

Report to: Council Community Protection Panel Cabinet
Date: 9 July 2008 2 June 2008 12 June 08
Subject: Food Service Plan 2008/09
Report of: Director of Environmental Services
Contact officer: Alan Blundell Telephone: 01942 705027

Purpose/summary: To seek approval for the Food Service Plan 2008/09

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: None. The Food Service Plan must be produced and approved on an annual basis.

Recommendation/decision: That Council approves and adopts the Food Service Plan 2008/09 as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks/Implications:

Financial:	Within existing resources
Staffing:	Within existing resources
Policy:	Council Policy Framework
Equal Opportunities - has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	In 2006
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only:

Categorisation of the report:	X		
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	X
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Community Protection Panel 2 June 2008		12 June 2008	9 July 2008

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 19 May 2008



FOOD SERVICE PLAN

2008/2009

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

1 . AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BUSINESS COMPLIANCE SECTION

'1.1 To ensure that food produced, consumed and sold in the Borough is wholesome and safe to eat'

We hope to achieve this objective by -

- Carrying out planned risk based inspections during the year
- By a series of other risk based interventions.
- Providing advice, information and support to local businesses, residents and other client groups.
- Responding to requests for service such as complaints, food safety incidents and food related illness
- Sampling and testing food particularly food which is produced locally.

We try to ensure that the processes and practices which deliver these objectives are applied fairly and consistently, by following relevant Codes of Practice and Practice Guidance and by adopting the Council's Enforcement Policy.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

Our Food Service Plan links into and complements the Council's corporate objectives, corporate frameworks and political principles. -

1.3 Service Planning and Performance Management

We are committed to performance management and service planning. We monitor our performance and produce quarterly reports which mark our progress towards the annual targets.

We use tools such as Charter Mark and ISO 9000 to evaluate and continuously improve the services we provide.

We consult with our stake-holders and use those results to shape the services we provide. Random samples of service users are routinely surveyed about the services provided. The Food Health and Safety Section along with other providers in the Department was awarded ISO 9000 in January 2005 and has maintained that accreditation to date

1.4 Partnership Working

We support the idea and the philosophies of partnership working. We are active participants in the AGMA Public Protection Partnership and work with the local Primary Care Trust, other Local Authorities, local businesses and local communities.

1.5 Places

With a healthier environment and with safe food we believe Wigan will be a more attractive place to live and work in. A safer and a revitalised environment should attract inward investment, new businesses and new employment and should also encourage our existing businesses to develop and grow.

1.6 People

We are committed to equality and diversity and we want all our stakeholders to develop their potential whatever their background.

We make educational, advisory and promotional visits to schools, businesses and local communities to enable these and other groups to make informed choices and informed decisions.

We think 'Prevention is better than Cure' and so we have provided Guidance Notes which cover a wide range of food safety and food related issues.

We provide Guidance in several languages and can use oral translation services when necessary.

2.0 BACKGROUND

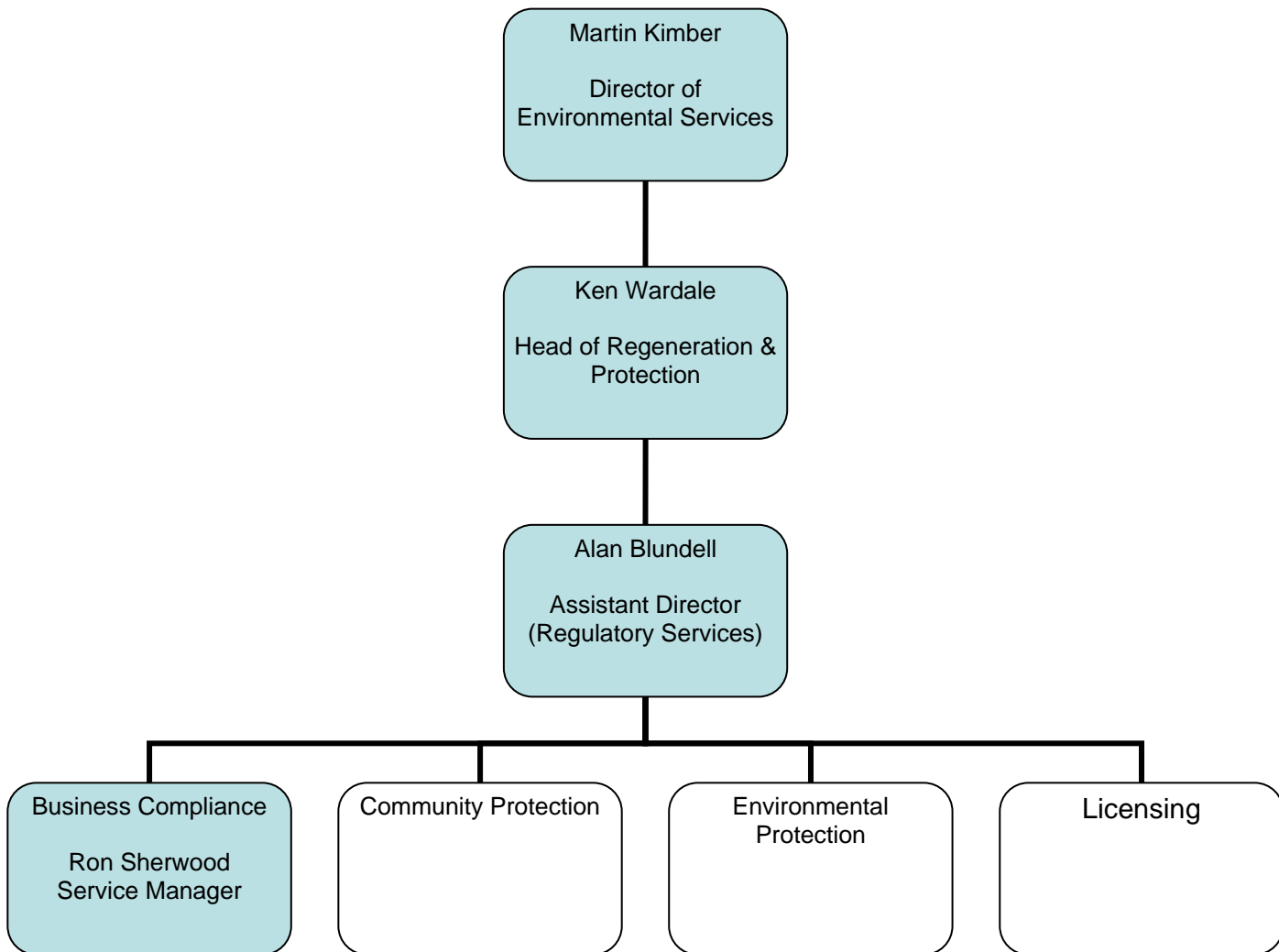
2.1 Profile of the Authority

- An estimated 305,000 people live in the Borough making it the 12th largest Council in England and, at an estimated 73 square miles, the 9th biggest.
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- The Borough lies between Liverpool and Manchester, combines several smaller townships and the major communities of Wigan and Leigh.
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- The Borough is the most westerly part of Greater Manchester and has good access to national road and rail networks.
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- The coal and cotton industries have long since disappeared and printing, processing and food manufacturing have taken their place.
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- There are an estimated 2400 premises in the Borough where the Council is responsible for enforcing food safety.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The Environmental Services Department incorporates Regeneration and Protection Division, Neighbourhood Services Division, Performance and Resource Management Division and Development Division. The Department is organised in such a way as to be better suited and better able to respond to local needs. The organisation and structure of the Department is shown below.

The Officer with particular responsibility for food safety, food standards and food hygiene is the Service Manager – Business Compliance Section



2.3 Scope of the Food Safety Service

Following a recent reorganisation the Business Compliance Section within the Regeneration and Protection Division of the Environmental Services Department is responsible for delivering the food safety and food hygiene regulatory and enforcement functions.

Service responsibilities include –

- ◆ Completing an annual programme of planned, risk based food safety and food standards inspections.
- ◆ Investigating incidents of food poisoning and food borne illness.
- ◆ Responding to food safety, food hygiene and food standard service requests (including national food alerts)
- ◆ Responding to requests for information from other enforcing authorities concerning food manufactured and/or produced in the Borough.
- ◆ Providing information and advice about food safety, food hygiene, food labelling and other food related matters to our customers and partner organisations.
- ◆ Completing a programme of local food sampling and taking part in local, national and regionally co-ordinated food sampling programmes.
- ◆ Responding to 'consultations', contributing and providing expert opinion at local, regional and national level.
- ◆ Delivering food hygiene training and promoting food safety and food hygiene as circumstances and capacity permit.
- ◆ Approval and inspection of product specific premises under EC Regulations 852/2004 and 853/2004
- ◆ Responding to FSA Food Alerts and advising FSA of any serious local food problem or food related incident
- ◆ Maintaining the ISO 9000 Quality Assured Systems as they relate to food related functions and processes
- ◆ Maintaining the Food Register

3.0 DEMANDS ON THE FOOD SAFETY SERVICE

3.1 General Summary

There are currently an estimated 2400 premises on our food safety database. Restaurants and caterers represent 62% of all food premises, retailers 31%, food processors, distributors and manufacturers mainly selling by retail make up the remaining balances.

We are responsible for 23 businesses in the Borough which fall within the scope of EC Regulation 852/2004 and EC Regulation 853/2004. These businesses are inspected at least twice every year to ensure compliance with their approval status.

In 2007-2008, we inspected 100% of our high risk rated food premises (Category A & B) and 68% of Category C risk rated premises. We applied alternative interventions, focussed enforcement initiatives and contact strategies at our lower risk rated premises and successfully implemented Safer Food Better Business systems at a considerable number of additional premises. In addition a number of successful SFBB training courses were organised during the year including one in Cantonese.

We also continued our 'Out of Hours' inspections of take-aways and snack providers to ensure the safety of food served late at night

Our inspection priorities are consistent with the national agreed risk based assessment standard and during 2007-2008 we inspected 834 of the food premises due in the year and re-scored a further 498 as either new businesses coming into the Borough, businesses changing ownership or as a consequence of a complaint.

Our services are now provided by two teams, one concentrates on planned risk based inspections as well as dealing with food standards complaints and referrals. The investigations team deals with all the other complaints and enquiries about accidents, incidents, licensing consultations, infectious diseases, health safety and welfare issues and contributing to the pro-active effort if and when capacity allows.

Services are generally available between 08.30 am and 05.00 p.m. (Monday to Friday) but information and advice can also be obtained from alternative Council sources at other times for example evenings and weekends.

An 'Out of Hours' contact is available for food emergencies via the Council's Central Watch Service.

We have systems in place to ensure the continuity of service on a prioritised basis in the event of a serious emergency or disablement.

3.2 Enforcement Action

The Business Compliance Section subscribes to and supports the Enforcement Concordat and the Regulators Compliance Code, and takes great care to ensure that any enforcement action or regulatory function carried out and is consistent with the Council's Enforcement Policy..

In brief -

- ◆ Enforcement actions are linked to the scale, seriousness and criminal intent of the offence
- ◆ Apart from the most serious cases where previous advice or warning's have been ignored we try to resolve problems by providing help and support, advice and assistance.
- ◆ We always refer to and have regard to all relevant legislation, codes of practice and codes of guidance which protect the rights of a corporation and the individual and provide guidance for enforcement action and regulatory activity.

4.0 SERVICE DELIVERY

Our major priorities for 2008-2009 are set out in the Environmental Services Departmental Business Plan 2008-2009. Senior staff within the Business Compliance Section have had input into the Business Plan which will be agreed by elected members in due course and will be published on our web site

4.1 Food Safety Inspections

We operate a programme of risk-based inspections as set out in the Code and Practice Guidance. Our Quality Procedures ensure that following 'primary inspection', 'secondary inspections' are made to check progress against any improvement measures identified as necessary and specified at the time of the 'primary inspection'.

Currently there are an estimated 2400 premises on our food database and this year we plan to inspect 100% of the high risk rated food premises due and use a mix of intervention strategies to deal with the rest to bring about improvements to food safety in the most cost effective and efficient way.. Whilst we will continue to inspect high risk rated premises during 2008-2009 we will also carry out a series of planned interventions and projects aimed

at specific locations and specific work activities. Enforcing Authorities have been reminded by the Government and Government Agencies that regulation is more than just inspection and that regulatory services should engage a range of innovative interventions that can be tailored to and focussed on areas where resources have greatest impact. We are actively working through the AGMA Public Protection Partnership with the Better Regulation Executive and The Local Better Regulation Office to achieve this.

4.2 Food Safety Complaints

We have documented Quality Procedures for dealing with food and food related complaints. Our Procedures, we believe, are compliant with FSA and LACORS Codes of Practice and the Council's Enforcement Policy. Complaint response priority is determined by risk, that is the ability or the likelihood of the condition, circumstances or complaint adversely affecting food safety and/or public health generally. In 2007-2008 our then reactive team dealt with 320 service requests that were food related.

4.3 The Home Authority Principle

We support LACORS Guidance in respect of the Home Authority Principle and in particular LACORS 'Guidelines for Home Authorities' (March 1997). The benefits we see are: -

- ◆ Greater enforcement consistency, increased efficiency and reduced duplication
- ◆ Preventative enforcement through advice
- ◆ Resolution of conflict between authorities and between authorities and businesses
- ◆ Better understanding and awareness of commercial issues
- ◆ Enhanced technical and audit expertise.

4.3.1 The Home Authority Principle - Food Safety

We have no formalised agreement to act as 'Home Authority' for any local business but we do act as the 'Originating Authority' for a large canning company and, as such, we receive and respond to a significant number of requests for information, advice and assistance from other Enforcing and Regulating Authorities. Currently complaint levels are low but the scale and size of the plant ensures that, on occasion, workload will have significant resource implications for the Business Compliance Section.

5.0 ADVICE TO BUSINESS

Providing guidance, advice and promoting food safety and food hygiene to individuals and businesses is an important part of our service activity. We engage and interact with businesses on an almost daily basis and we speak at breakfast clubs, luncheons and business forums on a variety of food related topics. We have also formed an innovative partnership with the Ashton, Wigan and Leigh PCT to deal with food safety, nutrition, obesity, allergens and breast feeding issues and deliver a healthy business award.

6.0 INSPECTION AND SAMPLING

6.1 Routine Food Safety Sampling

We routinely sample to ensure the microbiological, radiological, composition, chemical safety and labelling of food. Sampling may take place as a result of

- ◆ A complaint
- ◆ As part of an investigation into food poisoning or food borne illness'

- ◆ As part of an inspection to establish the effectiveness of process management.
- ◆ For routine local, regional or national monitoring purposes.

We operate a prioritised sampling programme which should guarantee that food on sale or produced in the Wigan Borough is safe to eat. In 2007-2008 we took part in regionally co-ordinated surveys exploring the microbiology of sliced cooked meats, open pate, edible seeds, raw fish, raw chicken and salad vegetables at the point of sale as well as compositional and imported food which was FSA funded. In total we submitted 920 food samples for microbiological analysis in the year.

Our microbiological services are provided by –

Food, Environmental and Microbiological Services (FEMS)
North West Regional Partnership
Royal Preston Hospital

Whilst chemical and compositional analysis is provided by –

Eurofins Limited.
Broad Oak Business Park
Ashburton Road West
Trafford Park, Manchester

7.0 CONTROL AND INVESTIGATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND FOOD BORNE ILLNESS

The Health Protection Agency (HPA), the Ashton, Wigan and Leigh Primary Care Trust (PCT), the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust and ourselves have shared responsibilities for outbreak control, infectious disease and food borne illness in the Borough

8.0 FOOD SAFETY ALERTS

We are the Council's contact point for all Food Alerts (formerly Food Hazard Warnings). Our Quality Procedures ensure that we comply with national guidance and that our response is both timely and appropriate. Food Alerts are notified to us by 'Pager', EHC Net and/or email. Whilst we cannot predict the number of alerts likely in any given year we try to provide a response appropriate to the alert classification together with all the necessary contact, media engagement, follow up and related works

9.0 LIAISON WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

We participate in joint working with other local authorities, agencies and organisations in an effort to achieve greater enforcement consistency, to facilitate the exchange and sharing information, to maximise resources and to improve our own understanding and knowledge. Some examples are

- ◆ Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Public Protection Managers' Group
- ◆ The Greater Manchester Chief Officers' Food Liaison Group
- ◆ The Health Protection Agency
- ◆ The Ashton, Wigan and Leigh Primary Care Trust
- ◆ The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
- ◆ Local Authority Co-ordinating for Regulatory Services
- ◆ The Food Standards Agency
- ◆ Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Trust

We also have formal consultation arrangements with internal service providers in the Council concerning

- ◆ Applications under the Licencing Act 2003 and Land Charges.

10.0 FOOD SAFETY RESOURCES

10.1 Financial

Financial management cannot be entirely precise since much of the work we do is not food safety related. The Business Compliance Section is multifunctional and besides having food safety responsibilities we undertake occupational health safety and welfare enforcement at 4500 premises across the Borough and deal with miscellaneous service requests. Nevertheless we spent approximately £216k across food service activities during 2007-2008.

10.2 Staffing

The total establishment within the Section is 20. fte. We have 14. professional and technical officers deployed on operational duties, a service manager, 2 principal officers and 3 staff providing administration and support services. The Section is divided into 2 teams. One is Business Compliance and concentrate on the risk based inspection programmes for both food, health and safety and food standards whilst the second team deals with reactive matters such as complaints, accidents at work, outbreaks and infectious disease control etc.

11.0 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

As an accredited 'Investor in People', our in-house training and development ensures that all professional, technical and support staff are competent and trained to a level commensurate with their duties. All staff, with the exception of support and administrative personnel, are qualified Environmental Health Officers, Trading Standard Officers, Scientific or Technical Officers holding the Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection. All our professional, scientific and technical staff have considerable experience of food safety and food hygiene enforcement and are encouraged to meet the requirement of ten hours continuous professional development (CPD) update training each year. We allocate a nominal 2 training days per officer per year but this is reviewed subject to changing circumstances and legislation. Annual appraisal interviews with staff are used to identify training needs. Training is provided in a number of ways:

- ◆ Courses via the Council's Central Training Unit, Greater Manchester Food Liaison Group etc.
- ◆ External or Internal training courses and seminars.
- ◆ 'On-the-Job' training.
- ◆ Courses provided by CIEH, TSI, The Food Standards Agency or third party provider

On their return from course or seminar attendance Officers cascade the information gained to others within Section. This can vary from a simple overview of the event to a more formal presentation with overheads and handouts etc.

12 QUALITY SYSTEM

The Quality System went 'live' in April 2004 and was fully reaccredited in January 2008. Part audits by ISOQAR are undertaken every six months. Internal self audits are undertaken annually.

Requirements of our Quality System include verification of work, identification and rectification of non-conformances and customer satisfaction surveys. Officer work quality is assessed via review meetings, accompanied visits and reality checks in tandem with client feedback from our 'Customers'.

13 REPORTING PROGRESS

Key activities are continuously reviewed by the Principal Officers and by the Service Manager. A

Quarterly Report is presented to the Departmental Management Team and to the Elected Members which measures progress and highlights any variance from the targets set out in the Departmental Plan. Review of the previous year's performance and planning performance and setting targets for the following year always take place at the end of each financial year. The Plan is posted on the Council's web site.

14 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

14.1 Sickness Absence

Last year was an even more difficult year for the Section with performance once again affected by significant staff absences due to and illness, retirement and the loss of a recently qualified officer to another Local Authority. Despite this the planned inspection targets and year end out turns have been substantially maintained by extraordinary commitment from staff despite capacity and workload pressures.

14.2 e- Government

Work to improve the presentation and content of our web-site continued during 2007-2008 and whilst much of the web-site information has now been updated.

We intend to activate a 'Scores on the Doors' database at some point during the coming year subject to the final outcome of the Food Standards Agency study.

