

Committee: HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: September 08, 2005

6

Title: FOOD SAFETY PLAN 2005/2006

Author: Geoff Smith, Principal Environmental Officer, 01799
510582

Item for decision

Summary

This report supplies members of the Committee with the proposed Food Safety Plan 2005/2006

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee adopt the Plan.

Background Papers

The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are included in Appendix I attached to the report.

1. Food Safety Plan 2005/2006.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Elected Members
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	Existing Budget
Human Rights	N/A
Legal Implications	Existing Statutory Requirements of Council
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

1. This report has been presented to members because it is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency that every LA should prepare a Food Safety Service Plan and report it to Members for approval.
2. The situation that has arisen is - as above.
3. It needs to be considered now because - as above

Targets

4. What we are trying to accomplish is an achievable service plan that meets the statutory requirements and contributes to Corporate Objectives.

Options

5. There are no viable potential options.

Pay-Offs/Penalties

6. Safe food premises, legal food imports, compliant food safety enforcement service.
7. What happens if we do nothing?
 - Outbreaks of food poisoning
 - illegal imports of food
 - complaints against the service
 - failure to deliver statutory enforcement functions

Risk Analysis

8. The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Unsatisfactory food premises	High	High	Regular inspections
Outbreaks of food poisoning	Medium	High	Regular inspections
Import of illegal food products	Medium	High	Regular inspections
Increase in complaints regarding food or premises	High	High	Investigation, enforcement action

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL SERVICES

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2005/2006

0.0 Introduction

1.0 Service aims and objectives

- 1.1 Aims and objectives
- 1.2 Links to Corporate Plans and Objectives

- 3.7 Food Hazard Warnings
- 3.8 Liaison
- 3.9 Food Safety Promotion
- 3.10 Food Hygiene Training
- 3.11 Export Certification

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Profile of the Local Authority
- 2.2 Organisational Structure
- 2.3 The scope of the food service
- 2.4 Demands on the food service
- 2.5 Enforcement policy
- 2.6 Food Safety Quality System

4.0 Resources

- 4.1 Financial Allocation
- 4.2 Staffing Allocation
- 4.3 Staff Development plan

3.0 Service Delivery

- 3.1 Inspection programmes
- 3.2 Food complaints
- 3.3 Home authority principle
- 3.4 Advice to business
- 3.5 Food sampling
- 3.6 Outbreak control and infectious disease control

5.0 Quality assessment

- 5.1 Quality Assessment

6.0 Review

- 6.1 Review against the service plan
- 6.2 Identification of any variation from the service plan
- 6.3 Areas of improvement

0.0 Introduction

The Council is designated as a Food Authority under the Food Safety Act 1990 and as such has a statutory duty to enforce the Act.

The Food Service Plan is dedicated solely to the food safety enforcement function. It covers all elements of food safety and hygiene for which Uttlesford District Council has enforcement responsibility.

This Service Plan has been produced in response to a requirement by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in its *Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement*. The FSA was established in April 2000 as an independent monitoring and advisory body in response to widespread public concern over a number of food safety issues including BSE and the E.coli food poisoning outbreak in Scotland in 1996. One aim of the FSA is to make food law enforcement more effective, efficient and accountable.

The Service Plan sets out how Uttlesford District Council will deliver the food safety enforcement function in accordance with current guidelines for the period 2005/6. This document sets out the following:

- food safety objectives detailing the Council's responsibilities as set out in legislation, associated statutory codes of practice and national Guidelines;
- the current work programme within the Service;
- the Council's policy on food safety, sampling, provision of information to business, response to food safety incidents and infectious disease control.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

Our Aim is to protect the public from food that may be contaminated, unfit for human consumption or injurious to health and to ensure that the highest standards of food safety are practised and maintained in premises throughout the district, where food is prepared, manufactured, supplied, stored or imported.

Primary Objectives

- To ensure the health and well-being of the public by promoting and enforcing safe standards of hygiene and food safety in the preparation, manufacture, storage, distribution, handling and sale of food in all relevant food premises in Uttlesford in accordance with the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990, all regulations made there under and all product specific legislation;
- To undertake an effective and planned programme of quality risk based food safety inspections of food premises (by qualified and suitably trained officers), to ensure compliance with food law and to minimise risks to health and safety. To take appropriate enforcement action proportional to the risks involved and in accordance with the Council's Food Safety Enforcement Policy with due regard being given to guidance from relevant external bodies;

- To provide an inspection service for all Imported Food arriving via Stansted Airport and operate the Border Inspection Post, in accordance with UK and Community requirements.
- To monitor foodstuffs manufactured, sold or imported in Uttlesford, through a planned yearly sampling programme. To carry out reactive sampling for microbiological examination;
- To promote effective communication with consumers and businesses on food safety matters within Uttlesford;
- To encourage, assist, and support by providing information, education training and advice.
- To investigate all complaints regarding premises, practices and food items;
- To investigate all complaints received in accordance with service customer care standards;
- To investigate and control outbreaks of food poisoning and other food hazards, within the district, and take appropriate action to prevent any recurrence;
- To act as Home Authority to manufacturers and packers of food located within Uttlesford, providing advice, food hygiene inspection reports and responding to requests for “Home Authority” reports from other Local Authorities;
- To complete and submit statistical returns, on time, accurately and to the Food Standards Agency requirements;
- To take part in public awareness campaigns (e.g. Foodlink) and encourage healthy eating by the operation of the Heartbeat Award Scheme;
- To actively support the Essex Food Liaison Group.

1.2 Links to Corporate Plans and Objectives

Council's Mission Statement

The Service Plan has been developed to support the attainment of the Council's Mission Statement, which describes the overall purpose, or aim of the services provided by the Council. “Working together we create a better Community”.

The Council's Strategic Objectives

The Council's Best Value Performance Plan sets out five key goals that the Council will pursue on behalf of the community:-

- (a) To safeguard the environment and enhance it for future generations

- (b) To manage the economy to meet the needs of the whole community
- (c) To improve the health of our community and ensure Uttlesford remains a safe place to live
- (d) To ensure that the choice of homes better meets our community needs
- (e) To ensure better access for all in our community to services and jobs

Community Strategy

The Uttlesford's Futures Community Plan was prepared following consultations with local people on their priorities for improving the quality of life. The vision resulting from that was "Uttlesford, a safe and pleasant environment in which to live, grow and prosper". To work towards that vision the following headings were agreed:-

Safety Of The Community
Conserving The Environment For Future Generations
Improving Health
Transport and Getting Around
Economic well being, Education and Economy

Food safety has an important role in providing for the health of the community and a safe and pleasant environment in which to live and work. It is also important for the economic well being of the community benefits the local economy and the service provides education and training for the whole community and to local food businesses.

The Food Service contributes directly to the Corporate aims in the following ways:

- Food is a prerequisite of health. The safety, quality, and wholesomeness of food play a key role together with nutritional issues, in improving health;
- The Service focuses on protecting the public and promotes good quality food production in Uttlesford;
- By helping to create economic prosperity and sustainability ensuring a prosperous economic future for local business that can compete on a level playing field;
- By working in partnership with other agencies and services aimed at improving the quality of life, health, safety and well being of the citizens of Uttlesford ;
- Providing life-long learning through advice to business and dissemination of information to consumers, enabling everyone to realise their full potential and make informed choices about the products they choose to buy;
- Reducing crime through the investigation of complaints and proactive inspection;
- The Service proactively aims to deliver health information and

education to the community from primary school age to senior citizen through participating in projects such as Food Safety week, which is aimed at families through primary school children, and the Heartbeat Award scheme, which promotes healthy eating;

Proprietors of commercial properties are consulted following the inspection of their premises. The Service continually strives to keep businesses and industry updated on the issues that act as interfaces between the Council and themselves, through promotions and specific mails shots.

2. Background

2.1 Profile of the Uttlesford District

See appendix 1.

2.2 Organisational structure of Environmental and Cultural Services

See appendix 1.

The Councils management structure has been re-organised into 8 service areas each with an Executive Manager and two Corporate Project Managers. The Executive Managers will report as the Executive Management Team to the Chief Executive. Environmental Services is one of the services areas. The changes were effective from 1 June 2004.

The Food Service forms part of the Commercial Section within Environmental Services that is managed by the Principal Environmental Health Officer, who in turn reports to the Executive Manager – Environmental and Cultural Services.

The Commercial Section consists of: 1 Principal EHO (PEHO), 2 F/T Environmental Health Officers (EHO's), 3 P/T EHO's, 1 F/T Environmental Health Assistant and 1 F/T Technical Officer (TO).

The PEHO provides advice, undertakes co-ordination and carries out monitoring on behalf of the Executive Manager.

The EHOs undertake the planned programmed inspection of food premises within Uttlesford; imported food duties, provide advice and training to consumers/businesses, enforcement and sampling.

The TO undertakes food and water sampling. A significant proportion of officer time is allocated to other functions such as health and safety enforcement, training course administration, infectious disease control and licensing.

The equivalent of 1 full time EHO's time is utilised in providing the Imported Food Service (including POAO and FNAO). The service is provided on a call out rota basis including the PEHO who also spends a considerable amount of time dealing with the administrative aspects.

The scope of the food

The Commercial Team Food Safety Team provides the following

service

services:

- 2.3.1** Establish and maintain an up to date register of all food premises in the district.
- 2.3.2** Inspect all food premises on a risk based programme in accordance with Food Safety Act 1990, Code of Practice and take enforcement action as necessary.
- 2.3.3** Carry out visits and inspections to food premises as necessary within the plan period, including re-visits and investigative visits.
- 2.3.4** Investigate and resolve to our satisfaction all food complaints or complaints about food premises.
- 2.3.5** Investigate all statutory infectious disease notifications, allegations of food poisoning to establish any links with local food businesses or foodstuffs. Maintain an up to date and effective outbreak control plan.
- 2.3.6** Provide advice and assistance to businesses and consumers on food related issues.
- 2.3.7** Receive and act appropriately to all food hazard warnings, RASFF notifications and incidents issued by the Food Standards Agency.
- 2.3.8** Investigate incidents of contaminated food and take necessary action. Seize, detain and destroy, as necessary, unfit food.
- 2.3.9** Monitor the movement of unfit food into and out of the Uttlesford District area.
- 2.3.10** Take action to close food premises found to present an imminent risk to health.
- 2.3.11** Act as Statutory Consultee in relation to Licensing issues.
- 2.3.12** Identify premises processing, handling and storing meat products and preparations, and prepare them for approval.
- 2.3.13** Identify premises processing, handling and storing cooked meats, dairy, fish and/or egg products and prepare them for approval.
- 2.3.14** Identify premises processing, handling and storing food(s) that fall under other specific regulations and ensure that they comply with such regulations.
- 2.3.15** Identify premises requiring butcher's licences, determine licence applications and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- 2.3.16** Ensure that all products of animal origin (POAO) arriving from third countries are subject to veterinary checks as necessary. Staff and operate the Border Inspection Post at Stansted Airport accordingly.
- 2.3.17** Ensure that food not of animal origin (FNAO) arriving from third countries for sale for human consumption is inspected on a risk

assessment basis. Provide an out of hours service for those foods subject to clearance at Stansted Airport.

- 2.3.18** Undertake a food sampling programme that takes account of current food problems and imported food. Participate in national and regional coordinated sampling programmes.
- 2.3.19** Undertake food hygiene training as necessary. This may include both regular courses and one off courses designed for specifically targeted groups.
- 2.3.20** Run the Heartbeat Award Scheme in partnership with Uttlesford PCT. Encourage and recommend food businesses to participate. Assess new applications and renewals. Monitor existing award holders.
- 2.3.21** Comment on proposed food legislation, codes of practice and other official documents as necessary and as requested.
- 2.3.22** Provide appropriate export certification as requested by food companies in the district.
- 2.3.33** The Food Service is also responsible in the majority of premises for the enforcement of health and safety law. Where inspections of food premises are carried out that fall to the Council for health and safety enforcement, a joint inspection is made.

2.4 Demands on the food service

As at 1 April 2005 the Environmental Services database has identified that it is responsible for enforcing Food Safety in 659 food premises within the Uttlesford District. According to the Food Safety Act 1990 Code of Practice Risk Categories these premises can be broken down as follows:-

<u>Risk Category</u>	<u>Number of Premises</u>	<u>Inspection Frequency</u>
A	= 3	6 months
B	= 61	12 months
C	= 299	18 months
D	= 84	2 years
E	= 78	3 years
F	= 77	5 years
Unrated	= 16	
Total	= 618	

The number of inspections planned in 2005-6 in accordance with the COP is approximately 320.

The new Code of Practice issued by the FSA revised the score system for risk rating of inspections as follows:

Category	Minimum Frequency of Inspection		Points
	Range	Max	
A	92 -	196	at least every 6 months
B	72 -	91	at least every 12 months
C	42 -	71	at least every 18 months
D	31 -	41	at least every 2 years
E	0 -	30	Alternative enforcement strategy

As a result approximately 155 premises formerly in categories E & F now fall into the alternative strategy group. However for the coming year at least we intend to continue to inspect these premises in order to ensure they all will have received an inspection within at least the last 5 years and to ensure they have been correctly risk rated.

Alternative Enforcement strategy

Businesses scoring 45 points or less overall need not be subject to primary inspections. Such "low-risk" businesses will however, be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy not less than once in any 5-year period. This we will achieve by questionnaire to the proprietor of the business requesting information as to their management and hygiene standards.

Other premises

The number identified as Manufacturing/Processing premises are: 11
 The number identified as Retail premises are: 125
 The number identified as Catering premises are: 415

As at 1 April 2005 the number of Approved or Licensed premises was:

Fish regulations	=	1
Meat regulations	=	3
Dairy regulations	=	2
Butchers' shops regulations	=	11

Others:

Seasonal Slaughterers of Christmas Turkeys = 12

Chinese owned catering premises = 15

Indian (Bengali) owned catering premises = 18

There are a number of mobile food businesses operating in the district which comprise mainly ice cream and burger vans. In addition there are a number of food traders operating on Saffron Walden, Thaxted and Gt Dunmow Markets that are open on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday each week and at Farmers Markets in the district.

There are two languages other than English identified as being significant among food handlers and proprietors within the district. These are Bengali and Chinese, however the majority of proprietors are able to speak adequate English or have somebody present at the premises that can translate.

In any cases where there may be language difficulties the service has use of "Language Line", a telephone translation service.

A number of pamphlets and leaflets on food safety are also available in different languages within the food service at Uttlesford. These languages are not seen as placing a particular demand on the food service.

The Environmental Health Service is based at the Council Offices in Saffron Walden. The office hours are 8:30 to 5:00 pm Monday to Thursday and 8:30 to 4:30 pm Fridays.

2.4.1 Hours of Service provision

The service is provided by:

- The internet
- By telephone
- By direct call/inspection/in person at the office or on site
- By E-Mail/letters/correspondence, post
- Leaflets produced by the Service and by Central Government Agencies

The Service has an out of hours answer phone that directs callers to a 24 hour answering service in the event of emergencies. The service has the contact details for the senior Environmental Health management staff. Details of the services provided and how to contact us are also provided on the Council's web site.

In addition an out of hours rota system is provided for Imported Food control which provides 24 hour cover every day except Christmas Day.

The Border Inspection Post at Stansted Airport is operated normally during office hours but out of hours service can be provided if necessary by arrangement.

2.4.2 Imported Food Service

There are particular and growing demands placed on the service due to the importation of food products via Stansted Airport. The airport is growing rapidly and is projected to double its throughput of passenger

flights in the next 10 years. The number of cargo flights is similarly expected to grow and new cargo handling sheds are proposed to be constructed in the next few years.

Products of Animal Origin (POAO) (meat, dairy, fish etc products) are dealt with via the Border Inspection Post located in the business park. A part time contracted OVS has been appointed by the Council who works in conjunction with the EHO's of the Commercial Team in providing the BIP service.

Food Not of Animal Origin (FNAO) (fruit, vegetables, spices etc.) are dealt with on a call down rota basis at the cargo handling sheds, by the EHO's of the Commercial Team. Only products requiring Customs clearance (and thereby free entry into the EU) at Stansted are inspected. A 24 hour service is provided 365 days a year on a risk assessment basis. Other imports are sent under customs control to inland ERT's for clearance. The service also deals with the clearance of Organic Products that require a certificate of organic origin to be endorsed.

The equivalent of 1 full time EHO's time is utilised in providing the Imported Food Inspection Service (including POAO and FNAO). The service is provided on a call out rota basis including the PEHO, who also spends a considerable amount of additional time dealing with the administrative aspects.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

This service operates to the documented Environmental Services Enforcement Policy which forms part of the Service Plan. Copies are available from the Service or on the Councils website at www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Environmental Services staff will adopt an approach to enforcement for all its regulatory activities based on risk assessment so as to make the best use of the staff resources allocated. Staff will act within the Service's overall enforcement policy but due regard will be had to guidance from recognised bodies.

Uttlesford District Council has adopted the Enforcement Concordat and therefore staff will carry out activities in this service plan in accordance with the Concordat.

In the event of legal proceedings being necessary this service currently uses the services of the Uttlesford Council Corporate Services.

2.6 Food Safety Quality System

A quality and monitoring system at present comprising some 24 operating procedures, has been developed in order to provide a consistent and reliable basis for the carrying out of the food team services. These procedures are reviewed annually and updated as legislation, Codes of Practice or guidance change. More procedures will be developed where necessary.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Inspection Programme.

3.1.1 Programmed The number of Programmed Food Hygiene Inspections for the period 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006 is approximately 320 as detailed in 2.4 above.

3.1.2 Carry Over The number of Programmed Food Hygiene Inspections carried over from the last year = 0

The target for this year is to achieve 95% of this programme. The 5% reduction from 100% allows for the number of premises that will close or have their risk rating category (that determines the frequency of inspection) changed due to improved standards, during the course of the year.

3.1.3 Revisits Based on the number of revisits carried out in 2004-5 the estimated number of revisits for this plan period is approximately 130.

3.1.4 Reactive Visits Based on the number of reactive visits carried out in 2004-5 the estimated number of reactive visits is 160.

3.1.5 Approved Product and licensed premises Additional time and expertise of officers is required to ensure that any Approved Product and licensed premises are correctly inspected and monitored. Specific training to officers responsible for such premises in their district will be provided as necessary. There are currently 7 Product Specific approvals and 11 butchers licensed premises.

3.1.6 New Food Safety Legislation New Food Safety legislation is expected to take effect from 1 January 2006, which will require all food businesses to have a documented food safety (HACCP) system. This follows the introduction of a mandatory EU directive.

In order to assist Local Authorities to implement these new legislative requirements the Food Standards Agency has developed a new educative approach called safer 'Food, Better Business' (SFBB) aimed at small to medium enterprises. In addition it is to make available funding for LA's to bid for in order to implement the SFBB scheme. A bid has been submitted and we await further information on whether it has been successful.

The FSA expects Local Authorities to participate in the delivery of the new approach and provide support to local food businesses. The resource requirement for this initiative is unknown but some reduction in the 2005/6 Programmed Food Hygiene Inspection plan may be permitted by the FSA. It is expected that the costs incurred will be in the region of £2000 in order to run training events, publicity and provide information packs etc to local businesses.

3.2 Food Complaints

Based on the number of Food complaints received over the last two financial years the estimated number for this plan period is 40.

3.3 Home Authority Principle

We are currently in the process of discussing Home Authority Agreements with two food businesses in the district. As such we will act as an advisory body to the businesses on matters of food safety and as a conduit for enquiries made by other Local Authorities. The aim is to provide a consistent source of advice and to advise on enforcement and legal interpretation issues. The additional resources required to provide this assistance will be monitored.

3.4 Advice to Business

Education plays an important part in improving food hygiene standards and therefore Environmental Services staff will carry out the activities in this service plan with an educative approach wherever possible.

The provision of advice to existing or proposed food businesses, members of the public, other council service departments and other persons will continue in the same way as last year. Advice is mainly person to person whilst officers are carrying out visits / inspections but may also be via phone calls or letters to the Environmental Services.

Officers aim to give advice in accordance with recognised guidance and codes of practice.

3.5 Food Sampling

The service will continue to carry out food sampling, in accordance with the Essex co-ordinated food sampling programme developed in conjunction with the Health Protection Agency Laboratory Service (Chelmsford) and Essex Food Group sampling programme.

The Essex co-ordinated food sampling programme includes sampling initiatives organised by LACORS and the Food Standards Agency.

For this plan period the allocation from the HPA is £15,790.

Based on the last two years the number of scheduled samples carried out by this service is estimated to be 300 – 400 samples for the year.

The service also enables random sampling of foods to be carried out where it is felt necessary. This may occur following a programmed or other visit to a food premises or as a result of a food complaint received by Environmental Services.

3.5.1 Imported Food Sampling

An ongoing programme for the sampling of imported food is to be instigated in 2005-6. A bid for further Sampling Grant money available from the FSA is to be made with a provisional budget of approximately £2000.

3.6 Outbreak Control and Infectious Disease Control

The Service is a joint signatory to the Control of Communicable Disease – Joint Plans of Essex Health Protection Unit and Essex Local Authorities. The plan provides an agreed protocol throughout Essex for the investigation and control of communicable diseases in the area. Specific procedures for the isolated incidences and outbreaks of communicable diseases are included.

3.7 Food Hazard Warnings

Reaction to Food Hazard Warnings and RASFF alerts is carried out in accordance with Food Safety Act 1990, Code of Practice 16.

The Code of Practice requires that the food safety service has a mailbox dedicated to the receipt of all FSA enforcement control messages that is accessible to all food safety enforcement staff. In addition there is a connection to the Environmental Health Computer Network (EHCnet) as the Food Standards Agency communicates Food Hazard Warnings via this computer. The mailbox and network is checked daily by officers. Information regarding the issue of Food Hazard Warnings is also received via the paging service of EHCnet.

75 warnings were received in 2004, 21 of which required some action to be taken within the district.

Records of each Food Hazard Warning received are kept by the PEHO on a central computer file who decides on the appropriate response. Action is taken in accordance with the information attached to the relevant Warning.

3.8 Liaison

A number of arrangements have been made to improve the consistency of enforcement with neighbouring Authorities and other agencies.

- This service actively supports the Essex Chief Officer's Food Group.
- Investigations of suspected food poisoning outbreaks are carried out either jointly or in close contact with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) for Essex Health Protection Unit.
- The service attends Imported Food workshops and seminars organised by the FSA and DEFRA and is an active member of the Association of Port Health Authorities.

The service also advises and liaises with the following:

- The Uttlesford PCT (Heartbeat Award Scheme)
- The Health Protection Agency Laboratory Service (Chelmsford)
- Other services within the Uttlesford Council, including: Building Control, Planning, Licensing and the Environmental Protection Team.

The service is consulted on planning applications and building control involving food hygiene.

The resource necessary for the Essex Food Group is one Officer's time approximately six half days per year.

3.9 Food safety and health promotion

A new post of Health Promotion Officer is to be created within Environmental Services following the Best Value Review which recommended additional resources be made available to improve the Councils health promotion activities.

Part of the remit for the new post will be to undertake promotional activities covering the food service including healthy eating, instigating

the Heartbeat Award Scheme, food hygiene courses and National Food Safety week.

National Food Safety Week

For National Food Safety Week (June 13 – 17) we undertook a series of Foundation Certificate Courses in Food Safety offering them at half the normal price as an incentive for local businesses and the self employed. Over the 5 courses, 63 people were trained of whom 60 achieved a pass mark and were awarded their certificate.

Consideration is also being given to running the CIEH Curry Chef Competition aimed at Indian food restaurants and takeaways in the District. This is a nationally run competition which recognises good food hygiene standards as well as excellent cuisine. There are local, regional and national heats for the winners of each round.

3.10 Food Hygiene Training

This service regularly runs The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), Foundation Certificate Course in Food Hygiene throughout the year. In addition, due to demand, it has been decided to also offer the CIEH Update Course in Food Hygiene.

We have set dates for 6 Foundation courses in 2005-6 and expect to train 90 candidates. Our pass rate for the exam paper is approximately 97%. Additional courses will be made available according to demand.

3.11 Export Certification

This service provides export certificates for a manufacturer within the district exporting various foods. The number of certificates requested during the last plan period was 5.

It is estimated that a similar number of certificates will be requested during this plan period.

4.0 Resources

The Overall budget for Environmental Services (Public Health) is £640,410.

4.1 Financial Allocation

From this amount the food service is not currently allocated a specific amount.

For this plan period the HPA Laboratory Service has allocated a sampling budget of £15,790.

All officers now have desk top access to a computer. In addition a separate standalone computer is provided at the Border Inspection Post at Stansted Airport for POAO imported food related work.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

For the plan period the available staff for this service plan includes:

- 1 Principal EHO (0.25 fte)
 - 1 District EHO (full time) (0.75 fte)
 - 1 District EHOs (part time) (0.25 fte)
 - 1 Port Health/District Environmental Health Assistant (pending full qualification as an EHO) (0.75 fte)
 - 1 Technical Officer (0.25 fte)
- Total fte = 2.25

This staffing allocation is not solely for this service plan. These officers also carry out duties under Health and Safety, Licensing and Communicable Disease Control.

It has been estimated that the total officer time spent on delivering the food safety service is approximately equivalent to 2.25 full time equivalent persons, 0.75 of which is dedicated to the Imported Food Service.

Since the 1 April 2005 the workload between the team of 6 (4.5 fte) District Environmental Health Officers within the Commercial Section has been re-organised into a 6 monthly rotational system of Food Safety, Health and Safety and Port Health. In addition there has been an ongoing secondment of 1 EHO p/t (0.5 fte) to the role of Corporate Health and Safety Manager. The decision to specialise further from the generic approach was made to provide the officers with additional time to build up their expertise and proficiency within the specialised fields. The knowledge and skill required for all of the fields has increased markedly in recent years particularly in regard of the Port Health. New food hygiene legislation is due to be introduced from 1 January 2006 which will have some important additional requirements for the proprietors of food businesses to comply with and for the EHO's to explain and ensure are implemented. The secondment of 1 EHO p/t to the Corporate Health and Safety role has led to a shortfall in the capacity to carryout the programmed inspection of premises. Consequently some additional inspection work has had to be bought in from consultancy firms that specialise in food safety work for LA's.

Services of the central administrative staff are available to support the Commercial Team.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

This service continues to identify training and development needs by an annual, personal appraisal of all staff.

All EHOs that are members of the C.I.E.H. are required to undergo at least 20 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per year. In addition, in accordance with COP 19, officers authorised for food safety matters must receive structured ongoing training in food safety which is managed, assessed and recorded.

Such training should include new legislation and procedures and technological developments that may take place in food businesses subject to their inspection.

A minimum of 10 hours CPD per year on food safety matters is required.

The service recognises this need and supports staff in achieving the minimum amount required by the CPD scheme. Training is achieved in a number of ways including external courses, in house training and low cost seminars or courses through the Essex Food Group.

Officers are responsible for monitoring the amount of training they have received during the year.

Monthly team meetings have also been organised to discuss matters and issues of consistency arising under this service plan area.

For this plan period, whilst staff may attend adhoc professional training courses, no major training needs have been identified to date.

This department supports Environmental Health Officers that wish to obtain Corporate Membership of the C.I.E.H. by taking the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC).

5.0 Quality Assessment

This service underwent a "Best Value" review in 2004/5.

During the plan period a programme of joint inspections is to be developed in order to assess, maintain and improve consistency of food inspections within the service team.

Audits

During 2005/6 the service will be audited by officers from Braintree District Council. The audit will be carried out as part of the Essex Inter Authority Audit Programme and follows the protocol and procedures issued by the Food Standards Agency.

The audit covers:

- Organisation and Management
- Policies and procedures
- Internal monitoring
- Enforcement
- Authorised officers
- Food premises inspections
- Records and inspection reports

6.0 Review

6.1 Review against the service plan The review below, unless stated is for the last plan period, financial year 2004-2005.

6.11 Food Hygiene Inspections The target for the last plan period was to achieve 100% of programmed inspections. This target has been reduced to 95% due to the effect of premises closures and improved premises having a lower risk rating score during the year.

The actual percentage achieved was **95.7%**

6.12 Revisits The number of revisits carried out was 59

6.13 Service requests The number of service requests received by this service area was 168

This can be broken down into categories according to the codings assigned at the time of producing the service requests.

- Hygiene Advice
- Registration
- Food complaints
- Export Certificates
- Microwave Checks

- Sampling Visits
- Health Promotion activities
- Food Hazard Warnings
- Alleged food poisonings

In addition there were 201 Imported Food requests for service.

6.15 Prosecutions

No prosecutions were taken during 2004-2005.

6.2 Identification of any variation from the service plan

As there was very little variation from the service plan in the last plan period it has been decided to keep the performance targets the same as the last plan period.

6.3 Areas of Improvement

1. All documented procedures for this service area will need to be reviewed due to the new food safety legislation and FSA Code of Practice that will be introduced before January 2006.
2. The IT system/database needs to be reviewed having regard to any FSA guidance resulting from the new legislative requirements.
3. If as a result of the IAA, any shortcomings identified in the Service Plan will need to be addressed by an Action Plan and dealt with accordingly.