

<b>Environment Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	30 June 2022
<b>Report Title</b>	Food Service Plan 2022 - 23
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Lisa Fillery, Director of Finance
<b>Head of Service</b>	Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Annmarie Goodwin, Food & Safety Team Leader (North)
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open: Appendix I</b> <b>Exempt: Appendix II</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. To approve the Food Service Plan 2022-23 and endorse the resource needed to meet future demands of the service.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) require all food law enforcement authorities to prepare a Food Service Plan to reflect achievements, plan for future challenges and identify resource to meet this need.
- 1.2 Given the impact the Covid pandemic has had on the hospitality sector, together with the recruitment difficulties we are experiencing, due to a national shortage of competent enforcement officers, this service plan outlines the challenges that lie ahead for the service and how managers and officers intend to respond.
- 1.3 At this point in time, with the UK position of importing food into the country, the impact of the UK leaving the EU is not anticipated to impact on the service should the authority have discretionary powers for issuing Health Export Certificates.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The FSA require the Food Service Plan to demonstrate we follow principles of:
  - Good regulation.
  - Focus on key delivery issues and outcomes.
  - Provide an essential link with corporate and financial planning.
  - Set objectives for the future and identify major issues that cross service boundaries.
  - Provide a means of managing performance and making performance comparisons; and
  - Provide information on the authority's service delivery to stakeholders, including businesses and consumers.

The format for the plan is set down by the FSA, and as a shared service we benefit by providing comparison information for all partnership local authorities, Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells.

- 2.2 The Covid pandemic has had a major impact on the delivery of food enforcement over the last two years. The effect of numerous lockdowns on the hospitality sector is well documented, but for food enforcement this meant that the inspections that were due during times of lockdown have caused a backlog of inspections, that need to be addressed.
- 2.3 Locally, Kent has seen the creation of a new Border Inspection Post at Ashford and the reinstalment of Dover as one the busiest ports of entry to the country from Europe. This has had an impact on our ability to recruit and retain competent officers for food enforcement by creating even more competition for staff, on top of the competition from London authorities, plus individuals making life changes.
- 2.4 Lockdowns saw a surge in new food business registrations, a trend which is continuing. Some of these businesses are transitory (furloughed individuals) but they impact on officer time as we must process their registration, arrange visits for an initial hygiene risk rating, provide guidance and advise them.
- 2.5 The pandemic also required the service to respond to the numerous Covid enforcement measures, diverting resource to projects and activities as the county went through Tiers, Steps and eventually the opening of the economy.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 Members are asked to approve the Mid Kent Food Service Plan 2022-23 (Appendix I). It outlines the service achievements and future challenges we are aware of. It covers just one year as the FSA anticipate introducing a modernised food enforcement programme in 2023/24.
- 3.2 There are two focuses for the work of the team for the coming year:

Recruitment and retention of authorised officers  
Completion of inspection programme

The current staffing level is not sustainable given the service demands and we need to review the service to ensure we continue with a core of well trained and competent officers.

We will work closely with the Director of Resource to ensure that the service remains within the financial parameters for the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

### **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Members may choose not to approve the Food Service Plan 2022-23 or agree with the workplan for the coming year. This would be counter to requirement of the FSA Framework Agreement and suggest that the authority was not having due regard for their food law enforcement responsibilities.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 No consultation is required for the Food Service Plan.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	A Food Service Plan will demonstrate the Council is a well-managed organisation and support several priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2020-23.
Financial, Resource and Property	The Service Plan has no additional resource implications over the current shared service charges to Swale BC, subject to any recommendations from the review of the recruitment and retention item which would be subject to the Director of Resources approval. The 2022/23 budget for F & S and Admin (at 60% for food work) is £274,568. The estimated cost of the food function is £239,591, other work undertaken by the team accounts for the residual cost.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Council as a food law enforcement authority is required to produce a Food Service Plan as part of the Food Standards Agency powers under the Food Standards Act 1999.</p> <p>There are no consequences arising from the proposal that adversely affect or interfere with individual's rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
Crime and Disorder	There are no Crime and Disorder implications.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	There are no Environment, Climate and Ecological Emergency implications
Health and Wellbeing	The Food Service Plan support the Health and Wellbeing aspirations of the Council.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults implications have been identified.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The Food Service Plan seeks to reduce risk to the Council of failing to deliver a service to meet the food law responsibilities by prioritising recruitment and retention of appropriately qualities staff. No health and safety implications have been identified.
Equality and Diversity	The proposal in the report has a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.

Issue	Implications
Privacy and Data Protection	No data privacy implications have been identified.

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Mid Kent Food Service Plan 2022-23
- Exempt Appendix II: Food Recovery Plan 2022-23

## 8 Background Papers

None.