

**FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN**

**2024 - 2025**



# Contents

Page

1. Service aims and objectives 3
   1. . Aims and objectives
   2. . Links to corporate objectives and plans
2. Background 4
   1. . Profile of Tamworth Borough
   2. . Organisational structure
   3. . Scope of the food safety service
   4. . Demands on the food service
   5. . Enforcement policy
3. Service delivery 7
   1. Interventions at food establishments
   2. Food complaints
   3. Home authority and primary authority
   4. Advice to businesses
   5. Food sampling
   6. Food safety incidents
   7. Liaison with other organisations
   8. Food safety and standards promotional work
   9. Control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease
4. Resources 11
   1. Financial allocation
   2. Staffing allocation
   3. Staff development plan
5. Quality assessment 12
   1. Quality assessment and internal monitoring
6. Review 12

6.1. Review against the service plan

6.2. Identification of any variation from the service plan

6.3. Areas for improvement

1. Member approval 12
2. **Service aims and objectives**

**1.1 Aims and objectives**

Our aim is to ensure that food (including drink) produced, stored or sold in Tamworth is safe to consume and complies with the requirements of food safety legislation. In order to achieve this we will provide a food safety service that is helpful, open and consistent and gives the best possible service for the people of Tamworth. As such we recognise that we have an important part to play in ensuring and improving public health within the Borough.

Our service users include members of the public, local businesses and other stakeholders such as the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards. In order to ensure that food produced or sold in Tamworth is safe, we aim to follow the requirements of the Food Standard’s Agency (FSA) Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance.

Objectives supporting our aims:

1. Carry out food hygiene interventions at categories A, B and C rated premises within 1 month of their due date.

2. Inspect all high and medium inherent risk food businesses within 1 or 2 months respectively of them starting to trade or of TBC being notified that they have started trading.

3. To provide a risk-based response to all notifications of food related illness or suspected illness in order to minimise effects on the community.

4. To carry out proactive sampling in accordance with nationally and locally set programmes.

5. To provide information, advice and education on food safety and public health issues to the business and residential community

6. To respond to complaints concerning food safety on a risk basis, further detail of which can be found in our complaints policy.

7. To take action to ensure compliance on a consistent, transparent and proportionate basis.

* 1. **Links to corporate objectives and plans**

This service plan supports the Corporate Plan 2022-2025 and the Council's ‘vision for Tamworth’, by setting out in detail the actions the council intends to take, in relation to food safety. The food safety service has an impact on many of the objectives in the Corporate Plan, for example by contributing to community safety and by supporting business growth by providing advice and ensuring a level playing field.

The Environmental Health Service Plan 2022/3 – 2024/5 sets out the specific targets of which the Environmental Health department have ownership. The targets relevant to food safety is that we will review our existing suite of food hygiene policies as required by the FSA and also transitioning our database from M3 to Assure.

1. **Background**

**2.1 Profile of Tamworth Borough**

Tamworth is a large market town with a population of 78,600 right in the centre of Britain – close enough to Birmingham to share the benefits of working with England’s second city, but far enough away to have our own distinct identity. The town centre is the hub and focal point for the town with a range of restaurants, pubs and bars and other licensed premises and activities. The local economy is strong and vibrant with a diverse range of businesses including manufacturing, office, logistics and retail, many of which are dovetailed with residential areas, both old and new.

Tamworth BC is a relatively small local authority, mainly urban and suburban in nature, located within the area of Staffordshire County Council. The council is made up of 10 electoral wards each represented by three Councillors.

* 1. **Organisational structure**

The Council comprises 30 locally elected representatives otherwise known as Councillors. The Council’s committee structure can be seen at: <https://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

**Executive Management**

The executive management structure of the Council is shown in figure 1.

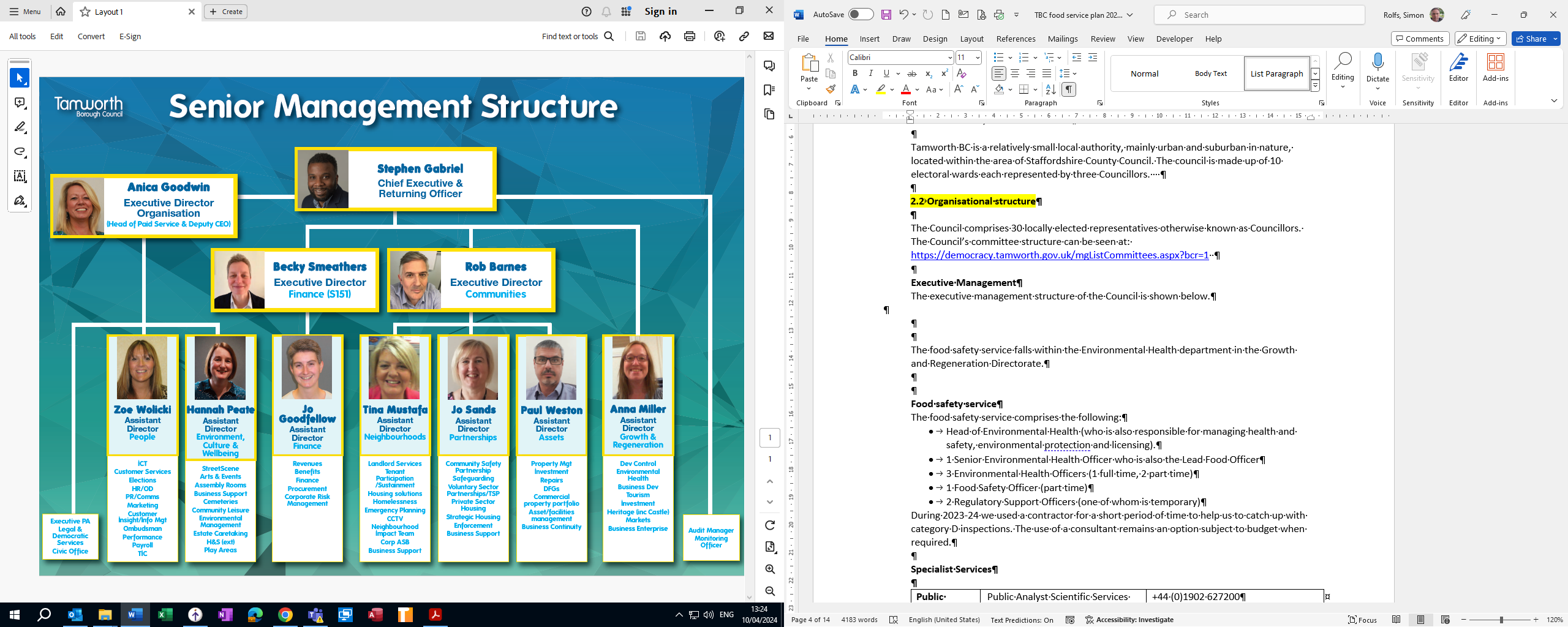


Figure 1: Senior management structure

The food safety service falls within the Environmental Health department in the Growth and Regeneration Directorate.

**Food safety service**

The food safety service comprises the following:

* Head of Environmental Health (who is also responsible for managing health and safety, environmental protection and licensing).
* 1 Senior Environmental Health Officer who is also the Lead Food Officer
* 3 Environmental Health Officers (1 full time, 2 part time)
* 1 Food Safety Officer (part time)
* 2 Regulatory Support Officers (one of whom is temporary)

During 2023-24 we used a contractor for a short period of time to help us to catch up with category D inspections. The use of a consultant remains an option subject to budget when required.

**Specialist Services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Public analyst services** | Public Analyst Scientific Services Limited (Wolverhampton), i54 Business Park, Valiant Way, Wolverhampton, WV9 5GB | +44 (0)1902 627200  [info@publicanalystservices.co.uk](mailto:info@publicanalystservices.co.uk) |
| **Food and water analysis** | Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Services  UK Health Security Agency  61 Colindale Avenue  London  NW9 5EQ | 020 8327 7160 / 7325  [fwe.nrl@ukhsa.gov.uk](mailto:fwe.nrl@ukhsa.gov.uk) |

**2.3 Scope of the food safety service**

The Environmental Health Department carries out all food hygiene duties, including inspections, sampling, complaints, imported food, export certificates etc. Food standards matters within Tamworth are dealt with by our colleagues in Trading Standards employed by Staffordshire County Council.

The Environmental Health Department also has responsibility for:

* workplace health and safety including registration of skin piercers
* licensing including taxis, premises serving alcohol and animal welfare
* infectious diseases; and
* environmental protection including nuisance complaints, air quality monitoring and planning consultations.

The following functions are provided by the service:

* Maintenance of a food premises registration database for all food businesses located within the borough;
* Provision of advice to local businesses to assist them in complying with their legal responsibilities and to promote good practice.
* Inspections and audits of food businesses to ensure they comply with food safety legislation. This includes continuing to fully participate in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
* Approval of food manufacturers handling products of animal origin.
* Sampling and analysis of food and water to check their compliance with safety requirements.
* Investigation of complaints about illegal/unfit food and unlawful food businesses;
* Investigation of food poisoning outbreaks;
* Investigation of national Food Alerts (issued by the Food Standards Agency).
* In the most serious cases, formal enforcement action is taken to protect public health including the seizure of food, service of notices, and closure of premises and prosecution of offenders.
* Issuing of export certificates
* Promoting food safety
* Consultation with external agencies and internal services i.e. licensing, trading standards, planning.

**2.4 Demands on the food service**

Table 1: Food premises risk bands

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1 April 2023** | **1 April 2024** |
| A | 1 | 0 |
| B | 16 | 26 |
| C | 63 | 77 |
| D | 205 | 186 |
| E | 263 | 280 |
| Unrated | 42 | 26 |
| Outside | 0 | 0 |
| Total registered | 590 | 595 |
| Approved premises | 1 | 1 |

A number of specialist manufacturers are located within Tamworth Borough including:

* A meat products manufacturer
* A dairy products manufacturer
* A business that imports high risk foods not of animal origin and exports them to the EU.
* A cold store that distributes food nationally

Officers responsible for inspecting and enforcing in such premises will have had specialist training and/or experience in accordance with the competency framework.

There are also a considerable number of events that take place in Tamworth, many of which are organised by Tamworth Borough Council which our officers regularly visit to ensure that food is being offered safely and legally.

**Service Delivery Points**

The team are hybrid workers operating mainly from home but we regularly use the office located at Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, B79 7BZ. The service is available 9.00am-5.00pm Monday-Friday although officers regularly work in the Borough outside these hours as required. Council services are also available in person at Tamworth Information Centre, Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Corporation Street, B79 7DN 10.00am -4.00pm Monday-Saturday

**2.5 Enforcement policy**

The Council has approved an Enforcement Policy and carries out its’ regulatory functions in accordance with the Regulators’ Code. The importance of achieving a fair and consistent approach to enforcement is recognised by the Council. The Enforcement Policy is followed for all enforcement action undertaken by the food service and is available from this page <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/environment>.

1. **Service delivery**

**3.1 Interventions at food establishments**

An annual risk-prioritised programme of interventions will be undertaken in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. The Service will use the full range of interventions and enforcement options available to ensure that the highest standards of food hygiene and safety are achieved and maintained.

Table 2 shows the targets that were set for 2023-24 and the interventions completed during that time period. Please note that all category A and B interventions have been completed, the discrepancy between figures is likely to have been caused by businesses ceasing to trade prior to intervention.

Table 2: Interventions 2023/24

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Food premises risk band** | **Total due in 2023-24** | **Targets for 2023-24** | **Interventions completed 2023-24** |
| A – Highest risk | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| B | 14 | 14 | 13 |
| C | 36 | 36 | 34 |
| D | 125 | 50 | 108 |
| E – Lowest risk | 171 | 75 | 19 |
| Unrated (rolled over from 2022-23) | 42 | 42 | n/a |
| Estimated number of new premises | 100 | 80 | 114 |
| Estimated number of revisits | 20 | 20 | 23 |
| **Grand Total** | **508** | **317** | **313** |

In 2024-25 there are 143 food premises due for a Food Hygiene Intervention excluding the remaining backlog from the covid pandemic. Categories A, B, C and D are up to date, and we are currently inspecting new businesses within 1-3 months of registration dependent on risk.

Table 3: Interventions 2024/25

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Food premises risk band** | **Rolled over from 2023-24 to 2024-25** | **Total due in 2024-25** | **Targets for 2024-25** |
| A – Highest risk | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| B | 0 | 26 | 26 |
| C | 4 | 39 | 43 |
| D | 4 | 51 | 55 |
| E – Lowest risk | 130 | 27 | 100 |
| Unrated (rolled over from 2023-24) | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| Estimated number of new premises |  | 100 | 80 |
| Estimated number of revisits |  | 20 | 20 |
| **Grand Total** | **164** | **289** | **348** |

Category A, B and C premises should all receive full inspections, partial inspections or audits. We are now up to date on category D premises and therefore alternatives to full inspections, partial inspections or audits are available to use in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. Category E premises are subject to an alternative enforcement strategy which is detailed in the intervention policy and should help us catch up with them.

The target number of interventions for 2024-25 is 348 which is an increase on 2023-24. The priority is to continue to inspect all category A-C premises as well as ensuring new registrations are dealt with on a risk basis. It should also be noted that 100 of the interventions planned for 2023-24 are alternative enforcement strategy interventions at category E premises using Regulatory Support Officers who are now relatively free of other work to assist with food hygiene.

NB: Our Regulatory Support Officers were originally taken on temporarily as Covid Support Officers but one of these roles is now permanent and both officers are being trained to take on the role of Regulatory Support Officer alongside other responsibilities. The second role remains temporary.

There is a risk that members of staff leaving and officers being involved in significant enforcement action may easily lead to these targets being jeopardised.

**3.2 Food complaints**

Food complaints received and investigated by the service fall into one of the following categories of Service Request:

* Complaints about food being contaminated or in some other way unsafe for consumption
* Complaints about hygiene of food businesses (hygiene, pests etc.)

Table 4: Food complaints

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Food Complaints** | **Hygiene of Food Premises** |
| 2022/23 | 28 | 12 |
| 2023/24 | 39 | 12 |

We aim to respond to all service requests within the necessary timescale. Where the service receives excessive numbers of service requests then the Head of Service and lead officer for food safety will make a decision on how these should be prioritised and whether resources need to be re-allocated.

Service requests are investigated in accordance with established procedures and policies. The initial response to complaints will be within five working days depending on the severity of the complaint, with more serious complaints receiving a more urgent response.

**3.3 Home authority and primary authority**

**Home authority scheme**

The Home Authority Principle is an arrangement where multi-national food businesses can enter into a formal arrangement with a single local authority (known as their Home Authority), to agree on common standards and interpretation of the Regulations in their many premises with the aim of ensuring consistency of enforcement. Local Authorities dealing with these businesses are then expected to have regard to any arrangement agreed by the Home Authority before taking enforcement action. Home authority has been largely superseded by primary authority.

**Primary authority scheme**

The Primary Authority Scheme gives businesses (and multiple businesses that share an approach to compliance) the right to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance.

The scheme places a legal duty upon local authorities to consult with a primary authority where they are considering taking formal enforcement action against a business with such an arrangement. All of our officers are aware of the schemes and prior to any inspection of a food business that has a Primary Authority, our officers will check the Primary Authority website to review documentation and inspection plans.

Tamworth BC do not currently operate home authority or primary authority partnerships, but are open to doing so should the opportunity arise. Resourcing of such a partnership will depend on the nature of the partnership and will be considered as and when the situation arises.

**3.4 Advice to businesses**

The provision of advice to food businesses on food hygiene is an important part of the team’s role and represents the first option when dealing with minor contraventions. Proactive advice is provided to businesses on a routine basis during inspections.

Advice is also available on our website, over the phone and by email and we will provide advisory visits free of charge where resources allow. The Food Standards Agency have recently updated their business advice web pages, and we will signpost to this where applicable.

**3.5 Food sampling**

Our food sampling activities play an important role in monitoring the microbiological quality of food sold locally and helps us verify that food business operators have effective food hygiene controls in place. Food is sampled according to a programme coordinated through the Central England (North) Food Liaison Group, together with colleagues at the UK Health Security Agency laboratory (UKHSA) in London. Members of the group implement national, cross-regional and local sampling initiatives based on national intelligence and incidents. Additional food sampling is carried out as necessary to support food hygiene inspections, the investigation of food complaints and outbreaks of food borne disease. We aim to take part in at least two surveys per year, subject to resources.

Samples are currently sent for microbiological examination to the UKHSA UKAS accredited laboratory in London. Courier collection is arranged on an ad hoc basis from Marmion House. Samples requiring analysis for chemical or physical parameters are sent to the Public Analyst. More details can be found in our food sampling policy and food sampling procedure.

Table 5: Food sampling

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2023-24** | **Targets for 2024-25** |
| Premises sampled | 10 | 12 |
| Total samples | 25 | 30 |

**3.6 Food safety incidents**

The FSA issues information about product withdrawals and recalls to let consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. A Product Withdrawal Information Notice or a Product Recall Information Notice is issued where a solution to the problem has been put in place – the product has been, or is being, withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers, for example. A Food Alert for Action is issued where intervention by enforcement authorities is required. These notices and alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal or recall by a manufacturer, retailer or distributor.

When a Food Alert for Action is issued, the Council must carry out the specified actions within the alert which may include visiting food premises and removing contaminated food from sale. The FSA also sometimes issues Allergy Alerts which are normally dealt with by our colleagues in Staffordshire County Council’s Trading Standards department.

Food Alerts are sent to all officers via the Smarter Communications platform which the FSA use to communicate with local authorities. The lead officer for food will normally take responsibility for ensuring that any actions needed are appropriately delegated, but when they are not available this responsibility will fall to another Environmental Health or Food Safety Officer.

A Food Alert can have large resource implications as they sometimes involve the need for us to visit many food businesses. It is our policy that a minimum of at least one commercial EHO or FSO is available during office hours to ensure that we can respond to food alerts. However due to the risk to Public Health, it is essential that adequate resources are provided to action these Alerts and this area of the service will receive whatever resources are required to fulfil these duties. In serious cases the Head of Environmental Health and lead officer for food will reallocate, or obtain additional resources to deal with the incident and maintain other high risk workload.

**3.7 Liaison with other organisations**

The Council is committed to ensuring that the enforcement approach it adopts is consistent with other enforcing authorities.

This is achieved through regular meetings of the Central England (North) Food Liaison Group, which is attended by the lead officer for food safety. This group comprises representatives from all LA’s in Staffordshire and Shropshire, Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards Department, the Food Standards Agency and the UKHSA laboratory and Health Protection teams.

This forum provides an opportunity for the authorities to discuss consistency issues both in their approach to enforcement and in the operation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The group holds regular training and consistency events and also implements an inter-authority auditing programme. The group also considers centrally issued guidance and consultations from the Food Standards Agency. We also have good informal links with neighbouring authority North Warwickshire Borough Council, who are not part of our food liaison group.

The Council also provides a representative to regular meetings with the health protection team at UKHSA in Stafford, where communicable disease issues are discussed. These meetings are also attended by the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), local water companies, DEFRA, AHVLA, public health nurses and the microbiology department.

**3.8 Food safety promotional work**

Officers routinely promote food safety issues during their day to day contact with Food Business Operators. We will also be participating in campaigns to promote awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme as part of national Food Safety week including the use of the Council’s social media channels.

**3.9 Control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease**

UKHSA reports all cases of potential food poisoning to TBC for our officers to investigate where appropriate.

The objectives of this service are to:

* Fulfil the Council’s statutory responsibilities relating to the control of infectious disease;
* Identify the source and cause of reported infection;
* Implement measures to prevent further spread;
* Protect public health by providing cases and members of the public with advice on personal hygiene, safe food handling and control of infection;
* Exclude food handlers and people working with high-risk groups in consultation with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC)
* Take enforcement action in accordance with our enforcement policy to ensure that risk is mitigated.

Large outbreaks are resource intensive and place significant demands on the Service. In the event of a significant outbreak, the Head of Service and lead officer for food safety will monitor the situation and re-allocate resources and staff from other areas as necessary. The number of cases of infectious disease for the last two years is detailed below in table 6.

Table 6: Infectious disease notifications

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2022/24** | **2023/24** |
| Campylobacter | 60 | 49 |
| Salmonella | 7 | 11 |
| Cryptosporidium | 10 | 4 |
| Giardia | 4 | 2 |
| Listeria monocytogenes | 0 | 1 |
| Legionella | 0 | 1 |
| Shigella | 1 | 0 |
| Scarlet fever | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **83** | **68** |

**4 . Resources**

**4.1 Financial allocation**

The budget for food safety for 2024-25 is £113,680. The Council recognises the importance of being able to deal with legal action and other one-off occurrences by maintaining adequate corporate reserves and provisions. The service makes use of a shared legal service with South Staffordshire District Council.

If legal action is to be taken by the service, costs are met from within a central budget for legal fees. Where possible costs are recovered.

**4.2 Staffing allocation**

The staffing allocation for the food safety services is as follows:

* Head of Environmental Health
* 1 Senior Environmental Health Officer
* 3 Environmental Health Officers (comprising 1 full time permanent, 2 part time permanent)
* 1 Food Safety Officer (part time)
* 2 Regulatory Support Officers

Table 7: Current estimated resource for food safety

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of officers** | **FTE for food safety work** |
| Senior EHO | 1 | 0.495 |
| EHO | 3 | 1.44 |
| Food Safety Officer | 1 | 0.4 |
| Permanent Regulatory Support Officer | 1 | 0.1 |
| Temporary Regulatory Support Officer | 1 | 0.05 |
| Total authorised officers | 6 | 2.335 |
| Total regulatory support officers | 2 | 0.15 |

Our Regulatory Support Officers are currently undertaking training to ensure that they meet the requirements of the competency framework, but also support the team’s administration. All EHO’s are qualified to undertake the full range of food safety work, subject to their individual competencies.

**4.3 Staff development plan**

The Council is committed to providing each officer responsible for Food Law enforcement with a minimum of 20 hours Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training each year. Furthermore it is recognized that there are some development needs within the food safety team at present and therefore one of our priorities for this year is to use experienced officers to help develop those that have less experience.

All officers undertaking food safety work meet the relevant qualifications and experience requirements detailed in the Food Law Code of Practice or are working towards them.

Officers responsible for inspecting complex manufacturing and approved processes have received specialist training or have considerable previous experience and will have this documented in their competency frameworks.

Professional and technical competence is also supported by:

* + The council’s annual Performance Development Review system which helps identify training and development needs. Funds are provided from a central budget for training in accordance with Performance Development Reviews.
  + Membership of the Staffordshire and Shropshire Food Safety Liaison Group.
  + In–house training sessions/team briefings.
  + Access to the ABC food law training portal for all officers responsible for enforcing food law which provides a wealth of online training and webinars.
  + Access to the Mallard Consultancy network for training on legal proceedings
  + Membership of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health is funded by the Council.

**5. Quality assessment**

**5.1 Quality assessment and internal monitoring**

The Environmental Health service has systems in place to help ensure that food hygiene interventions are carried out consistently and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. To assist this process a number of procedure notes and templates have been created that are available electronically to all Officers.

A procedure relating specifically to quality monitoring of inspections is currently being developed and this is further reinforced by:-

* + The lead officer for food safety carrying out a regular review of the paperwork, notices, and reports produced by officers following inspections;
  + Consistency exercises
  + Internal and inter-authority audits
  + Monthly team catch ups
  + Annual Performance Appraisal which includes a 6 monthly review

**6. Review**

**6.1 Review against the service plan**

The process of review will be commenced in March/April each year based on:-

* + the targets set out in the Environmental Health Service Plan 2022/3 – 2024/5 and associated performance indicators
  + performance and resources available over the previous 12 months
  + responses to feedback from local businesses and the community
  + observations from Members and the Environmental Health Department
  + advice and guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency, the Local Authority Co-ordinating Body on Regulatory Services and examples of best practice.

A service review report on the previous year’s performance by the food safety team will be submitted to Members each year.

**6.2 Identification of any variation from the service plan**

Performance figures are produced for our National & Local Indicators at quarterly and end of year points through the council’s performance monitoring software ‘Pentana’. Any variances against the Food Safety Service Plan, including resource implication, will be addressed during this process as well as directly through regular 1:1 and team meetings with service staff.

**6.3 Areas of improvement**

Whilst the team has managed workload well this year, the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with turnover of staff means that several policies and procedures still require development and implementation. A priority for 2024-5 will be monitoring and development of the quality of our interventions based on the implementation of an updated internal monitoring procedure. It is hoped that this will highlight areas of staff development which can be prioritised this year.