

Annual Council – 1 June 2015

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for the year 2015/16

Service: Economy and Environment

Wards: All

1. Summary

- 1.1 Through the work of its Environmental Health and Trading Standards Divisions, Economy and Environment ensures that food and drink produced, prepared or sold in the borough is safe and without risk to health, is correctly labelled and meets appropriate compositional and microbiological standards.
- 1.3 The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan attached as **Appendix A** describes how the Authority will enforce statutory controls and monitor food, premises and personnel in a structured manner. The Plan will also be used as the basis for any inspection or audit by the Food Standards Agency. As the Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework it is required to be approved by elected members.
- 1.4 Through the work of the Director of Public Health issues around health and well being are at the centre of policy development. The link between the health of residents and the local economy is seen as a key issue in Walsall and is enshrined in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Corporate Plan. The aims and objectives of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan, contribute significantly to both the health and economy agendas.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Council approve the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for the year 2015/16.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The provision of safe food and water and the prevention of outbreaks of food and water borne disease is a fundamental principle of protecting public health. Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers work directly with businesses and residents and are constantly striving to provide a balance between the economic success of the business against the need to always protect the health of customers and staff.
- 3.2 The Plan sets out the Council's commitment to food safety enforcement for the year ahead and. The outturn against last year's work programme is also reviewed and discussed in section 6.

- 3.3 A consideration and review of resources is a requirement of the FSA Framework and it is acknowledged that these have reduced over recent years. The amount of work required to fulfil the statutory inspection programme as well as the amount of reactive work received remains at a high level leaving a shortfall in available officer time. The number of enforcement interventions required against premises posing an imminent risk to health has increased significantly this year resulting in difficulties fulfilling the planned inspection programme. Other issues of significance such as food poisoning outbreaks, imported food controls and food adulteration have also had an impact on completion of planned activities. Resources, Quality Assessment and Review are set out in sections 4, 5 and 6 of the report.

4. Council priorities

- 4.1 The work of Environmental Health and Trading Standards fits neatly within the Council's priorities. These services interact on a daily basis with whole sectors of the Walsall business community to ensure the products they produce are safe both in terms of the impact on their employees and the health of residents across the whole life course.
- 4.2 The service is in a position whereby it can support businesses by providing face to face, timely and competent advice on a range of complex subjects to ensure they operate correctly, efficiently and lawfully. Responsible, profitable businesses that have longevity are key to ensuring the economy recovers and that local people can stay in employment or get back into employment as quickly as possible.
- 4.3 Whilst the work within the plan involves the protection of health and the improvement and profitability of business it also recognises that some individuals or traders will place profit before safety and therefore the service has a range of legal sanctions available to it to tackle what are basically criminal behaviours.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The planning process allows us to identify our targets for the year ahead and to consider possible impacts on the service when compared with previous years. During 14/15 unplanned reactive work was of an unexpectedly high level. The additional work made it impossible to complete the inspection programme in full and this demand requires careful monitoring for the year ahead. Should the volume of unplanned activity continue at its current level or indeed increase the service will need to reassess its workload, reprioritise the activities that are planned and potentially consider seeking additional resource to assist. Consultation with the Food Standards Agency and Public Health England to agree an alteration in priorities would be recommended should this occur.
- 5.2. In May each year statistical returns are made to the FSA through its Local Authority Enforcement Management System (LAEMS) for scrutiny of Local Authority performance.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The service is currently funded from within the councils cash limited budget and the plan will be met from within existing budgets.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 By virtue of section 12 of the Food Standards Act 1999 the Food Standards Agency has the function of monitoring the performance of enforcement authorities in enforcing relevant legislation. That function includes, in particular, setting standards of performance (whether for enforcement authorities generally or for particular authorities) in relation to the enforcement of any relevant legislation. The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities is the mechanism by which the Agency puts into effect the powers contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. It provides for the following:
- published local service plans to increase transparency of local enforcement services;
 - clear agreed standards for local authority feed and food law enforcement;
 - local authority monitoring data used to select authorities for audit where there are concerns over enforcement performance; and
 - an audit scheme aimed at securing improvements and sharing good practice.

Any plan produced by the Authority should comply with the Framework Agreement.

- 7.2 The Agency's audits of local authority feed and food law enforcement are conducted against the requirements of the Framework Agreement and, more specifically, a document called the Standard. The Standard sets out the minimum levels of performance expected in relation to the full range of a local authority's feed and food law enforcement activity, including food hygiene, food standards, imported food and feeding stuffs law enforcement. The Standard draws together the obligations on local authority feed and food law enforcement services arising from legislation and related guidance, and codes of practice. This includes local authority performance in relation to inspections, sampling, complaints, formal enforcement, promotion and advice to business.

- 7.3 The Food Law Enforcement Service plan adopts parts of the "service plan template" set out in the Framework Agreement. The work of the Division pertinent to this report is undertaken pursuant to the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and associated codes of practice, the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 and any other such regulations developing from the European Communities Act 1972

The Food Safety Act 1990 states that every food authority shall enforce and execute within their area the provisions of this Act with respect to which the duty is not imposed expressly or by necessary implication on some other authority.

8. Property implications

- 8.1 There are no property implications within this Report.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1 The purpose of this Plan and the primary objective of the work of Environmental Health and Trading Standards is to ensure that the health and wellbeing of individuals and indeed communities is protected. The fact the service has a direct link to businesses, residents and partner organisations also places it in a strong position in terms of added value work in terms of interactions on such key issues as obesity, smoking, alcohol and safety at work. Failure to undertake this work would place residents at threat of ill health, disease and particularly for vulnerable persons the possibility of preventable death.

10. Staffing implications

- 10.1 Although the work contained within this report is managed each year based on the resources available to the Service. It is unlikely in the current economic climate that we can continue to maintain all aspects of the service at the levels we do currently, particularly as the Service has lost a number of full time posts over the last five years. This does mean that we will need to effectively prioritise our work and review new approaches to the way in which the services operate. Any alterations to working practices or priorities will be discussed and agreed with staff prior to any implementation.
- 10.2 A qualification and competency review of all staff involved with Food Law will be required during 2015/16 to ensure staff satisfy the requirement of the newly published Food Law Code of Practice.

11. Equality implications

- 11.1 These proposals seek to benefit all parts of the community equally and will be consistently applied across the Borough. Food sampling programmes and support for local businesses will where possible reflect local needs. Where there are food businesses or consumers with particular language, cultural or other needs these can be addressed with reference to good practice that is shared amongst local authorities within the West Midlands and also nationwide.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Environmental Health and Trading Standards have traditionally carried out Customer Satisfaction surveys to gauge how satisfied businesses are with the way in which they have been treated by Officers. These surveys may be now unsustainable due to reduced administrative services and workload pressures on operational staff. The Services are part of various Regional and National groups where good practice, principles of enforcement and education and joint or collaborative work are discussed. Upon approval of the Plan it will be uploaded onto the Authority's web site and made available for public comment.

Background papers

Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement
Marmot Review
Sustainable Communities Strategy
Health and Wellbeing Strategy

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Date 20 May 2015



Walsall Council

Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2015-2016

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1.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOOD SERVICE

- To protect public health from the spread of preventable, communicable illness by ensuring that high standards of food safety are maintained in food premises.
- To protect consumers from food fraud and the substitution of food sold or manufactured in the borough
- To use the skills and opportunities available to the service to promote and implement key aspects of the Public Health agenda e.g. Health switch.
- To have regard to the Enforcement Policy when considering the most appropriate course of action in response to non compliance.
- To undertake activities in a way that supports those we regulate comply and grow

OBJECTIVES

- To carry out a programme of interventions at food premises allocating resources to those premises posing the most significant risk.
- To respond to requests for advice from new or existing businesses, Home or Primary Authority schemes and support them in achieving legal compliance.
- To publish Food Hygiene ratings so consumers can make informed choices and encouraging businesses to raise standards and become more profitable.
- To inspect premises or use intelligence to ensure that food and in particular imported food offered or exposed for sale is fit for human consumption and to expedite the removal of hazardous products from the food chain.
- To investigate cases of communicable disease, including the investigation of practices and processes identified as sources of infection.
- To investigate complaints relating to food and the conditions of food premises and where necessary take appropriate and timely enforcement action
- To review procedures and ensure they comply with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement, relevant codes of practice and internal quality systems.
- To undertake a microbiological food sampling programme at manufacturing premises and in connection with outbreaks of disease or service requests.
- To undertake a food sampling programme to ensure that food complies with compositional standards and labelling and is free from harmful contaminants.
- To meet with and work with Partners and other Local authorities to share good practice and discuss local, regional and national priorities.

1.1 LINKS TO CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND PLANS

The Council has a Corporate Plan 2015-19 as a key element of its performance framework. It is informed by intelligence from the 2011 census, index of Deprivation 2010 and three key thematic needs assessments: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Economic Needs Assessment and Safer Walsall Community Safety Assessment. The plan is an articulation of the aspirations of the Council expressed as a strategic plan that can be delivered over four years and aligned to the budget. It has been agreed by all elected members at full Council.

To meet its Purpose and Vision the Council will focus on the following key priorities.

- Support with the cost of living
- Creating jobs and helping people get new skills
- Improving educational achievements
- Helping local high streets and communities
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing
- Helping create more affordable Housing

However there is also recognition that with less resource available the Council will have to concentrate on protecting the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities.

These priorities provide a focus for the whole council and the Food Service directly supports and contributes to them by ensuring the provision of the following:

- Supporting new and existing businesses to not only survive but thrive despite difficult economic conditions.
- Continue to introduce an element of competition into regulatory standards through the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – empowering residents to choose which business should receive their custom.
- To confront those businesses or individuals who seek to gain an unfair advantage over competitors by not complying with regulations and therefore putting their staff and customers at risk.
- Ensuring that unsafe practices and foodstuffs are identified and robustly tackled to ensure the health of the public is protected therefore preventing ill health that places a negative burden on the economy and people's lives
- To give consumers confidence when shopping in Walsall
- To use the skills and opportunities available to the service to promote and implement key aspects of the Health and Well Being Strategy for example through Healthy Workplace Awards, Making Every Contact Count, the Health Switch Award and tobacco control/smoking cessation projects.
- To prevent outbreaks of communicable disease and where such disease outbreaks take place using the statutory powers available to control and stop their spread as well as bringing to justice those who may be responsible.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 PROFILE OF WALSALL MBC

Walsall is a unitary authority in the West Midlands region and is home to over a quarter of a million people (269500). Whilst the Borough is predominantly urban, it does have significant areas of open space mainly in the east. Along with Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton, Walsall forms part of the Black Country sub region which was designated a Local Enterprise Partnership in 2010.

Walsall lies at the heart of the national road and rail networks with the M6, M6 toll, M5 and M54 all running through or close to the Borough. Rail and bus routes feed into national networks meaning 5 million people are within 45 minutes of Walsall by public transport.

Walsall town centre is the strategic and economic centre of the borough, but there are also five key district centres: Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. All of these have distinct histories and identities and are important retail hubs serving their local communities.

Four out of five businesses surveyed serve clients locally in Walsall and around two in three serve the Black Country or West Midlands. Over 60% of businesses have customers in the rest of the UK and over 30% have customers overseas. Only a third of sales are outside the region meaning Walsall Companies are very reliant on the local economy. Over half of working residents are employed in the borough and it is estimated around 4.7% of the Boroughs residents are employed in the food/accommodation sectors.

Walsall has a variety of manufacturing and service industries and is an operational base for a number of food wholesalers. There are also several companies producing a variety of food products which are distributed throughout the UK.

Over 1 in 7 Walsall adults 24,960 people (14.9%) are out of work and dependent on a key benefit. Walsall has been ranked as the 35th most deprived English local authority. The Borough is ethnically diverse, with 23.1% of Walsall's inhabitants coming from minority ethnic communities. In some wards, up to 70% of the population are from BME groups. Many people in these communities either own, or are employed in small food businesses.

In the past two decades the eating habits of the UK population have evolved rapidly and one of the major changes to the UK diet is that the average person is eating one in six meals outside the home. A number of studies have found that takeaway food outlets are often located in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation; people on low incomes continue to devote a higher proportion of their income to food than people who are better off so there is a clear health inequality.

The food service plays an important role in bridging the link between health and economy by protecting and improving the health of residents whilst also having regard to the economic prosperity of the business sector.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Walsall Council has 60 elected members that meet together as the Council and decide its overall policies and set its budget each year.

The Councils Policy Framework includes plans and strategies required by the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations, 2000. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan is adopted as part of the policy framework:

The Councils Constitution allows the Head of Communities and Public Protection to authorise members of staff to act on behalf of the Council and to enforce and administer relevant legislation. They are also authorised to appoint or recommend for appointment:

- The Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures
- The Deputy Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures
- An Inspector to institute legal proceedings in respect of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Public Analyst for the purpose of Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990
- Lead Officer for Food

The Area Managers for Environmental Health and Trading Standards & Licensing are responsible for

1. Coordinating delivery of statutory inspection programmes across their respective services
2. Managing their respective functions with respect to enforcement of relevant legislative requirements and take responsibility for the vetting of prosecution reports and other enforcement interventions.
3. The Environmental Health Manager acts as Lead Officer for Food Safety.
4. The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager acts as the Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures.

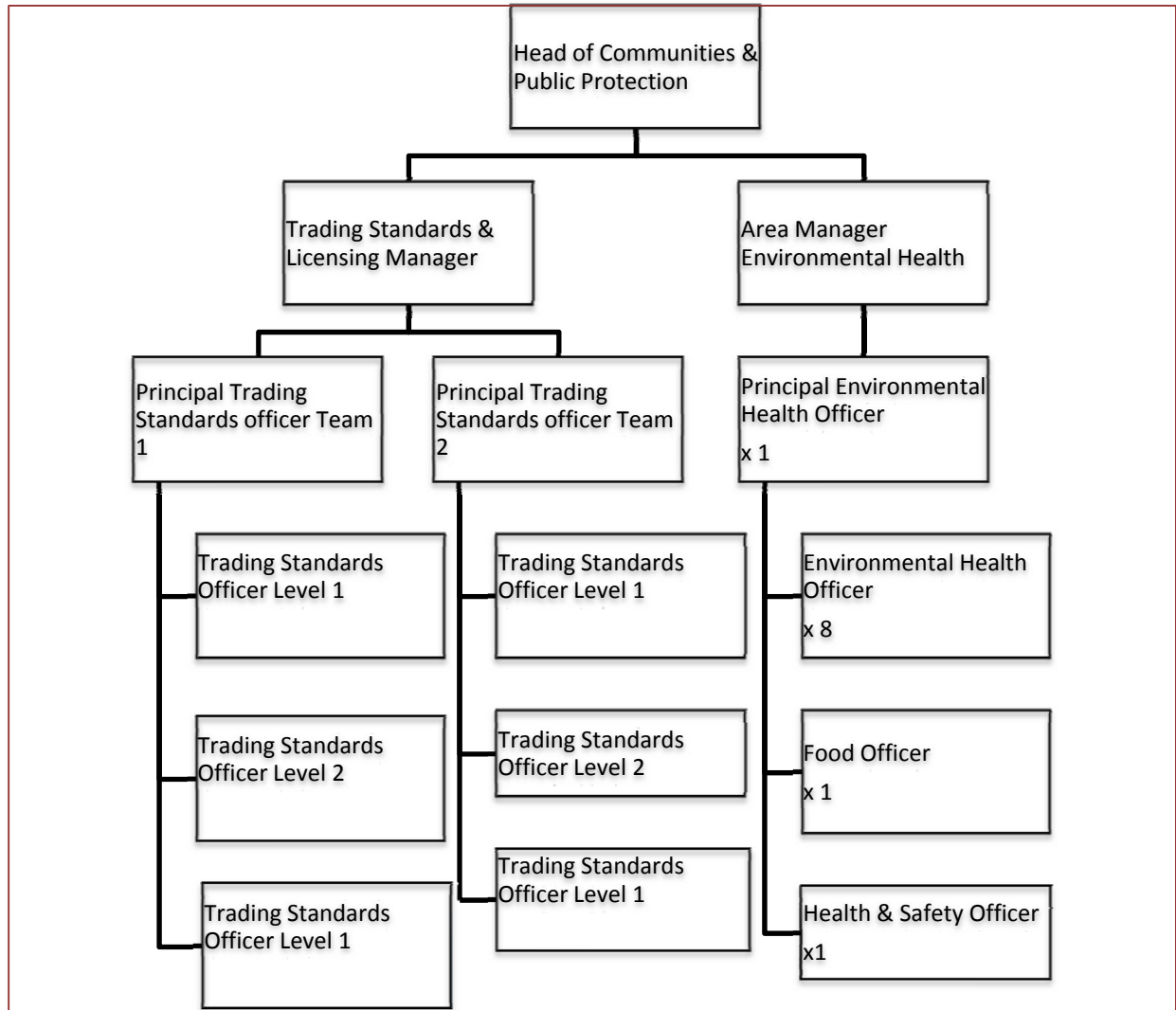
The Principal EHO and TSO are responsible for delivery of their respective services in line with current corporate, national and regional policies and priorities through the day to day management of a team of officers to achieve appropriate impacts and outcomes for residents, businesses and visitors to Walsall

Operationally there are presently 6 FTE Officers qualified to undertake food safety duties within Environmental Health.

The Environmental Health Service use the Public Health England Food, Water & Environmental Microbiology Laboratory, Good Hope Hospital, Rectory Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 7RR.

There are presently 1.5 FTE Officers undertaking duties relevant to food standards within the Trading Standards.

Trading Standards use Worcester Scientific Services for compositional food samples.



2.3 SCOPE OF THE FOOD SERVICE

The enforcement of food related legislation is a joint responsibility between Environmental Health and Trading Standards: All services are provided by officers employed by Walsall Council.

The **Environmental Health** service provides the following services:

- Food safety/hygiene inspections
- Infectious disease investigations, (including food poisoning and water borne disease)
- Microbiological food sampling
- Food safety advice to new and existing businesses
- Food and food hygiene complaint investigations
- Drinking water supply - monitoring and assessment
- Promotional and educational activities based around food safety and hygiene
- Operation of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Animal health and welfare in the domestic, commercial and agricultural sectors including licensing associated with animals and premises.
- Commercial nuisance complaints in respect of odour, noise, waste and drainage.
- Comments as a statutory consultee in the respect of planning applications and licence applications.
- Paying for and arranging for cremations and burials where no arrangements have been made to bury the dead.
- Monitoring the exhumation of buried human remains
- Health and Safety at Work regulation including accident investigation and the registration of skin piercing activities.

The **Trading Standards** service provides the following services:

1. Food standards inspections (including feeding stuffs inspections)
2. The investigation of complaints in relation to food labelling and composition
3. Food and feeding stuff sampling for compositional and labelling conformity
4. The investigation of complaints in relation to composition and labelling of animal feed and feeding stuffs
5. Food standards advice to business
6. Food standards education to consumers

The full range of Trading Standards legislation is delivered alongside the food standards service.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

A profile of the 2395 food businesses registered on the Food Service database is as follows:

FSA CODE	PREMISES TYPE	NO. OF PREMISES
A	Primary Producer	29
C	Manufacturer and Packer	42
E	Importer/exporter	0
F	Distributors/transporters	65
G01	Supermarket/hypermarket	67
G02	Small retailer	508
G03	Other retailer	109
H01	Restaurant/cafe/canteen	274
H02	Hotel guest house	19
H03	Pub/club	279
H04	Takeaway	294
H05	Caring premises	191
H06	School/college	134
H07	Mobile unit	126
H08	Restaurant/caterer other	252
	Total	2395

There are 21 premises approved to produce products of animal origin for distribution throughout the UK and Europe: These comprise;

- 6 wholesalers & cold stores
- 3 pie manufacturers
- 3 sausage manufacturers
- 3 Asian snack manufacturers
- 2 pork scratching manufacturers
- 1 cooked meat manufacturer
- 1 kebab manufacturer
- 1 Scotch egg manufacturer
- 1 pattie manufacturer

There are no red meat slaughterhouses in the borough. There is one small-scale Halal poultry slaughterer operating throughout the year; food safety enforcement in this premises is undertaken by the Food Standards Agency.

There are six registered agricultural feeding-stuff (animal feed) establishments.

Walsall as a Borough has a significant number of premises where English isn't the primary language spoken by many of the staff. There also tends to be a relatively high turnover of Food Business Operators or Business Owners in the Borough. This means officers may not see the same person twice when carrying out visits. This is not conducive to building long term positive relationships where compliance can be improved with mutual cooperation.

Delivery of the Food Service	
Service Delivery Point	Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP.
Hours of Opening	Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5.15pm Friday 8.45pm to 4.45pm
Telephone numbers	EH 01922 653010 TS 0845 330 3313 Out of Hours 01922 650000
E mail	environmentalhealth@walsall.gov.uk trading_standards@walsall.gov.uk
Website	www.walsall.gov.uk
Social Media	www.facebook.com/makemeasavvyshopper www.facebook.com/safeandsoundaroundtown Twitter: @ehwalsall @savvyshopper

2.5 REGULATION POLICY.

An Enforcement Policy is in place which has been approved by full Council; this is published on Walsall Council's web site and a printed copy is available upon request.

http://www.walsall.gov.uk/enforcement_policy

3.0 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 INTERVENTIONS AT FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Interventions are defined as activities designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment. They include, but are not restricted to, “official controls” which are any form of control for the verification of compliance with food law. Methods and techniques for carrying out tasks related to official controls include monitoring, surveillance, verification, audit, inspection, and sampling and analysis.

In addition to official controls, interventions also include activities that are effective in supporting food businesses to achieve compliance, such as targeted education and advice or information and intelligence gathering.

The FSA considers that an interventions programme is central to a local regulatory and enforcement regime, and Food Authorities must ensure that such a programme is appropriately resourced.

Trading Standards Food Standards Interventions.

Traditionally, all food premises have been subject to food standards inspections. The Code of Practice now lays out alternative interventions which Local Authorities may adopt. These allow authorised Officers to use their professional judgement to apply a proportionate level of regulatory and enforcement activity to each food business.

Food Standards interventions will, therefore, be applied in a risk-based intelligence-led manner, in accordance with the Intelligence Operating Model, so that resources are effectively targeted and directed at those businesses that present the greatest risk. A flexible approach to resourcing enables us to respond appropriately to incidents and to ensure the necessary protection to the Borough's food chain. High risk food premises will continue to receive programmed food standards inspections or audits.

Environmental Health Food Hygiene Interventions

During the Early Part of 2015/16 April- June the identification of unrated premises will take place. These unrated premises will include duplicate premises that require merging on the database and premises that registered with the authority but subsequently never opened and require removal from the FSA programme. Those requiring an appropriate intervention will be added to the Food Intervention programme prioritised according to the nature of the activity at the premises.

A rated premises will be subject to a full inspection at the appropriate frequency (6 months). Any other intervention, such as sampling or education/training, will be recorded for monitoring of enforcement actions but will not be used as the planned intervention

B rated premises will be subject to a full inspection or in agreement with a line manager a partial Inspection at the appropriate frequency (12 months). Any other intervention, such as sampling or education and training, will be recorded for the monitoring of enforcement actions but will not be used as the planned intervention.

Premises rated as C will be subject to a full inspection, partial inspection or audit at the appropriate frequency (18 months) until such time as the premises is considered to be "broadly compliant" with relevant food law. Once broad compliance has been achieved, planned interventions will alternate between inspections, partial inspections, or audits and other official controls agreed between the Inspecting Officer and their Line Manager.

Premises rated as D will receive an intervention at the appropriate frequency (2 years). Such interventions will alternate between an intervention that is an official control and an intervention that is not an official control.

Premises rated as E will be subject to an Alternative Enforcement Strategy at least once during any three year period. Visits to check the information supplied, by an appropriately qualified officer, will be recorded as a verification visit.

The alternative enforcement strategies will involve sending questionnaires to businesses due for inspection. A sample of businesses will receive a follow up visit to verify the information provided.

Other triggers for an alternative intervention will be:

- Consumer complaint
- Planning or building regulation applications
- Infectious disease notification
- Changes in activities or management
- Non-return of questionnaire

The number of Food Hygiene inspections planned between April 2015 and March 2016 are as follows:

RISK CATEGORY	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Frequency of visits	6 mths	12 mths	18 mths	2 yrs	Alternative strategy	
Inspections scheduled	28	159	540	106	141	974

It is anticipated that in line with figures from 2014/15 further Regulatory demands on the Food hygiene service will include

- 270 Food Business Registrations requiring attention
- 145 Revisits to premises following an earlier intervention
- 114 Initial Food Hygiene Inspections
- 74 Requests for new food advice
- 29 Hygiene Improvement Notices
- 13 Emergency Prohibition Notices
- 12 Prosecutions
- 7 Emergency Prohibition Orders
- 5 Imported food visits/issues
- 2 Simple cautions
- 1 Voluntary Closure

Therefore the estimated number of visits to food premises for 15/16 will be 1238.

Walsall Council implemented the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme on the 1st April 2011: After four years of operation it is encouraging to see that the proportion of businesses that are ranked "Broadly Compliant" (scoring 3, 4 or 5) has increased year upon year, despite the continued financial pressure on businesses.

Rating (& Descriptor)	Number of businesses			
	April 12	April 13	March 14	April 15
5 (Very Good)	232	328	373	473
4 (Good)	209	308	349	347
3 (Generally Satisfactory)	174	336	353	321
2 (Improvement Necessary)	63	130	121	98
1 (Major Improvement Necessary)	171	180	149	153
0 (Urgent Improvement Necessary)	13	10	8	15

1542 businesses are recorded on the FHRS, 1407 are rated the other 135 being at present exempt from rating. Taking 3 and above as satisfactory then 81% of Walsall Businesses are at least satisfactory with 18% requiring varying levels of improvement.

Staff are trained in the consistent rating of food premises having attended a number of FSA training sessions relating to this area. The results are therefore an honest reflection of the situation within the Borough. The Principal EHO is active in various local, regional and national discussions and working groups around the FHRS.

	April 12	April 13	Feb 14	April 15
% of Businesses achieving satisfactory ratings.	71.3	75.2	79.45	81%

Prioritisation

Should a situation occur whereby demand outstrips staffing levels our priority will be targeted at matters of highest risk to ensure the greatest level of protection is afforded to the public

- an unsafe practice is occurring or has occurred which represents a significant hazard to public health;
- a particular food handling or food preparation practice is found to entail a previously unsuspected hazard to public health;
- a foodstuff previously thought to be safe is found to be hazardous to public health;
- a food with widespread distribution is found to be contaminated and thereby presents a significant hazard to public health;
- a food with widespread distribution is the subject of fraud in labelling or presentation
- in the case of primary production, an occurrence on-farm of a contagious animal disease (such as Blue Tongue) or a natural disaster (such as severe flooding) makes on-farm inspection impractical
- Notifications of single cases of significant infectious disease e.g. E coli 0157
- Outbreaks of infectious disease of any type

As a consequence lower risk work will inevitably suffer and a secondary strategy will have to be devised to deal with the back log of work arising from the realignment of priorities. This may include

- Lesser qualified Officers making a first response
- Qualified agency staff brought in on a temporary basis
- Response by phone/letter/email only
- Signposting to other agencies or legal advisors.

3.2 FOOD COMPLAINTS

Officers will prioritise food complaints based on the nature and severity of the matter reported.

Many complaints relate to dissatisfaction with the condition of food and often fail because the continuity of evidence has been broken i.e. it is possible the contamination entered the food after opening. With these cases and the diminishing resources available to the service stricter procedure for the acceptance of complaints will be adopted allowing officers time to investigate matters of higher priority. Information wills till be made available to complainants on actions they may be able to take themselves.

During 2014/15 the Environmental Health dealt with:

- 326 planning applications
- 280 licensing application consultations
- 251 confirmed food poisoning investigations (29 relating to water)
- 172 complaints about food eaten or purchased being unfit
- 152 general enquiries and new business advisory visits or discussions
- 97 complaints about waste associated with food businesses
- 93 complaints about unsatisfactory food premises/practices including Mobiles
- 77 complaints of noise and odour at commercial premises
- 50 concerns about H&S at food premises
- 34 enquiries about public health burials
- 21 complaints about pest infestations
- 11 press enquiries
- 5 Imported food concerns and 1 export certificate request
- 4 Incidents involving water supply issues at food businesses

Overall, the team responded to 1790 requests for service during 15/16 with 94% of complaints being responded to within the target response times.

3.3 HOME AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE AND PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME

Primary Authority

The Primary Authority Principle has its basis in law and is a significant Central Government priority. The authority is permitted to recover its costs for advice given under the scheme and if the business follows the “assured advice” then enforcement action such as a prosecution by other authorities is not likely to be successful.

On the 2nd July 2014 Cabinet approved the adoption and charging regime for this scheme. To date no Primary Authority partnerships have been signed up to.

Home Authority Principle

The Home Authority Principle has been developed by Food and Trading Standards Authorities as an aid to good enforcement practice.

It aims to:

1. Encourage Authorities to place special emphasis on goods and services originating within their area.
2. Provide businesses with a Home Authority source of guidance and advice.
3. Support efficient liaison between Local Authorities.
4. Provide a system for the resolution of problems and disputes.

The principle commands the support of Local Authorities, central Government, Trade and Industry Associations, Consumer and Professional Regulatory bodies.

3.4 ADVICE TO BUSINESS

The Authority has always provided appropriate and competent advice, to local businesses and residents, within available resource constraints.

The past twelve months has seen a large increase in the number of people wanting to prepare food for sale in their domestic kitchens. Environmental Health recognises that certain low risk food items such as cakes can be prepared in a domestic kitchen and we have produced a number of factsheets for domestic caterers.

We have attempted to make our website easier to use, with information about setting up a food business and application forms that businesses and members of the public can download free of charge.

Where possible advice is given to businesses before they start trading: It is easier to advise on layout, equipment and practices at the planning stage before a business commences trading. Under the FHS, a business that does not have a fully implemented Food Safety Management System cannot score higher than 1 (Major Improvement Necessary) so where time permits, officers carry out coaching visits to Food Business Operators to ensure they understand the importance of this requirement.

The Environmental Health twitter account @EHWalsall has since 2014 attracted over 245 followers and over 630 messages have been 'tweeted'.

The Trading Standards Twitter account @Savvyshopper has 132 followers and has tweeted 541 messages.

We will continue to use social media for communicating food safety, trading standards infectious disease and health and safety messages. The Tweets are made by officers and Managers within the team and are regularly retweeted by other councils, businesses and members of the public.

Food safety advice is routinely given as part of an inspection or intervention visit and is complemented by the use of targeted business updates, national and local publicity campaigns and other promotional activities.

3.5 FOOD SAMPLING

MICROBIOLOGICAL FOOD SAMPLING

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

1. To determine the current state of food safety in the Borough
2. To improve the effectiveness of food hygiene inspections.
3. To investigate suspect cases of food poisoning linked with local businesses.
4. To investigate complaints about food.

Microbiological examinations will be carried out using free samples allocated by Public Health England The samples are taken by the Food Safety Officer; other Officers are authorised and can take samples if necessary.

SAMPLING PROGRAMME 2015-2016 Food Manufacturers Selling Mainly by Retail

There are a number of manufacturers in Walsall and we prioritise our sampling regime to ensure the products distributed both locally and nationally are safe.

Historically our own microbiological sampling has given a clear indication of where the manufacturing processes require improvements to secure food safety. Common issues officers find include unsatisfactory levels of microorganisms associated with cleanliness and growth of organisms due to extended shelf life dating of products. Using the results Officers are able to more accurately target interventions with the businesses to correct any poor results as well as to verify where the processes used are working well.

13 manufacturers were visited and 137 samples taken or assessed. 107 samples were returned as satisfactory. 6 premises results were returned with results that required further investigation.

During 15/16 we will sample food manufactured at the following premises.

Company	Address	Food
Gorman's Pork Pies	Bloxwich.	Pork Pies
Timezone Ltd	Willenhall,	Meat pies
Midland Chilled Foods	Willenhall.	Meat pies
Midland Sandwich Co.	Walsall.	Scotch eggs
T C Morris	Willenhall.	Pork pies
Piquant Ltd	Bloxwich	Mayonnaise
Coopers Butchers	Darlaston	Cooked meats
A E Poxon	Brownhills	Cooked meats & sausages
Madani Frozen Foods	Walsall	Kebabs, sausages, Asian snacks
The Traditional Indian Catering Co.	Brownhills.	Asian snacks, sandwiches
Direct Food Solutions	Willenhall.	Curry ready to eat meals
Lawrences	Walsall.	Sausage
Potters Pork Products	Walsall.	Sausage
Fresh Co Sandwich Ltd	Walsall	Sandwiches
The Sandwich Company UK Ltd	Walsall	Sandwiches

FOOD AND FEED STUFFS SAMPLING (Food Standards)

An annual sampling programme is drawn up to ensure that food is accurately labelled and meets compositional and safety standards. It also facilitates the support and auditing of local businesses and contributes to national healthy food / healthy eating campaigns. It is enhanced by additional sampling in response to complaints. The Authority also successfully contributes to regional sampling programmes. This provides economies of scale, associated value for money and a greater impact from a larger results base. We also participate in additional FSA food authenticity projects

The Trading Standards Service targets its proactive sampling at locally produced foods, those products/ingredients from companies that manufacture in, are based in, or import into Walsall. In addition, foods are targeted which are causing current concerns.

These are identified through communication with the Food Standards Agency, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Commission; through local, regional and national intelligence held by local authorities; and through consultation with the Public Analyst.

Emerging food fraud risks can also be identified by looking at economic drivers: High value / high volume products, products in short supply; products with rising prices; products with a complex global food chain. Looking at some of these factors gives us a chance of identifying the next horsegate:



Imported Food

Imported food makes up about 50% of the food consumed in the UK and in line with a letter from the FSA (ENF/E/08/061) the Service is committed to ensuring that at least 10% of all food samples are of foods imported into the European Union. In addition, since 2008 substantial funding has been obtained from the Food Standards Agency to carry out sampling under their Imported Food Sampling Programme.

All sampling undertaken by officers is in accordance with relevant legislation and all formal food and animal feed samples are taken in accordance with the relevant Food or Feed Law Codes of Practice.

Samples are analysed and/or examined by the Service's Public/Agriculture Analyst appointed in accordance with the procedures laid down in Regulations and relevant Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice. Alternatively some samples are examined/tested in house, if it is appropriate to do so.

3.6 CONTROL AND INVESTIGATION OF OUTBREAKS AND FOOD RELATED INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Public Health England have been appointed to act as Proper Officer for Walsall Council in respect of infectious disease notifications. PHE notify Environmental Health of food poisoning cases in the Borough via secure electronic communication. Environmental Health have a statutory duty to carry out an investigation to ascertain the source of the illness and check to ensure that there is no risk of the illness spreading further.

Environmental Health staff work closely with colleagues in Public Health England and have powers to formally exclude people from work or school if they are classed as a high risk case and their actions place other people at risk of catching communicable disease.

The Authority has a documented procedure for the investigation of incident of reported or suspected cases of food poisoning and a formal plan to cover the management of the investigation outbreaks of food borne infectious disease.

The number of cases of food poisoning that have been notified and investigated has fallen over recent years, which is encouraging news and demonstrates that a combination of advice and enforcement in food businesses is working.

Campylobacter remains the primary pathogen with 161 cases in the Borough. Salmonella accounted for 22 cases, Ecoli 0157 3 cases and the water borne diseases Cryptosporidiosis and Giardia accounted for 26 cases

Responses to infectious disease notifications are measured against the PHE document - Roles and Responsibilities for Investigation of Gastrointestinal Infectious Diseases.

Having no specific out of hour's duty staff for responding to infectious disease notifications does however pose a difficulty in dealing with emergency notifications i.e. those required within 24 hours. Invoking the Emergency Planning procedure of identifying and contacting relevant Senior Managers is currently how this issue is addressed.

In a large scale outbreak the Council could draft in staff from other services to assist in some of the basic duties. For additional resource from expert or qualified officers assistance may have to be requested from other West Midlands Councils through the Memorandum of Understanding that all 7 Councils have signed up to.

During the year two significant Food Poisoning outbreaks alleged to have resulted from Walsall based businesses were investigated and are discussed at point 6.2.

Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Food poisoning cases reported and investigated	343	299	266	288	253

3.7 FOOD SAFETY INCIDENTS

The Food Standards Agency issues information about product withdrawals and recalls to let consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. This information is issued electronically to Environmental Health and Trading Standards.

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 enforcement by authorities is required. These notices and alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal.

40 food alerts were received in the calendar year of 2014 and so far in 2015; a log of all Food Alerts is maintained on the Food Standards Agency website.

3.8 LIASION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Authority is a member of the **West Midlands Food Hygiene Liaison Group** which as a forum aims to provide consistency of enforcement, acts as a facilitator for benchmarking activities and provides 'standardisation' exercises to facilitate consistency. The group and provides a valuable link between local authorities and the FSA.

The Principal EHO is the regional representative at the **FSA Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Working Group**, which meets at the FSA headquarters in London to discuss consistency and policy issues relating to the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

The Authority also works in partnership with the following organisations either on an ongoing basis or as the result of targeted work programmes.

1. Food Standards Agency & the South West & West Midlands Regional Office
2. Public Health England
3. Director of Public Health and Public Health consultants
4. School Foods Trust
5. Walsall Catering Services
6. Corporate Procurement
7. Worcestershire Scientific Services
8. Staffordshire Scientific Services
9. Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust
10. Department of Health (West Midlands)

The Trading Standards Service works with a wide range of organisations in carrying out its food and feed law enforcement function. These include the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Department of Health (DoH), the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Meat Hygiene Service, the Intellectual Property Office and the other 13 Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CEnTSA).

CEnTSA Food Standards Liaison Group

The above Group is made up of food standards lead officers plus the regional Public Analysts. The Walsall lead officer for food standards is Chair of this group and as such is responsible for leading on regional projects including sampling, guidance to business, legislative consultations and sharing best practice.

A Walsall representative also attends the Business Needs Group to ensure educational and advisory communications to support business are produced in a timely manner and contribute to the production of a quarterly business newsletter.

National Food Standards and Labelling Focus Group

Walsall's Food Standards Lead officer also sits on the National Food Standards and Labelling Focus Group which gives guidance to regulators and industry as well as working with FSA, DEFRA and DoH on regulatory consultations and codes of practice.

Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub is the LGA's professional social network which helps people in local government connect and share online in a secure environment.

The CEnTSA food standards liaison group have a presence on the Hub. The Knowledge Hub is used as a vital tool for sharing intelligence and best practice, both regionally and nationally.

UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS)

In 2009 Walsall Trading Standards became the first Authority in the CEnTSA region to be linked into the FSA's UKFSS national food sampling database. Early adoption of the system has allowed Walsall to secure funding from the FSA for additional sampling projects as well as providing a tool for targeted sampling surveillance. In recent years Walsall has received funding from the FSA to act as a Super-User with a remit to support and train other authorities adopting UKFSS.

Rapid alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and the European Commission.

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) provides food and feed control authorities with an effective tool to exchange information about measures taken responding to serious risks detected in relation to food or feed. This exchange of information helps Member States to act more rapidly and in a coordinated manner in response to a health threat caused by food or feed.

IDB and FSA Intelligence Databases

Intelligence on food issues is also collected by Trading Standards departments in the CEnTSA region through the national Intelligence Database - IDB which also inputs into the Food Standards Agency food fraud database. Data from IDB and the FSA database is used to produce a Regional Control Strategy.

Intelligence Operating Model (IOM)

The IOM is a national intelligence framework developed to support national, regional and local needs. It is used as a targeting and prioritising tool for all Trading Standards work.

3.9 FOOD SAFETY AND STANDARDS PROMOTIONAL WORK AND OTHER NON OFFICIAL CONTROLS.

Food Hygiene Project

Utilising funding from the Councils Area Partnerships a Coaching session was arranged with some of the Boroughs lower rated premises during February 2015. The sessions were lead by a multi-lingual food business owner who is also a trainer and food consultant in an effort to boost the knowledge and experience of FBO's and their staff. The short term effects of this training need to be analysed however feedback has been positive and further sessions will ideally be arranged during 15/16.

Food Safety Week 2015

This annual event will take place week beginning 18th May and will focus again on campylobacter associated with chicken, encouraging better practices at home and within businesses to prevent the spread of what is the UK's most common cause of food poisoning.

Social Media Campaigns

Environmental Health and Trading Standards use Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook to communicate current messages of local, regional or national importance. This can include checking Food Ratings, Food Alerts, latest allergy information etc.

Health Switch Award

The Health Switch Award implemented using funding from Public Health during 14/15 will continue and the service will again aim to work closely with the business to ensure they understand the concepts and principles of basic healthy eating and how they can use this knowledge to positively influence both the food they offer for sale and their business, making changes to their menu.

Two premises Bobs Fast Food, Caldmore and Cardamon Spice, Brownhills have received the gold Health Switch award receiving publicity in the local press and a certificate to display in their premises.

Maintenance of standards and fulfilment of the award criteria will be monitored during routine food hygiene inspections.

During 15/16 premises in all 6 area partnerships and Walsall Town Centre will be targeted to work on this award. It is envisaged that by achieving the award local publicity may increase interest in the premises from residents as well as motivating other premises to come forward leading to a greater roll out of the scheme.

4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

The table below shows the cost of the Food Safety element of Environmental Health for last year and includes an estimate of its cost for 2015/16.

	14/15 Actual	15/16 Estimate
Staffing Costs	361,042	284,787
Support Services	3,212	1,147
Supplies and Services	17,876	14,070
Transport Costs	12,326	13,597
Income	-22,485	-3,151
Expenditure	371,971	310,449

The table below shows the cost of the Trading Standards Food Standards service for last year and includes an estimate of its cost for 2015/16.

	14/15 Actual	15/16 (Estimate)
Staffing Costs	85,290	86,848
Support Services	69	764
Supplies and Services	4,930	7,169
Transport Costs	2,219	2,918
Income	-2,601	-855
Expenditure	89,907	96,843

4.2 STAFFING ALLOCATION

Environmental Health food safety services are delivered in one Borough-wide team of 8 EHO's and 1 Food Safety Officer lead by a Principal Environmental Health Officer. There are 1.5 FTE posts undertaking Food Standards work in Trading Standards.

In addition to food safety work, the Officers in the team are also responsible for Health and Safety, waste control, planning and licensing applications, nuisances associated with food premises, drinking water quality and local authority-arranged funerals.

During 2014/15 one H&S Officer post was deleted as part of the review of budgets. One FTE Assistant Trading Standards Officer Post and one Enforcement Officer post was deleted from Trading Standards.

An under spend due to the early departure of the Health and Safety and income received from Public Health for additional works allowed two Agency EHO's to be employed to assist in the provision of the food hygiene (and H&S) service.

The qualifications and competency of food enforcement officers is set out in legislation (Regulation (EC) No.882/2004 on Official Controls) and implemented in the Food law Code of Practice published by the Food Standards Agency.

A recent review of the Food Law COP has clarified the requirements for suitably qualified and competent officers and a review of EH staff (including Managers and Supervisors) will have to take place during 15/16 to ensure they are fully compliant. This could result in additional training costs and time out of the Office attending training courses or similar.

Environmental Health Officers all possess a BSc. or MSc. in Environmental Health and registration from the Environmental Health Officers Registration Board (EHORB) together with other appropriate qualifications. The Food Safety Officer has a Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection from the EHORB.

The FSA Framework Agreement requires a consideration of the level of resources required against those available. Based on last years out turn the following table indicates a shortfall in available Officer time to complete all activities. Close monitoring of this years workload will be required to see if this is a continuing trend and whether decisions are required in the respect of resource levels.

Area of Work	Current FTE's	Req'd FTE	Business case
Planned Inspections	3	4	A statutory obligation based on the Food Law Code of Practice
New business inspections	1	2	A statutory obligation based on the Food Law Code of Practice
Food Sampling (microbiological)	0.024	0.5	Essential part of food safety identifies food hazards at manufacturers
Food Complaints	1	0.5	Reactive response to residents and business needs.
Infectious Disease	0.024	0.4	Statutory responsibility with the Director of Public Health
Emergency Prohibitions	0.006	0.20	Enforcement actions resulting from food businesses being unsafe.
Improvement Notices	0.009	0.20	Enforcement actions resulting from food businesses being unsafe.
Prosecutions/simple cautions	0.036	0.20	Enforcement resulting from non compliance with Regulations
Advice and Support	1	1	Supporting business and residents to ensure standards are maintained.
Management	1	1	Overseeing the food plan, workload, personnel and budgetary matters.
Administration	1	1	Support frontline officers in administering the work of the service.
Total	8	11	
Shortfall	3		

4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Walsall Council is implementing a regime of annual Employee Performance Reviews for staff where discussions take place with staff and in the light of the service plan objectives, action plans are drawn up for each individual.

All Food Law Enforcement Officers will receive training assessments and evaluation during any such reviews. These reviews will take account of the new food law code of practice requirements as set out above. This may pose an additional cost to the service to ensure all staff are fully qualified and competent.

External and internal training provision will then identified in accordance with staff and service requirements. To maximise budgetary provision wherever possible support is given to courses provided by CeNTSA and the Food Standards Agency who have proven to be the most cost effective training suppliers. Officers are also able to identify forthcoming training via the CeNTSA annual training plan. In house development in the form of workshops and cascade training is also utilised where appropriate.

2014/15 OFFICER TRAINING PROGRAMME

In 2014/2015 officers received training in the following areas:

Prosecution: Cradle to Grave	March 2015
Listeria in Hospital Catering Kitchens	March 2015
Business Insight Training	March 2015
Language Barriers	March 2015
Food Leads Update	March 2015
Legionella Stakeholders Update	Feb 2015
E Coli 0157	Feb 2015
Food, Water & Environment Symposium	Jan 2015
Interpretation of Microbiological Results	Nov 2014
FHRS Consistency	October 2014
Tattooing and Body Modification	October 2014
Private Water Supplies	July 2014
Food Fraud and Traceability	July 2014
GI outbreak Investigation Seminar	June 2014
Cirrus Trojan 2 Noise Evaluator Training	April 2014
Illegal Tattooing Workshop	March 2014
Imported Food Control for Inland authorities	Feb 2014
Health & Safety & Safeguarding in Residential Care Homes	January 2014

5.0 QUALITY ASSESSMENT

5.1 Quality assessment and Internal Monitoring

The Principal EHO makes periodic accompanied visits with Environmental Health Staff. This includes the checking of formal Notices and paperwork. A sample of reports of inspection are reviewed and a consistency check carried out FHRS scores

Officers will participate in regional standardisation exercises, benchmarking and peer reviews if they are organised: Walsall Council has taken part in inter-authority audits relating to the operation of the FHRS within the last 12 months.

It will continue to be the Management Team's responsibility to react swiftly to performance monitoring reports. This will include reflection on inspections where non-compliant premises are found to ensure the right level of intervention has taken place.

The Area Manager Environmental Health will undertake a quarterly assessment of the work of the service culminating in the Annual Review which is part of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan process.

The Councils Internal Audit Team last inspected Environmental health in 2012 giving an assurance level of Significant.

The FSA last audited Environmental Health in 2010 with a revisit in 2011 on the subject of Local Authority Assessment of HACCP Compliance in Food Business Establishments.

5.1 WORKPLAN FOR 2015-2016

In order to assist monitoring of Environmental Health performance the following matrix will be used.

Key Service Activity	Action	Target	Action lead
Ensure residents have access to safe & healthy food	Implement the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan	Plan to be submitted to Council for approval Quarterly monitoring of the Plan shared with Management team and staff.	David Elrington
Maintain the Food Hygiene Rating System	Maintain the Food Hygiene Rating System	Fortnightly uploads to the national database Results reported back to Inspecting officers No of Appeals dealt with within timescales in the brand standard.	David Elrington
Ensure residents have access to safe & healthy food	Implement the microbiological food sampling programme focusing on high risk premises and manufacturers	Premises requiring sampling to be agreed. 100% of premises receive a sampling visit 100% of premises where failures or issues identified receive a follow up intervention.	David Elrington
Respond to food poisoning and infectious disease notifications.	Respond to all disease notifications using timescales developed by PHE	100% response within PHE recommended timescales	David Elrington
Assist new and existing business with relevant and timely advice,	Respond to requests for advice and visits to new premises within 21 days.	100% response Quarterly check of Business advice on walsall.gov.uk Regular Tweets of relevant business advice.	
Investigate complaints about alleged business malpractice.	First Response to complaints about trading practices within service standards.	100% response	David Elrington
Ensure residents have access to safe & healthy food	Continue the Health Switch project.	Identify and work with businesses. Promote attainment of awards through the media.	David Elrington
Ensure officers enforcing food law have relevant CPD for their role	Review training opportunities and number of CPD hours per Officer quarterly.	Number of hours per officer	David Elrington

6.0 REVIEW

6.1 Review against the service plan

Service objectives are reviewed on a quarterly basis the key performance measures from the year 2014/15 are:

Objective	Target	Actual
Number of Programmed Inspections	100% of Inspections due	29 A rated premises have been inspected during the year and there are no outstanding inspections. 100 170 B rated premises required inspected there are 4 outstanding. 98 448 C rated premises required inspection there are 91 outstanding. 80 290 D rated premises require inspecting there are 22 outstanding. 92 89 E rated premises required inspecting there are 4 outstanding 95 1026 premises required inspecting 88 were complete with 121 carried forward into 15/16
Number of Food Samples taken for microbiological examination	200	137 samples submitted for microbiological examination. 107 Satisfactory.
No. of cases of food borne disease receiving response within Public Health England guidelines.	100%	Food related 213 – 91% Water related 29 – 76% Other 9 - 89% Overall – 251 cases – 89% response
No. of complaints responded to within 3 working days.	100%	398 - 95% response
Assist new businesses set up in compliance with Regulations.	100% 21 day response	194 Businesses – 94%
Assist existing businesses with timely advice in relation to legal compliance.	100% 21 day response	71 Businesses – 92%
First Response to complaints about trading practices.	100%	94% response within 3 working days

6.2 Identification of any variation from service plan

Officers are working hard and achieving a good level of performance in what has been and continues to be a challenging time.

A decision was taken during 14/15 to target specific manufacturers during a specific period of time allowing the Food Safety Officer devoted time to completing areas considered of high priority. Without this decision it is likely sampling would have continued to be pushed aside as more pressing matters took priority. The sampling programme continues to prove its worthy by highlighting issues in the manufacturing process and the plan used in 14/15 will be replicated during 15/16.

The Authority started the year with a target of 952 inspections, as the year progressed new premises opened, old premises closed, premises were refitted, altered, changed ownership etc. All these factors make for an ever changing landscape and therefore as the year progressed the number and type of inspection changed depending on what circumstances the officers found or become aware of.

Risk category	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL
Frequency of visits	6 mths	12 mths	18 mths	2 yrs	Alternative intervention strategy	
Inspections estimated at 1.4.14	17	175	585	128	47	952
Inspections allocated	28	162	460	95	37	783
New (unplanned) Inspections	6	21	134	52	37	250
Total Inspections	34	183	594	147	74	1032
Total inspections outstanding	0	4	91	22	4	121
No. of compliant premises	2 = 6.9%	80 = 49%	585 = 80%	333 = 90%	560 = 99%	1560/1851 = 71%

There appear to be 355 premises on the Services computerised system that are unrated for food hygiene. An initial review of these premises appears to show many of them to be new businesses recorded on the system but which either never progressed to opening or were of low risk therefore potentially falling outside the scope of the inspection regime. It is also possible that some of the premises are duplicates of existing premises.

Part of the task for 15/16 will be to review these premises, identify and close those that are no longer relevant and further scrutinise/allocate for action those that may need an intervention. A review of the way in which Food Registration and new business enquiries are recorded will also take place.

During the winter period 9 food premises were closed including 6 during a 6 week period. This dominated the 3rd quarter in terms of officers working to resolve the issues, collecting evidence and putting together legal files. Overall 12 premises have been formally closed during 14/15.

Two officers are usually allocated to a closure this meant most of the team were working on closures, undertaking pace interviews etc for protracted periods of time. Officers have worked on and continue to work on between 14-18 prosecution files for serious hygiene offences. If it takes 30 – 40 hours to complete a closure and associated prosecution file then it could take upwards of 700 hours to complete this for 12 such incidences.

The number of food hygiene interventions that could take place during that same period could be estimated at around 100. It has to be acknowledged though that enforcement is an important part of the work of the service. Taking the decision to prosecute those who place the public at serious risk is sometimes necessary and proportionate to convey the seriousness of the offences to the wider industry in the hope that this along with the much larger amount time spent on advice and support will help to drive up standards in the borough.

Realising that inspections were falling behind due to the closures and legal actions meetings were held with the team to discuss prioritisation of work. Each officer considered their work load alongside their managers and identified the highest risk premises due. Agreement was reached to target those at the expense of premises where experience suggested they were more compliant and less likely to pose a risk to health. Those premises not inspected during 14/15 will continue to be targeted as part of the programme for 15/16.

The team further considered the method for evening inspections. Arrangements were made for officers to pair up with other regulatory staff and go out as a group on several evenings planned over a couple of months. This allowed for up to 10-12 inspections to be completed in one session. It also allowed for safer work practices and greater level of support in the event of closures. On one such night a food closure lead to confrontation and 6 officers were called to support the closure with action falling just short of police intervention.

Long term sickness absence has had a significant impact on the Service this year and the impact of staff absences has had to be considered and workloads adjusted to try and cope with this. It is hoped this is not an ongoing matter.

With the additional funding from a vacant post an agency officer was employed during February and March to work through new and unregistered food premises that had been held back whilst higher risk premises were targeted. Depending on budgetary circumstances this officer may only be available for a maximum of 3 months.

A food poisoning outbreak in a neighbouring authority was traced to a premises in Walsall and swift action by officers from both authorities brought this matter under control. The premises was closed and is now subject to legal proceedings.

A food poisoning outbreak on the 31st March 2015 allegedly affecting up to 500 people required an immediate response from the service alongside PHE and the Director of Public Health's office. This has meant effectively 4 members of staff working on this case almost exclusively for 2 weeks.

6.3 Areas of Improvement

The following areas of improvement will be necessary in 15/16

1. Ensuring all staff receive adequate levels of training and CPD
2. Reviewing the registration process in terms of internal systems so that new registrations are identified and recorded appropriately
3. Identifying and dealing with unrated premises or premises that fall outside the intervention programme
4. Ensuring the database is scrutinised more frequently to ensure the statistics reported give an accurate reflection of the work carried out.
5. Identifying efficient work methods to cope with diminishing resources operationally, managerially and administratively
6. Scrutinising the new food law cop to ensure the authority is compliant with its requirements.