



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING



FOOD FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

REPORT OF ACTIVITY FOR 2003/2004

Local authorities are required, by statutory Code of Practice made under the Food Safety Act 1990, to produce an Annual Framework Agreement in respect of their proposed food activities. The document must be approved by the elected Members and this has been done in respect of the period 2003/2004. This approved document sets out the proposals and plans for food safety activity for a 12-month period and detailed budget provision and other resources. It confirmed that a review comparing performance with the plan would be produced at the end of the period.

This review report confirms performance for the period 2003/2004 and compares this against the plan. Pertinent facts are that several Environmental Health Practitioners left our employment during the period, accordingly there were severe capacity issues, particularly towards the end of the period, work has therefore had to be prioritised and some activities reduced.

A contractor has been employed since January and officers have worked "overtime" to partially address this capacity deficit. Various targets were specified in the plan, most of which were estimates based on previous years' demand factors and were, therefore, subject to variation, the exception to this was the number of hazard generated food hygiene inspections. A total budget of £280,148 was allocated to food safety and associated activities.

At time of writing this report the main budgetary elements of staffing and on-costs were not available for the period 2003/04, other expenditure was broadly in line with budget, a verbal update will be given as relevant. Targets were specified in the framework agreement as follows.

Food Hygiene Inspections

Inspections were divided into two categories of inspections, (1) those scheduled by hazard scores which could be confirmed, and (2) those likely to be generated, for example, at new premises:

- Those due by hazard category were confirmed to be 638 due
- Those projected at new premises and other re-scheduled premises. 62 estimated

All inspections due by hazard category were carried out in the period, but not all other generated inspections were carried out within the period, with 20 outstanding due to staffing

shortages. However, FLARE software records indicate a total of 764 food hygiene inspections were carried out in the period indicating that demand was greater than anticipated.

Other visits

Revisits to premises were projected to be 451 and 375 sampling, survey or advisory visits were also projected, giving a total projection of 826 other visits.

FLARE records indicate that 441 revisits and 442 sampling, survey or advisory visits were carried out, giving a total of 883 other visits. At the end of the period 30 revisits were outstanding due to staffing shortages but again demand exceeded projections.

Complaints

Food premises and foodstuff complaints were estimated to be 250. A total of 251 food premises and foodstuff complaints were received and resolved in accordance with section procedure.

Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases necessitating an investigation were estimated to be 300.

A total of 283 cases were investigated in accordance with section procedures. In addition, a food poisoning outbreak associated with the consumption of egg fried rice, as well as viral outbreaks at residential and nursing homes, were investigated.

Sampling

A total of 130 food and 280 water samples, as well as 36 Biotrace/Ecolog surveys, were projected.

A total of 139 food and 229 water samples were taken, as well as 18 Biotrace/Ecolog surveys carried out. The variation in samples taken was as a result of a switch in emphasis from water to food samples, the reduction in Biotrace/Ecolog surveys, was as a result of staff shortages.

Home Authority Work

Total time allocated to 'Home Authority' work was estimated as 40 hours. Actual time spent was 10 hours, again as a result of staff shortages.

Additional and Better Links to and Partnerships with Business and Individuals.

This was indicated as an aspiration, but very little progress has been made. In addition, the surveying of the district to maintain the correctness of our Flare database has been greatly restricted, again due to staffing shortages.

Health Promotion

A very limited amount of promotional work has been carried out and the development of Environmental Health Services' Health Promotion Plan has been restricted, again as a result of staff shortages. No progress has been made on a possible award to businesses to encourage food hygiene, healthier food options and reduced exposure to passive smoking at food premises, due to a review of Council priorities.

Review of Policy and Procedural Document

Some progress has been made, but revised Central Government Codes of Practice are expected shortly, these will inform future revisions, which have, therefore, been deferred. It should be noted that these revised Codes of Practice could increase demand upon the service. This issue is covered within the draft Framework Agreement for 2004/2005.

Areas of Improvement

Variations from the plan for 2003 /2004 were either as a result of unavoidable increased demands upon the service, staffing shortages or due to delays in receiving revised government guidance. A recently qualified environmental health practitioner is due to commence employment at the end of June 2004 and advertisements for two further practitioners have been agreed.

The provision of this extra staffing resource should enable the Food Framework Agreement proposed for 2004/2005 to be achieved.

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