer service.

The needs of “harder to reach” groups has yet to be addressed and it is hoped that the results of further consultation will be incorporated into the strategy in due course.

Various leaflets are also available relating to specific areas of food and infectious disease control.

3.3.3 Quality Assessment

Performance Indicators have been identified within this Service Plan.

Regular team meetings of the specialist food officers take place.

Internal quality monitoring is undertaken in accordance with:

- The Internal Procedure Monitoring Note.
- Food Premises Inspections – Quality Control.
- Checking of correspondence.
- Checking of drafted notices.

3.4 The Food Service

3.4.1 Organisational Structure

- Qualified and competent officers undertake a range of duties including food hygiene, food fitness standards and the investigation of food borne illness.
- Lead Officer, responsible for Food Safety is Mr J.G Keerie, Principal Environmental Health Officer, 01954 713133
geoff.keerie@scams.gov.uk
- The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) is currently Dr Bernadette Nazareth, supported by Dr Kate King at the Health protection Agency.
- The South Cambridgeshire food safety team deals with food safety issues whilst Cambridgeshire Trading Standards deal with food standards work. All Services work closely together on issues, for example dealing with food alerts from FSA and imported food matters.
- Specialist Services are also provided by Lincoln Sutton and Wood Ltd, Analytical and Consulting Chemists, 6 Clarence Street, Norwich NR1 1HG.
- The Food Examiners are the Health Laboratory service at Addenbrooke’s Hospital 6th Floor. The HPA laboratories in Chelmsford now process food samples.

- The Product Contamination Liaison Officer (0845 4564564 or 01480 428018) is the current contact within Huntingdon Police Headquarters for criminal food adulteration.
- Contractors are also used to assist with any shortfall in food hygiene inspections of Category C and D premises. The use of contractors is restricted to an initial inspection. Any follow up action required, e.g. revisits, service of notices, legal proceedings is referred back to the Service.
- The Food Safety Team is organised into three geographical areas due to the rural nature of the area. Inspections are issued on month-by-month basis and officers may inspect premises or carry out other duties in another officers' district. This helps to ensure that our limited resources are flexible. The demands on the service are high and the team strives to achieve its inspection targets.

3.4.2 Scope of the Food Service.

The Food Safety section of Health and Environmental Services provides the following services and key functions:

- Programmed food hygiene inspections of food premises within the District.
- Health and safety inspections and accident investigations in food premises.
- Responding to food alerts.
- Dealing with food and food related complaints and other service requests.
- Carrying out our annual food sampling programme.
- Registering and licensing food premises and mobile vehicles.
- Dealing with imported food and its origin.
- Education e.g. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Levels 1, 2 and 3 food hygiene and nutrition courses
- Website information, including 'Scores on the Doors'.
- Investigating cases of food related illness and other infectious diseases.
- Food Safety awareness campaigns e.g. Food Safety Week.
- Securing compliance with the requirements of the Health Act 2006.

To facilitate maximum efficiency the service is delivered through public/private partnerships. External contractors are used to deliver low and medium risk food hygiene inspections, alternative enforcement work and food safety training courses.

The selection and use of external contractors will be a decision taken by the Principal Environmental Health Officer in consultation with the Corporate Manager Health and Environmental Services and will be subject to the following criteria:

- There is a direct need to ensure statutory and local performance targets are met.
- External contractors must meet the competency requirements of the FSA's Food Law Code of Practice (England) October 2004 – (revision awaited). They must also have the necessary qualification and experience.
- The cost of the work can be met within existing budgets and is in accordance with the Council procurement policies.

In order to maintain the best quality of service, SCDC retains the inspection of high risk premises by its officers to ensure that resources are targeted on the appropriate categories of premises where risks have been identified. This allows for a greater degree of control over these premises and ensures continuity of enforcement activities.

Food Safety Officers also undertake dual food safety and health & safety inspections of Local Authority enforced premises, based on a risk focused inspection programme. The Food safety service operates from the South Cambridgeshire Hall between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. Evening and weekend inspections are carried out as determined by the risk based inspection programme and the premises opening hours.

Emergency food safety issues are currently directed initially to a 24-hour out of hour's officer via a Contact Centre. In addition the Council's fully revised website is used to provide information about food safety services for consumers and business and also provides a direct email address for service requests env.health@scams.gov.uk

In November 2005 the Service launched its 'Scores on the Doors' website. This provides information to the public and businesses on the inspection standards of the food premises. It has been very successful in improving the standards within food businesses in the District.

3.5 Demands on the Food Service

3.5.1 Profile of food premises – April 2009/10.

There are 1085 local food businesses mainly of retail or catering nature. There are few large food manufacturers located in the District.

Risk Category	A	B	C	D	E	Other	Total
Number of premises	4	29	397	163	481	11	1085

3.5.2 National Food Risk Category Descriptions.

The visit frequency is the minimum we are required to carry out.

A	High Risk visit at least every 6 months	D	Low Risk visit at least every 24 months
B	High Risk visit at least every 12 months	E	Very Low risk visit every 60 months or use alternative enforcement strategy
C	Medium Risk visit at least every 18 months		

The profile of the district is updated continuously. The growth and development of the district results in significant coding changes. Registered premises on 01/04/2006 numbered 1031 and has now risen to 1085. This indicates a continuous growth in the number of food businesses.

Currently there is 1 food business authorised under the vertical directive food legislation. There are 19 licensed Game Dealers in the District.

The following specialist businesses are in the district:

- a) A production plant for Premier Foods producing preserves and pickles for national and international export. They also produce dried potato products and peanut butter.
- b) A cook-chill central production unit (CPU) producing cook-chilled foods for Regional Hospitals, NHS Trusts and Care Homes.
- c) A sandwich producer.
- d) A significant number of market garden units producing products under glass, e.g. lettuces.
- e) Cambridge City Airport.
- f) A number of Food Mobiles.

3.5.3 Further demands will be made on the service in 2009/10 due to:

- Ongoing review and changes to approved premises, including the identification of new premises and the expansion of the definition to low level meat cutting plants. SCDC will have up to 2 of these in the next few months.
- Alternative enforcement strategies, resulting in a reduction of low risk inspections but with time then being reallocated to increased targeted educational and promotional work.
- Ongoing implementation of documented food safety management system for all food premises commensurate with their activities, including utilisation of the 'Safer Foods Better Business' pack promoted by the FSA.
- New Codes of Practice and a change in the way we work to be able to report on outcomes.
- An increasing number of Eastern Europeans working in food businesses which can present language and interpretation difficulties.
- Further development and promotional work linked to the 'Scores on the Doors' initiative.
- Smoke free activities have been passed to the Food and Health and Safety team for day-to-day management. The food safety team will be taking on outstanding issues, checking compliance on inspection visits, responding to complaints and providing advice to new businesses.
- Regulation in Practice - The Regulators' Compliance Code. In accordance with the Regulators' Compliance Code the Council will perform its duties in a business-friendly way, by planning regulation and inspections in a way that causes least disruption to the economy, and as such the code has been considered when determining this Food Service Plan.

3.6 Food Safety Incidents

The FSA regularly issues Food Alerts relating to foods which for all sorts of reasons may pose a risk to health. These vary in significance requiring an appropriate response. Warnings categorised "For Action" are of high priority and require immediate action. This may involve contacting and/or visiting food premises and taking immediate action under legislation. "For Information" hazard warnings do not usually require direct action by the Authority.

The methods of handling all hazard warnings are in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the FSA. Where the Authority becomes aware of a serious localised incident or a wider food safety problem it will notify the FSA.

3.7 Liaison with Other Organisations

The established County Officer Food Liaison Group collaborates well. Departmental procedures are shared Countywide to promote consistency. A yearly workplan is produced and followed. The food officer sub-groups share allocated procedural tasks.

A Chief Environmental Health Officers Group functions at a strategic and management level. It approves the workplan of the Food Liaison Group and monitors its work and output.

Liaison with LACORS, the FSA, CQC, HPA, and Trading Standards exists through the County Food Liaison Group.

Regular updates of food premises registration information is provided to our Trading Standards and HSE colleagues.

Other partnerships with a food safety agenda include:

- The South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Improving Health Partnership.
- Both the Cambridgeshire Obesity Group and the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Locality Obesity Group.
- The Cambridgeshire Food and Health Group.

Close liaison exists inter-departmentally with Building Control and the Planning services with reference to food businesses.

3.8 Food Safety Promotion

Food safety promotion work is undertaken by the following methods:

- Basic food hygiene training courses are run at intervals during the year and on request if a business has more than 12 delegates. Courses for Specialist groups, i.e. care home wardens and caterers whose first language is not English, are run as required.
- In 2008/09 1 nutrition courses was offered and completed.
- Talks to pupils of local educational establishments including schools, colleges, and voluntary groups.

The EHO (Public Health Specialist) considers other additional food safety promotional activities as part of his annual workplan. A healthy eating award will be scoped across South Cambridgeshire in 2009/10.

Food Safety Officers were in attendance at 3 events over the summer period promoting the service and especially hand washing and Scores on the Doors. This was well received by the public.

4 Service Delivery

4.1 Food Safety and Hygiene.

Food Premises – Hygiene Inspections. The Authority follows the priority rating system identified in the Food Safety Code of Practice and aims to inspect 100% of due high risk premises each and every year. Inspections consist of questioning the food business operator to discover their knowledge of food hazards and an inspection of the premises and food prepared there by observing food handling practices and procedures.

Inspection profile for the year beginning 1st April 2009

Risk Category	A	B	C	D	E	Other	Total
Number of premises	4	29	397	163	481	11	1085
Inspections scheduled	8	29	267	58	113	3	478

Category A premises are those with the highest risk, whether by the nature of the activities carried on there, or because of poor operating conditions. The minimum inspection frequency for the different categories of premises is given at 3.5.2. Special database software package for logging and tracking inspections and other activities is used. Revisions in the FSA Code of Practice provides the opportunity to deal with low risk premises by means other than an inspection; The Food service is continuing to develop a strategy for these premises through the year in consultation with local businesses and partners.

Revisits are made where there are concerns about food safety. The Food Safety Section has a structured risk based criteria to enable revisits to be prioritised. It is anticipated that 10% of premises inspected will be revisited.

In line with the Enforcement Policy, Hygiene Improvement Notices are issued if work detailed on a previous inspection report has not been completed or if there are serious concerns about food safety during a current visit. These legal notices ensure that improvements are made within a reasonable timescale.

Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices are used where there is an imminent risk to health. The Principal Environmental Health Officer and the Food Control and Health and Safety Team Leader are the only officers who are authorised to undertake this action. Officers must always contact either if an imminent risk is found. This will normally involve the immediate closure of the premises. Common reasons for closing premises are the discovery of pest infestations (mice, cockroaches), the absence of water / hot water; or very poor control over food hazards and / or cleaning.

4.2 Number of formal actions taken in 2008/09

Number of premises where Improvement Notices were served	0
Number of premises where Emergency Prohibition Notices were served	0
Prosecutions against businesses for poor conditions	0
Prosecutions against businesses for not complying with a notice	0
Formal Cautions issued against businesses for food safety and hygiene offences	0
Voluntary Closures	1

4.3 Food Hygiene Inspection Changes

4.3.1 Scores on the Doors & Information/Advice

SCDC was the First Local Authority to launch this innovative project, using an externally hosted website in November 2005, and the South Cambridgeshire/Southwark 5 star banding scheme. Subsequently 100 other local authorities have joined together on this website and share a common scheme. Evidence now strongly suggests that this innovation has had significant impact on businesses to improve their standards and the project is encouraging business proprietors to engage more with Environmental Health Officers to seek better compliance. The authority is seeing an improvement in the star ratings on re-inspections. The SCDC website also had an increased number of 'requests for information' currently running at around 10,000 per month. The Food Control and Health and Safety Team Leader has been invited by the FSA to join the working party for the national scores on the doors scheme.

The scores on the doors project has been very helpful in focussing resources at poor and/or failing businesses. Food premises are rated between zero and 5 stars. Those who score 2 stars or less are visited more frequently to improve the standard before they are re rated. However, these additional visits are to poor or failing premises and are therefore in line with Hampton principles and the requirements of the Regulators Compliance Code. Resources are being prioritised into the areas that will have the biggest impact on public health.

The scheme also allows the public to get access to information about standards of hygiene in premises where they may eat or buy food. The star rating is published on the www.scoresonthedoors.org or via the South Cambridgeshire website. Proprietors are also given a certificate if they achieve a four or 5 star rating. All food businesses that score 2 stars and above are given a window sticker to display their rating in a prominent place in their premises.

Since 2006 there has been a requirement for food businesses to implement a food safety management system such as "Safer Food Better Business". Cambridgeshire Food Liaison Group was awarded a grant to assist businesses to implement the scheme. A high proportion of businesses across South Cambridgeshire have undertaken this. However, there are some that have not engaged with such a system and so additional time has been spent at these premises to help the businesses achieve compliance. A monthly surgery free of cost to businesses is also held to assist with compliance.

Revisits to premises after inspections are also necessary to ensure legal requirements have been complied with, to ensure compliance with statutory notices or following a poor sample result etc.

4.3.2 Alternative Inspection Strategy for Food Hygiene

The revised Code of Practice, published June 2008, allows authorities greater flexibility in how to ensure compliance with food safety legislation i.e. the use of alternative interventions to inspections, particularly in lower risk premises. However, the use of alternative interventions for Category C premises can only be used when a premises is judged to be “broadly compliant”. This term originates from NI 184 and is based on the specific risk ratings given for compliance using the new statutory code of practice, i.e. how well the operator is complying with food safety standards at the time of the inspection. Alternative interventions can also be used for category D premises.

However, the use of an alternative intervention instead of an inspection is limited because of the Scores on the doors scheme being in place. There would have to be very strong justification not to carry out a full inspection of a premises because the results are published on the Scores on the doors website. This situation will continue to be reviewed and the use of suitable alternative interventions for broadly compliant C’s and D premises will be explored further.

The alternative methods employed for food hygiene inspections are by postal questionnaire for low risk premises.

The inspection technique and follow up, including post inspection correspondence will relate to the risk to food safety that was identified from the questionnaire.

The primary objectives when carrying out inspections are in accordance with the new FSA Food Law Code of Practice, however, a special emphasis is placed on the level of compliance with the new requirements for documented food safety management systems, awareness raising of the South Cambridgeshire Star Award Scheme (‘Scores on the Doors’) Safer Food Better Business, and also staff hygiene training. Specific consideration is also given to whether food samples need to be taken during routine food hygiene inspection work.

4.3.3 Food Complaints

It is the Authority’s policy to investigate all complaints concerning food produced, stored, distributed, handled and / or intended for human consumption within the District to ensure that it is without risk to the health or safety of the public. Complaints regarding labelling etc are forwarded to the Trading Standards Department of Cambridgeshire County Council in accordance with a county wide documented protocol.

Most of the complaints received about food relate to food produced outside of the District, although others relate to more freshly made local foods from establishments such as restaurants, takeaways etc. Service standards are set for response times to complaints. Performance against these targets is regularly monitored. In general, complaints will be responded to within 3 working days, however the more urgent the matter, the speedier the response.

All complaints and requests for service are recorded using the Proactive software and a team leader regularly monitors progress.

Number of Complaints about food, premises and personnel			
Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Number of complaints	76	112	96

4.3.4 Advice to Businesses

It is a Council agreed action to “support businesses to comply with the law while targeting those who flout it” (Council Action 26).

While the Authority will utilise its powers to enforce food legislation, it realises that where food businesses break the law it is often due to ignorance rather than intention. As a consequence it is the Authority’s policy to provide advice to businesses in a number of different ways:

- During programmed or other inspections.
- Advisory surgeries on a monthly basis free of charge.
- The provision of advice to any food business proprietor on how to comply with the law and on best practice. This may be prompted by Licensing, Planning or Building Control applications.
- The provision of free advice leaflets.
- The production of Food Safety News newsletters which are sent to all food businesses in the district.
- Information on our website.
- Business links –articles in business newsletters.

In support of the departmental and Council aims, the culture of the food team is to freely offer advice and information when required or when requested. Officers respond positively to requests for advice from proprietors of food businesses within 10 working days. Requests for advice from food businesses currently number approximately 150 per year. It is estimated that 1 hour per enquiry of officer time is necessary to meet this demand. This demand is currently met.

A Council magazine, "South Cambs Magazine", is produced four times a year and distributed free of charge to the 61,000 households in South Cambridgeshire. This magazine provides an opportunity to distribute food safety information to a wide audience.

4.3.5 Food Complaints

A documented policy relating to food complaints is adhered to and follows LACORS guidance. This policy has been adopted across the Cambridgeshire food authority district councils. A performance indicator to respond within 3 working days is a service standard.

The scope of the procedure currently covers:

- Receiving food complaints.
- Investigation of food complaints.
- Action to be taken on completion of the investigation.
- Transfer of food complaints.

The team is currently appropriately staffed to meet demand.

4.3.6 Food Inspection and Sampling

Microbiological food sampling is carried out to meet 4 main objectives:

- To determine the current state of food safety in the District as part of a structured sampling programme.
- To improve the effectiveness of food hygiene inspections.
- To investigate suspected cases of food poisoning where a link with a local business or food is suspected.
- To investigate complaints about food.

The formal food sampling plan links with LACORS as well as taking account of local trends and needs. The number of samples taken and submitted for analysis over the last few years has been significantly reduced by a shortage of regional resource. These include water.

Year	2008/09
Number of microbiological samples	259
Number unsatisfactory	4

4.3.7 Control & Investigation of Outbreaks, Disease & Food Related Infectious Diseases

GP's across the District report suspected cases of food poisoning to the Consultant for Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) at the Health Protection Agency. The Local Medical Microbiology Laboratory at Addenbrookes Hospital also advises the CCDC of positive results for food poisoning and food/water related illness. The Food Safety Team are then advised and carry out investigations to discover, if possible, the source of the infection and also to minimise the likelihood of secondary cases.

The Authority has a documented procedure for the investigation of incidents of reported or suspected cases of food poisoning and a formal plan to cover the management of the investigation of outbreaks of food borne infectious disease. These documented policies have been developed in conjunction with the Consultant for Communicable Disease Control at the Health Protection Agency, Dr Bernadette Nazareth.

Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Number of individual investigated cases	277	249	283

In 2008/09 the Food Safety team continued to investigate all notifiable gastro-intestinal illnesses including the most common cause of food poisoning, campylobacter. An increase in awareness of 'winter vomiting illness' - Norovirus - resulted in a small number of outbreaks being reported to the Department. Campylobacter, the highest number of those reported, forms part of the FSA's Food Borne Disease Strategy for target campaigns until 2010.

Approximately 2 hours is allowed per individual case investigation, making a total workload of approximately 566 hours, which is an increase of 68 hours on last year. It is anticipated that demand can be met by current staffing.

Following a recent review of guidance relating to infectious diseases and enteric disorders, new pamphlets have been drafted and printed and these will be distributed to all infectious diseases / food poisoning cases within the district during 2009/10.

A workload related to disease control is 'welfare burials'. Each one of these is unique and requires an immediate response. These are currently running at 2-6 per year but officers often begin to make welfare burial arrangements for up to 10-12 persons before distant members of family or friends agree to take on the burial arrangements. Welfare burials can be resource intensive as they are all different and require approximately 2 weeks of officer time to complete for a straightforward case. This puts additional pressure on the service.

5 Review of last years progress and performance

5.1.1 Review of the Service Plan

The Service Plan will be reviewed March 2010. The review will be facilitated by information from the IT system and will include trend analysis from previous year performance data. Departmental performance indicators are reviewed annually under the Service Planning process.

The Standards for Food Law Enforcement including food policies and procedure notes will be reviewed in accordance with the review timetable in the Internal Monitoring Procedure Note.

5.1.2 Review of Previous Year's Performance against Service Plan

The FSA Framework Agreement requires every local authority to review its previous years performance against its service plan. The review must identify where the authority was at variance from the service plan and, where appropriate, the reasons for that variance. This review details the performance of the food service for the financial year 2008/09 and must outline any significant issues that impacted on the delivery of the service.

At the end of this financial year, the intended actions as specified in the Health and Environmental Services Plan will be compared with what was achieved in the areas relating to food safety. The reasons for any variance identified will be stated and next year's plan will take these into account as lessons to be learnt from the previous year.

Targeted outcomes are reviewed on a three monthly basis.

5.1.3 Food Premises Inspections

In 2008/09 a total of 611 food business premises required an inspection of which 290 were classed as high risk (risk group A to C) and 321 were other risk (risk group D to F).

Target 2008/09 was a 100% of High Risk premises, which was achieved. The target for other risk premises was 90%, which was also achieved.

Revisits are carried out on an ad hoc basis to premises where significant remedial work is required, or "critical control points" are not adequately controlled.

5.1.4 Food Related Complaints

Up to 31 March 2009, the service received 96 food complaints and 29 complaints about food premises.

All complaints about food premises were investigated efficiently, with the response deadline of 3 working days being met (100%).

5.1.5 Advice to Businesses

Officers have continued to give free advice and assistance to both the trade and public throughout the year on food safety and hygiene matters. 165 advice responses were made but this figure is low as advice is often given ad-hoc and not recorded. In addition to advice given during the inspection process various advisory leaflets were produced and distributed.

5.1.6 New Businesses that have Opened

Despite the recession businesses continue to open , and in line with the Code of Practice these are visited within 28 days of opening. Last year 133 new businesses were visited by the team on top of the inspection programme, and this puts pressure on the inspection programme.

5.1.7 Food Inspection and Sampling

A total of 259 microbiological samples were taken and submitted mainly to the Hospital Laboratory Services for analysis. The sampling programme formulated by LACORS and the Eastern Region programme, as well as the services' sampling programme was followed. 4 food samples were considered to be unsatisfactory. All failed samples were followed up to ascertain the cause and necessary improvements were put in place to reduce the risk of a recurrence.

Eighteen Food Export Certificates were issued for consignments of food that was manufactured in the district and exported to non-EU countries.

5.1.8 Food-related Infectious Diseases

A total of 283 notified cases of food poisoning and suspected food poisoning were received up to 31 March 2009. Investigations were carried out within 24 hours of notification in 98% of cases. In all instances where local food premises were potentially implicated, no conclusive evidence was found to confirm that either the food or the premises was the source of the illness.

5.1.9 Liaison with Other Organisations

All existing liaison arrangements have worked successfully throughout the year and there are no planned changes to these systems.

5.1.10 Food Safety Promotion

8 food Hygiene Courses were successfully completed which is the normal number of courses offered each year. This year a level 3 course was also held

5.1.11 Staff Development

With officers personal development plans in place, training needs are identified at the beginning of the year. Both the officer and the Principal

Officer responsible for training, source and access relevant training courses. All officers secured the necessary amount of CPD as required by the FSA.

5.1.12 Identification of any Variation from the Service Plan

There were no significant deviations from the Service Plan.

5.2 Areas for Improvement

The Service for a number of years has produced a Service Plan. The requirement of the Service Plan is to improve yearly the achieved percentage of identified targets and identify where possible any improvements of a qualitative nature.

The review of the Service Plan enables foreseeable trends and known changes that may affect service requirements and service delivery to be considered.

To facilitate interpretation of the Service Plan and focus the Food Team's attention on relevant improvements, the Hampshire Matrix has been used since 2002 to monitor progress of the food team's improvements at six monthly intervals. Recent improvements in the last year to the scores on the matrix have been the introduction of the Food Safety Newsletter, placing of additional information on our website and the addition of businesses with Scores on the Doors.

Over the past 3 years food safety legislation has undergone significant changes and the team has dealt with these and continues to provide a high quality service. With new national priorities being developed by the FSA and the Local Better Regulation Office, the service will need to respond to these and improve further.

Some of the current planned improvements for 2009/10 are outlined as follows:

Service Improvement	Planned Outcomes / Output	Link to FSA framework agreement	Target Date
Assess the implication of new guidance from the FSA in relation to childminders and assist them to meet compliance	Await guidance from the FSA	Advice to businesses and working in partnership	March 2010
Healthier Lifestyles smoke free premises	Ongoing inspections and advice to ensure compliance	General commitment to better regulation. Dual Inspections	Ongoing
SFBB bid for phase 4 to ensure sustainability of the project and assist hard to reach businesses	To seek and secure SFBB funding from the FSA to provide one to one coaching and to ensure consistency within the Cambridgeshire Food Liaison Group	Advice to businesses and partnership working in line with guidance.	Bid July 2009 then roll out if successful September 2009 to March 2010
Continue to develop and promote the "Scores on the Doors" scheme for	Increase public access to inspection scores through SCDC website. Improve	Advice to businesses. Records and Inspection reports.	March 2010

providing inspection risk ratings on SCDC "Scores on the Doors" website as a 5 star rated scheme	overall number of premises achieving 3 stars and above.	Food Safety Promotion	
Set up and run a business stakeholder forum	Feedback from food businesses in SCDC on how we can improve assistance		March 2010
Run monthly food safety surgery	To provide a regular time when businesses can come and discuss food safety issues and receive one to one assistance with SFBB	Food Safety Promotion and information	On going
Scope - a healthy eating award across SCDC and Cambridge City	Increase public awareness of healthy diets to reduce levels of obesity	Food Safety Promotion and information	March 2009
Tips for Chips	Increase public awareness of healthy diets to reduce levels of obesity. To train fish and chip shops in good frying techniques.	Have applied for FSA grant. Launch February 2010 in national chip week	March 2010
Seminar for Butchers following sampling programme and lessons learnt from the Ecoli outbreak in Wales	Increase awareness of food hygiene in butchers shops and to review HACCP plans	Advice to businesses and working in partnership	October 2010
To undertake an Equality Impact Assessment on the Food safety service	To ensure service meets the needs of the community and does not negatively impact against any particular equality strand.	Equality and diversity	September 2009

6.0 Resources

6.1 Financial Allocation

Cost centre	2009/10 (£) budget
Staffing	140,710.0
Supplies and Services ¹	25,990.0
Support Services ²	35,720.0
Transport Costs	11,450.0
Income	2,050.0
Total	222,290.0

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.

¹ Includes ICT costs

² Includes accommodation and other support services costs (administration, finance, legal services, personnel etc). Lower legal costs estimated for this year.

7.0 Workforce overview

7.1 Staffing Allocation

The food team currently consists of the Principal Officer, Mr J Keerie and 4½ full time equivalent Officers, Mrs C Archibald (Team Leader), Mrs Julie Winfield District EHO, Mrs J Power (part-time) District EHO, Mr Stephen Broadbelt District EHO, Mrs Emma Trollope (part-time) Food Safety Enforcement Officer, Mrs Sarah Killick (part-time) Food Safety Enforcement Officer. In addition an EHO with responsibility for Public Health also has a time input into food related projects and 1 technical officer also contributes time. Consultants are employed on an ad-hoc basis to supplement the service offered. The 5 EHO's are all fully qualified and maintain their competence levels. Work relating to the food law enforcement service equates to 3½ full time equivalents.

7.2 Staff Development Plan

A personal development programme was introduced from 1 April 2001. This contributed to the Service obtaining the Investors in People Award in 2003 and reaccreditation in 2006 and a corporate achievement in 2009. This has highlighted training needs identified by individual officers, their managers and service demands. These training requirements are built into officers work programmes and budgetary requirements are identified and allowed for in service plans. Both internal and external training opportunities will be utilised, e.g. LACORS, CIEH, FSA and specialist consultants/expert advisers.

All food safety staff are subject to annual performance and development review interviews and a progress review which tracks and identifies training and development needs. Food safety training needs are prioritised in the context of wider Environmental Health requirements identified within the service wide training plan. The training budget allocation for 2009/10 should be adequate to fund the identified training needs for this year.

All food safety staff complete a training record log and a food safety training matrix to further assist in identifying development and training needs and for monitoring the competency of individual officers. The officers undertaking specific duties, such as dealing with approved premises, are identified and the training requirements assessed accordingly.

8.0 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.

Our Comprehensive Equalities Policy sets out specific principles and aims that we will follow in order to achieve our Commitment to Equality and the equality dimension of our Corporate Objectives and Values.

The Council has already adopted race and disability equality schemes and is in the process of developing a gender equality scheme. We have a number of relevant Human Resource policies, a strategy for our work with the Traveller community, which is currently being reviewed and other equality target groups.

Our approach to the delivery of our Commitment to Equality will reflect the following strategic objectives:

- Fairness and equity, while recognising that many people fall under more than one of our equality priorities.
- Being non-discriminatory in all areas and activities, including service delivery, staff recruitment and development and the purchasing of goods and services.
- Ensuring that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of our community have equal access to all of our services, particularly those associated with our key equality themes
- Ensuring that elected members and staff at all levels are clear about their responsibility to challenge discrimination, promote diversity and social inclusion, and work towards equality for all members of the community.
- Encouraging 'real' participation in local democracy by people who may normally feel excluded from decision-making processes. In doing this, we will ensure that we seek the views of groups who are particularly vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion or have found it difficult to access our services or receive favourable outcomes from them.
- Promotion of community cohesion & good community relations.
- Working with partners in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors to promote 'best practice' equality approaches throughout the community strategy, while ensuring the best outcomes from the strategy for all the people of South Cambridgeshire.
- Working towards a workforce which reflects the working-age population of the district and the county and conforms with 'best value' guidelines on staff diversity

The Council has achieved Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and is taking action to achieve level 2 this year.

The Council is also implementing a system of Equality Impact Assessments and this service will be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment by September 2009. The council uses a range of methods to make services as accessible as possible. These include:

- Wheelchair accessible offices with private interview facilities at Cambourne.
- Translation and Interpreting facilities where needed.
- Induction Loop and minicom for people with hearing needs
- Website and email.
- Contact Centre – with flexible and extended hours of operation.