

ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Community and Place Delivery
**SERVICE PLAN FOR
FOOD SAFETY and
HEALTH & SAFETY
LAWS ENFORCEMENT
2024/2025**

INTRODUCTION

Department

Community and Place Delivery

Service Area

Regulatory Services Section, Business Compliance Team

Lead Officers Responsible

Robin Ray – Assistant Director

Gheorghe Naforntita – Environmental Health Manager

Head of Department

Christine Traill. – Director of Community and Place Delivery

Lead Member responsible

Councillor Campbell – Chair/Lead Councillor

This is the Service Plan detailing food safety and health and safety law enforcement functions carried out by the Food, Health and Safety Team of Regulatory Services Section within Community and Place Delivery.

The Summary Plan will be published on the web and views sought from interested parties.

Agreed by: Robin Ray

Signed:



Assistant Director
Regulatory Services

Date: 11.06.2024

SECTION 1: SCOPE AND OVERVIEW

1.0.0 Profile of the Local Authority

1.1.0 The district has a population of approximately 148,200 (ONS 2021 population estimates) and covers an area of 161.2 km². It is within the Hertfordshire Green Belt; a few miles from the northern edge of London. The main settlements are the historic cathedral city of St Albans and the largely residential town of Harpenden. In addition, there are several large villages and hamlets in a predominately agricultural landscape.

1.1.2 The District has a reputation as being affluent, prosperous and highly qualified.

- Unemployment Rate 2.1% (May 2022)
- Minority Groups 18.9% (2011 Census)
- 53.0% have level 4 qualifications and above as their highest level of qualification (33.8% across England and Wales).

1.1.3 Due to close proximity to London and rail and transport connection, around 20% of the residents commute to London for work.

1.1.4 The local economy is predominantly offices, small enterprise, retailing and tourism based businesses hence the high percentage of restaurants, cafes, public houses warehousing and a number of retail parks.

1.1.5 There is one large food manufacturer located in the district together with three major food distributors serving the South-East.

1.1.6 The Council runs a thriving street market on Wednesdays and Saturdays and a farmers market on a monthly basis. In addition there are seasonal markets, e.g. Christmas and Continental markets. There are also regular Farmers Markets operating primarily in Harpenden.

2.2.0 Organisational Structure

2.2.1 The Food, Health and Safety Team sits within the Regulatory Services Section, and is part of the Community and Place Delivery Directorate.

2.2.2 The Director of Community and Place Delivery has overall responsibility for the service and the implementation of the food control service and health and safety enforcement service lies with the Environmental Health Manager, who reports to the Regulatory Services Manager.

2.2.3 The structure of the Food, Health and Safety Team is shown in fig.1.

2.2.4 Specialist support services are provided by external agencies detailed in Appendix 3.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

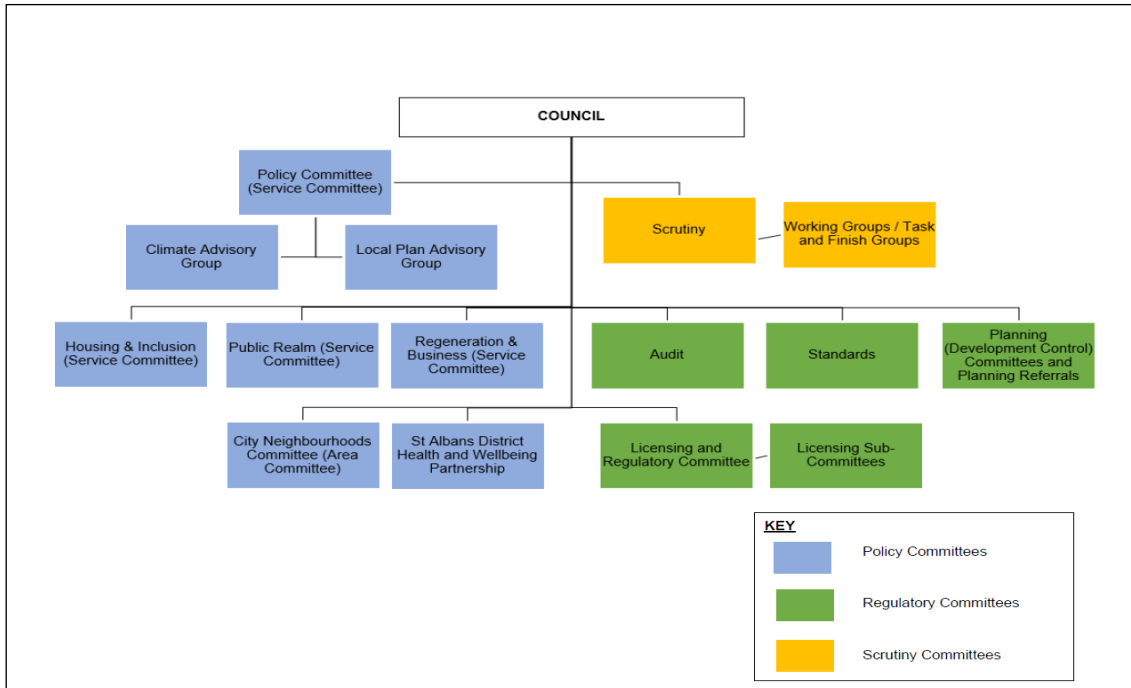
Figure 1:



2.3.0 Committee Structure

- 2.3.1 The Council operates a Committee System of Governance.
- 2.3.2 The Licencing and Regulatory Committee – review decisions made or actions taken and make recommendations to Council/Cabinet.
- 2.3.3 The Committee exercise the right to call in for recommendation decision.
- 2.3.4 The Committee Structure is set out in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Committee Structure



3.3.0 Councils Priorities and Objectives

3.3.0 Supporting the local economy

3.3.1 The team promotes self-regulation by all businesses as part of a balanced enforcement and educational approach. Officers offer advice, guidance and support on the development and implementation safety systems of control which, not only, assists businesses to reduce risks and losses but also to develop new business and employment opportunities.

3.4.0 Investing in our people

3.4.1 The Team ensures that employers fulfil their legal duties, as well as promoting best practice, in relation to the training and competency of employees and thereby improves the vocational skills of the local workforce.

3.5.0 Service Contribution to Corporate Objectives

Corporate Planning – Corporate Performance Plan 2021-2026

- The Corporate Plan sets out the Councils’ vision and commitments and also how the Council will serve its residents,

businesses, voluntary groups and other customers over the next 5 years. The four outcomes the Council want to see locally are:

- A thriving community
- A great place to live and work
- A vibrant economy; and
- A cost effective Council

Service Planning – Community Services, Business Plans

- how each service contributes to the Corporate Plan

Food Safety & Health & Safety Laws Enforcement Service Plan

- how the Council complies with its statutory duties and the teams' contribution to the corporate objectives

Individual Performance Appraisal Scheme

- how each member of staff contributes to the service plans and Council objectives

3.5.1 The service aims to support and implement the Council's vision and to contribute to a high quality life for all residents by delivering outstanding services, by working with the Community, County, Town and Parish Councils.

4.7.0 **Access to the Service**

4.7.1 The Service is located in the Civic Centre Offices in the centre of St Albans.

- Personal visits can be made during standard opening hours between:
 - ❖ Monday - Thursday 8.45am - 5.00pm
 - ❖ Friday 8.45am - 4.30pm
- By e-mail: [name]@stalbans.gov.uk (individual officer) or environmental@stalbans.gov.uk or www.stalbans.gov.uk

4.7.2 Because businesses are often open in the evening and at weekends the Food, Health and Safety Team has changed its operating module to cover both, evenings and weekends as deemed necessary.

4.8.0 **External Factors Impacting the Service**

4.8.3 Regulatory bodies such as the FSA and HSE are currently in the process of reviewing their enforcement interventions delivery model. Pending the consultations and approval the changes would be disseminated for implementation to enforcement authorities – LAs.

4.8.4 The Regulators Code Section 23 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 has a direct relevance to the work and officers are required to comply with the following;

Regulators should carry out their activities in a way that supports those they regulate to comply and grow.

The key points are that:

All enforcement decisions will be fair, independent and objective; they will not be influenced by age, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religious or political belief, disabilities or sexual orientation; due regard will be taken when dealing with juveniles or other vulnerable people; and, decisions will not be affected by improper or undue pressure from any source, including councillors.

- Regulators should base their regulatory activities on risk
- Regulators should share information about compliance and risk
- Regulators should ensure clear information, guidance and advice is available to help those they regulate meet their responsibility to comply
- Regulators should ensure that their approach to their regulatory activities is transparent.

4.8.5 The review and subsequent enforcement policy would recognise the importance of a mix of enforcement approaches, referred to as Interventions, and the external factors or drivers which will affect the final choice.

SECTION 5: FOOD SAFETY SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1.0 **Scope of the Food Safety Service**

5.1.1 The Food, Health and Safety Team (Figure .1) cover the following food safety objectives:

- food safety enforcement work: food premises inspections and revisits, food examinations
- alternative enforcement strategy for lower risk premises including questionnaires and visits as deemed necessary
- food safety advisory work (includes examination of plans, advice to prospective food business owners, new businesses)
- responding to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Alert Scheme
- food safety information and advice to the public
- maintenance of database and register of food premises
- Investigation of incidents of food poisoning and other food related health impacts including allergy
- the Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme implementation
- Post Brexit support to food businesses importing and exporting to and from EU

5.1.2 In addition the team is responsible for:

- health and safety enforcement (all business premises subject to Local Authority enforcement)
- corporate health and safety
- Implementation of public health strategy and responding to infectious disease outbreaks (including investigation and control)
- enforcement of smoke free legislation and provision of advice/consultation to businesses.
- investigation of food complaints
- investigation of hygiene complaints
- investigation of health & safety complaints and incidents

- Investigation/prevention of infectious disease including outbreak control
- routine food sampling
- examination of food
- examination of imported food
- food export health certification

5.2.0 Use of Contractors

5.2.1 The Council may from time to time utilise external contractors to cover maternity leave/vacancies due to long-term sick leave, or to carry out project work agreed in advance by the Assistant Director.

5.3.0 Demands on the Food Service

5.3.1 Food Premises

The spread of premises types within the district according to risk is set out in the table figure 3 below and interventions due in 2024-2025 is given in figure 4.

Figure 3 Profile of Food Businesses

	Total	A	B	C	D	E	U	O
A – Producers	13	0	0	0	2	8	2	1
C- Manufacturers	13	0	2	5	3	3	0	0
E- Importers	10	0	0	0	1	1	4	0
F- Distributors	28	0	0	0	2	18	6	3
G01- Supermarkets/Hypermarkets	27	0	0	4	13	15	4	0
G02- Smaller Retailers	150	1	5	15	60	81	18	8
G03- Retailers Others	66	0	0	1	3	28	17	28
H01- Restaurant/Café/Canteen	264	1	23	81	117	35	20	0

H02- Hotel/Guest House	17	0	2	2	4	3	1	1
H03 – Pub/Club	144	1	4	36	74	23	6	0
H04- Take-away	108	0	6	54	38	2	11	0
H05- Caring Establishment	265	0	27	53	33	20	31	49
H06- School/College	79	0	3	14	55	7	13	0
H07- Mobile Food Unit	94	0	1	14	25	9	20	1
Ho8- Restaurant/Caterer - Others	217	0	3	17	77	99	96	27
I – Material and Article Suppliers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,495	3	75	296	444	344	264	117

5.3.2 1 approved premises producing hospital meals

5.3.2 Catering premises make up the bulk of registered businesses

Figure 4 Food Business interventions due for 2024/25

Total	A	B	C	D	E	
Interventions due in 2024/2025	524	4	50	142	247	79

The Figure 4 does not include the projection for newly registered food businesses.

5.5.0 External Factors Impacting the Service

5.5.1 The high cost of living and property prices impacted by city’s close proximity to London has resulted in difficulties with the recruitment of staff for the service as a whole.

Also, there is a recognised shortage of qualified EHO’s national wide which hampers the recruitment of the new workforce.

5.5.3 (Post) Covid-19 Impact

The COVID 19 situation affected the completion on the previous years programmed inspection programme and still continues to have a significant impact on the delivery of programmed interventions.

5.5.4

5.5.5 The FSA has granted during pandemic a period for temporary deviation from the prescribed intervention frequencies set out in the Food Law Code of Practice, set up in the FSA guidelines food hygiene the road map to recovery.

However, the temporary deviation from the prescribed plan of inspection ended on 31st May 2023 and the Food Authorities have reverted to prescribed interventions frequency plan in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. This resulted in more premises to have come up for inspection during the current year.

Figure 5
Food hygiene minimum interventions frequency

Category	Score	Minimum Intervention Frequency
A	92 or higher	At least every six months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	52 to 71	At least every 18 months
D	31 to 51	at least every 24 months
E	0 to 30	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every three years

5.6.0 EU Exit impact

The post Brexit transition period with the UK leaving the EU had a significant impact on this service.

As a Third Country to the EU, the exported Products of Animal Origin (POAO) will require Export Health Certificate (EHC) to be issued to businesses by the respective Food Authority. The Service made provisions in place to assist the local businesses in running their businesses and will operate a fee paying service. All authorised officers (fully qualified EHO's) have been designed by DEFRA as certified officers for the purpose of issuing POAO certification.

- 5.6.1 All food imports & exports will need to go through importers & exporters registration to enable frictionless trade. The EHO’s have been involved with running advisory interventions to local businesses providing information on the process of importing and exporting to and from EU. The officers either have completed or booked a place for the Introduction to Imported Food and Official Controls Course. Also, the EHO’s have attended Imported Food refresher training to ensure they are competent to undertake the inlands checks and take the appropriate action if the situation arises.
- 5.7.1 The review and subsequent enforcement policy recognises the importance of a mix of enforcement approaches, referred to as Interventions, and the external factors or drivers which will affect the final choice. These are summarised in Figures 5a & b.

Figure 5a

The Scope of Interventions

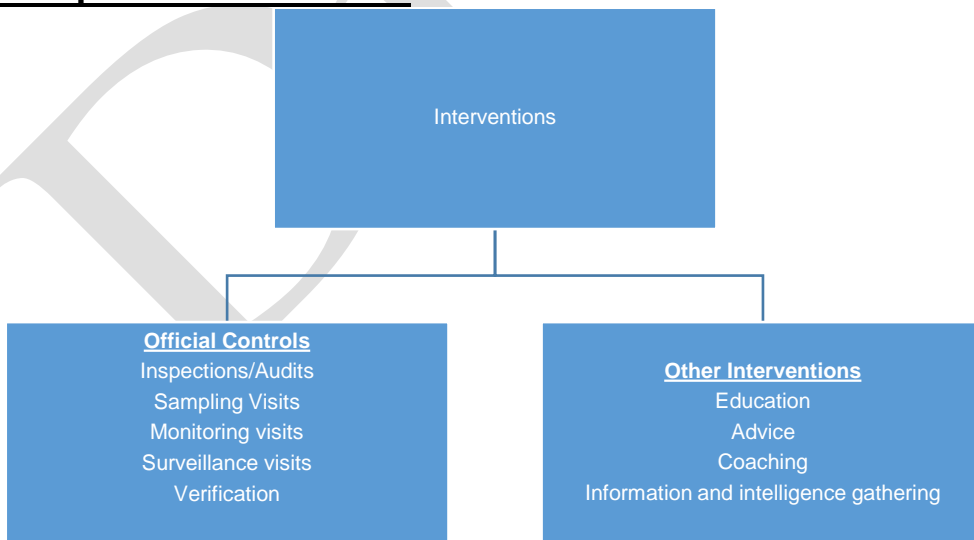


Figure 5b

External Factors impacting upon the Intervention mix

DEMAND DRIVEN	INSPECTION DRIVEN
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Requests for Service Food Complaints Food Registrations Primary Authority Principle Investigation of Food Poisoning Notifications and Outbreak Control Food Alerts Hospitality sector compliance Public Health interventions with respect to Covid 19 and other infectious diseases.	Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Sampling Programme
EDUCATION DRIVEN	INTELLIGENCE DRIVEN
Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Home Authority principle Food Hygiene Training Public Awareness Campaigns Partnerships	History of compliance Sampling Scientific and Technical Development Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Home Authority Principle Food Poisoning Notifications Food Complaints Food Alerts Liaison and Partnership Working

SECTION 6: FOOD CONTROL SERVICE DELIVERY

6.0.0 Food Inspections

6.1.0 It is St Albans policy to undertake programmed food inspections in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Practice Guidance Intervention Strategy taking into account the FSA’s recovery plan.

6.1.1 Food Authorities are responsible for delivering official controls and related activities in most food establishments in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to ensure that businesses are complying with the requirements of food law and to enforce those requirements where necessary. These controls and activities include inspections, audits, surveillance, sampling and other types of interventions. They relate to food hygiene (microbiological quality and contamination of food by micro-organisms or foreign matter).

- 6.1.2 The Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 requires official controls to be carried out regularly and on a risk basis with appropriate frequency. The nature and frequency of some official controls that LAs are responsible for is prescribed in specific legislation and others are recommended within FSA guidance.
- 6.1.3 The Food Authorities are expected to undertake all official controls and related activities prescribed in specific legislation and those recommended within specific FSA guidance as well as meeting the requirements of the Codes of Practice.
- 6.1.5 Premises are inspected at a suitable time of day, which will include out of hours visits in appropriate circumstances – Inspections are generally unannounced. Where appointments are made in advance then the reasons for this are recorded.
- 6.1.6 Inspections are programmed monthly using a computer database, to ensure that they are undertaken within 28 days of the due date.
- 6.1.7 Allocations of premises to individual officers, according to competence levels, are made monthly in advance and arrangements exist for monitoring progress and for rescheduling any premises missed due to unforeseen circumstances. We aim to inspect food businesses within 28 days of their due inspection date.
- 6.1.8 The Figure 6 shows the number of establishments in each risk category for food hygiene on 31 March 2024.

Figure 6a shows the number of food businesses in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme -establishments in each risk rated category on 31 March 2024.
- 6.1.9 The figure 7 shows the number of interventions and related activities carried out in 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024.
- 6.1.10 Figure 8 shows the number of food businesses which are due to receive a programmed intervention for the year 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025.

Figure 6

Number of establishments in each risk category for food hygiene on 31 March 2024 (There are 1.513 registered food premises)

A-rated total	5
B-rated total	62
C-rated total	275
D-rated total	529

E-rated total	288
Not yet rated total	299
Outside the programme total	37

Figure 6a

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme establishments in each risk rated category on 31 March 2024:

Rating	Establishments
5	804
4	149
3	67
2	17
1	11
0	0

There are 1,166 Food Premises within scope for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Figure 7 Interventions/ Activities 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024:

Interventions/Activities	No
Inspections /Audits	528
Verification /Surveillance	62
New premises registered	155
Sampling	153
Advice/Education	14
Voluntary Closures	7
Written Warnings	418
Improvement Notices	10

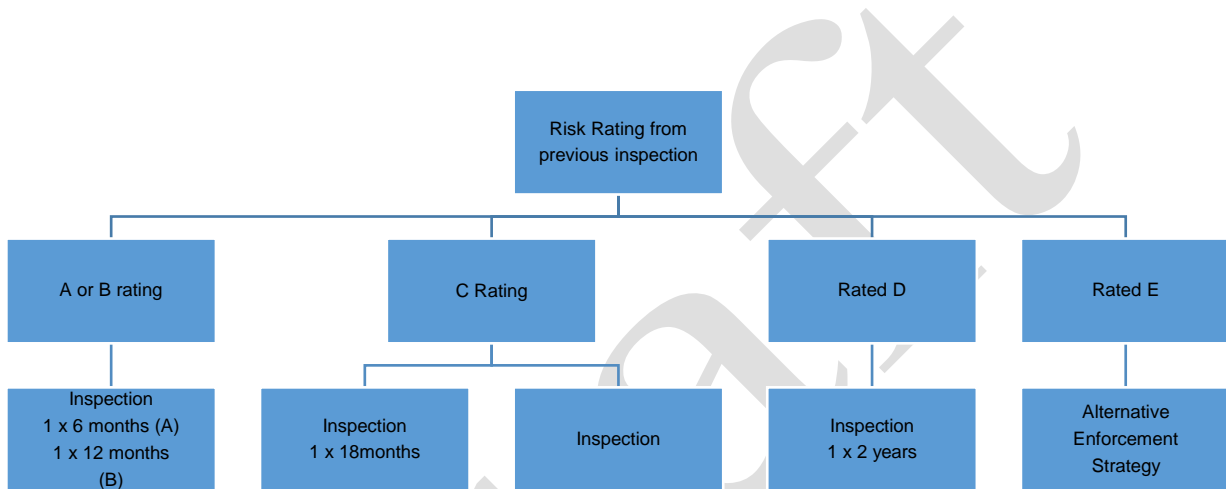
Figure 8

Estimated food inspection visits for 2024/2025

Risk Rating	Number
A	4
B	50
C	143
D	246
E	79
New premises estimate	150

TOTAL	689

Figure 9
Intervention Strategy



6.1.11 Using the information from Figure 8, and the Intervention Strategy outlined in Figure 9; it is envisaged that Food Businesses rated A and B plus C-rated and D-rated non-compliant premises will receive an inspection in 2023/24. D and C-rated broadly compliant premises will receive an inspection if they fall outside of the alternative strategy programme, otherwise they can be subjected to the alternative enforcement strategy. E-rated premises would be subjected to the Alternative Enforcement Strategy in accordance with the enforcement expectations set in the Food Law Code of Practice.

Using statistics from previous years it is estimated that the above programme will result in approx. 100 revisits, depending upon the risk categories. Also, It is estimated that there could be approximately 150 newly registered premises that would need to be inspected during the qualified period.

6.1.12 All officers undertaking inspections, investigating complaints, giving advice and taking samples meet the qualifications and experience detailed in the Practice Guidance.

- 6.1.13 There is a procedure in place for the verification of officer's qualifications and achievement of continuing professional development.
- 6.1.14 Secondary inspections (for example revisits) are carried out in accordance with Practice Guidance.
- 6.1.15 The staffing resource required to carry out food safety enforcement work with the main objective to achieve 100% completion rate of inspections (risk category A – D) is 4.56 FTE.
- 6.1.16 An alternative enforcement strategy for low risk food premises (E-rated), involves assessment by the Regulatory Support Officer and assessment by a suitably qualified Environmental Health Officer.

6.2.0 Food Complaints/Requests for Service

6.2.1 Complaints which are investigated by the service, receive a first response within 48 hours, and normally are as a result of the following:

- food stuff (contaminated)
- complaints about food businesses (hygiene)
- complaints about food handling (food handlers)

The team investigated 60 food complaints in the year 2023-2024

- 6.2.2 Food stuff complaints are investigated in accordance with *"The Food Complaints procedure"*.
- 6.2.3 Complaints relating to food businesses or food handling are investigated in accordance with *The Procedure for Dealing with Complaints/Enquires*.
- 6.2.4 An estimated 75 food related complaints and enquiries will be received in the year 2023/2024 requiring a staffing resource of FTE 0.15 officers.

Figure 10

Complaints for previous years

20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
109	99	74	75

6.3.0 Primary Authority Principle/Advice to Businesses

6.3.1 St Albans supports the Primary Authority Principle “Commitment to Primary Authority Procedure”. Details of the scheme are set out in Appendix 6.

6.3.2 The Business Compliance Team actively works with businesses to help them comply with the law and encourage improvements in the following ways:

- the provision of advice leaflets
- letters to businesses where major changes in procedures/legislation is expected
- lists of available leaflets and order forms are available online
- responding to enquiries
- dialogue with businesses through customer satisfaction surveys.
- advice issued during inspections and other visits.
- advice given during planning consultation processes.
- advice available on the Council website.
- newsletters to businesses.
- participation in the Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme.
- Also, the team has newly launched the business mentoring scheme aimed at improving local food business food safety compliance through providing tailored advice and coaching.

6.4.0 Food Related Enquires.

6.4.1 It is estimated that 80 will be received which together with the above initiatives will require FTE 0.15 officers.

Figure 11

Food related Enquires

20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
40	51	162	107

6.4.2 Advice to businesses

In addition to carrying out enforcement, the service is committed to working with businesses to help them be successful, comply with the law and to encourage the use of good practice.

Giving advice during the course of inspections and other visits directing businesses to other sources of information such as the Food Standards Agency website

Responding to business requests for advice and assistance

The service has introduced the Food Business Mentoring Scheme. The scheme is offered as a cost recovery paid service and provides tailored food safety advice to businesses who wish to improve their compliance with food safety requirements and/or need more help in order to improve their FHRS.

Also, St Albans Council has played a key role in developing the Hertfordshire Safe Food Pack (Food Safety Management System for Businesses).

The service provides a practical approach to food safety management such as:

- Businesses opting to use the system will receive training and mentoring.
- This will enable a food business to identify the key hazards within their operation and to establish the critical controls needed to ensure food is safe.
- It will enable businesses to comply with requirements imposed by legislation, approved codes of practice and relevant industry guidance.
- It will help businesses include the level of detail required taking into account the size of the business, the nature of the food operation and the key food safety risks.
- It is a legal requirement to demonstrate that critical controls relevant to the business are identified and effectively controlled (The principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point-HACCP). This pack will include the key elements of 'validation' and 'verification' described in Article 5 EC 852/2004.

6.5.0 Food Inspection and Sampling

6.5.1 The food control service will sample from and submit for microbiological analysis:

- all manufacturers within the district - food and water supplies
- product specific premises food and water

- premises targeted as local initiatives
- premises targeted for national UKHSA surveys
- premises in conjunction with food incidents
- Imported foods

6.5.2 Sampling is carried out in accordance “St Albans City and District Food Sampling Policy” in conjunction with the sampling programme. Figure 12 shows the number of food samples taken in the previous 4 years.

Figure 12

Food Samples

20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
18	131	74	153

6.5.3 The sampling programme for the service involves the participation in when these arise:

- FSA’s Imported Food Office
- UK Health Security Agency
- Herts and Beds Food Survey

6.5.4 The service aims to take at least the minimum number of samples requested by the testing laboratory.

6.5.5 This service requires 0.5 FTE resources.

6.6.0 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks of Infectious Disease

6.6.1 The food control service investigates all food related infectious disease. The investigations are carried out in accordance *with “The Procedure: The Investigation of Infectious Diseases”*. A 24-hour response time applies to all notification of illness. Consultation with the Consultant in Communicable Disease occurs in all cases of E-coli 0157 and Typhoid Para typhi and where multiple cases occur. The investigation of outbreaks is in accordance with the outbreak control plan as agreed by the Hertfordshire Control of Infection Committee.

Figure 13

Number of Infectious Diseases notifications

20/21	21/22	22/3	23/24
39	8	5	30

6.6.2

This requires a staffing resource of FTE 0.25. However in the event of an outbreak this staffing requirement is significantly higher.

6.7.0	Food Safety Incidents
6.7.1	The food control service, will on receipt of any alerts respond as necessary in accordance with Code of Practice and " <i>The Food Alert Procedure</i> ".
6.7.2	The number of Alerts issued is variable and difficult to predict. The extent of action required may be no action to numerous visits to food premises. In addition, the authority investigates Food Allergy Alerts. For this reason assuming 50 Food Alerts and Allergy Alerts, FTE of 0.25 officer is estimated which will result in letters/phone calls to business within the district, and press releases to local radio stations and newspapers.
6.8.0	Liaison with Other Organisations
6.8.1	The Council is committed to ensuring that enforcement action is transparent, and consistent with those of neighbouring authorities.
6.8.2	Liaison and dialogue on enforcement issues takes place via the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Herts and Beds Food Group ▪ Hertfordshire Health Protection Team ▪ Health Security Agency ▪ Health & Safety Executive Health and Local Authority Water Quality Liaison Meeting ▪ Care Quality Commission ▪ Planning, Building Control and Finance ▪ St Albans Clinical Commissioning Group ▪ Food Standards Agency ▪ LGA ▪ Office for Product Safety and Standards ▪ Hertfordshire County Council Trading Standards ▪ St Albans Market Management Team
6.8.3	The participation in these groups has resulted in valuable partnerships which contribute to the corporate vision, aims and commitments, and local area agreements.
6.8.4	It is estimated that during the year 2024/25 this activity will require FTE of 0.10 officers.
6.9.0	Food Safety Promotion

6.9.1	Promotional work during 2022/24 will be undertaken by officers within the Food, Health and Safety Team.
Projects Planned for 2024/25	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update and expand the Food Safety content of the Council’s website ▪ Developing and providing food business mentoring paid services ▪ Rolling out of the Hertfordshire Safe Food Pack for businesses ▪ Offer advice and assistance to food exporters to third countries/EU ▪ Provide advice and raise awareness of Allergen information ▪ Providing FHRs rating paid services to food businesses which want to improve their scoring pending improvements being made post primary inspection. ▪ Promoting FHRs scheme to consumers and businesses. ▪ Participate in UK HSA food sampling surveys.
	It is estimated that promotional activities during the year 2024/25 will require FTE 0.45 officers.

SECTION 7: Staff Development Plan (Food; Health and Safety Laws enforcement)

7.1.0 The service ensures officers are appropriately qualified and receive regular training and refresher training, in order that they may carry out their statutory duties. During 2024/25 all officers will each have access to the equivalent of 20 hours training, 10 hours of which is specific to food.
(N.B. The 6 officers who have achieved “Chartered Practitioner” status require a total of 30 hours training each year in order to maintain the chartership.)

- 7.1.1 The training programme includes:
- evidence of formal qualifications (i.e. originals shown and verified with awarding body)
 - the completion of a competency matrix detailing specific courses and dates

- competency checking (auditing skills and inspection techniques)
- identification of training needs during annual Staff Development and Review Scheme
- Food Standards Agency Training courses, ABC on-line training and other courses

7.1.2 A staff performance appraisal scheme was introduced in 2012.

- Review achievements and agree tasks and objectives 6-12 months
- Identify training and development needs and populate an individual action plan.

7.1.3 External courses planned for the year:

- Consistency training – Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme
- Approved establishments enforcement training
- Sampling Courses
- Interviewing Skills (PACE)
- Imported Food Training
- FSA Enforcement Sanctions
- FSA HACCP
- HSE Training courses, ABC on-line training and other courses

7.1.4 An estimated 65 hours training has been allocated to the team just for food safety. Equating a staffing resource of 0.40 FTE officers.

SECTION 8: QUALITY ASSESSMENT

8.0.0 Quality Assessment

8.1.0 Quality is assessed throughout the year in respect of each officer, by means of the following techniques:

- training and competence, officers are sufficiently trained, competent and experts in their field
- operating procedures internal procedures exist to cover food safety work, they are followed by all officers to ensure a consistent approach
- peer review professional scrutiny of inspection documents and letters
- review by Lead Food Officer of post inspection paperwork including computer input and risk assessment:

NB This applies equally to any consultants who may be contracted to assist with the inspection programme in the event of maternity/long term sick leave.

8.1.1 Consultants work once completed is signed off by the Environmental Health Manager (the Lead Food Officer), who supervises the activity later to ensure they comply with policies and internal operating procedures

- Team meetings held every two weeks.
- Performance Review. The annual and quarterly reviews of performance gives management and individual officers the opportunity to discuss the performance, identifying areas for improvement and put in place mechanisms to address development needs.
- Performance indicators. Computer audit reports are generated at regular intervals to indicate the extent to which responses comply with time requirements.
- Progress Monitoring – A system has been adopted that allows the Environmental Health Manager to review the progress of the inspection programme on a monthly basis.
- Quarterly performance and target review are carried out by Regulatory Services management team.

- Feedback on customer complaints or customer praise is discussed at team meetings and with individual officers.

8.1.2 The FSA conduct audit programmes of Local Authorities food law enforcement service approximately every five years. St Albans food service was subject to a detailed Audit in March 2013 which examined the Council's arrangements for carrying out its inspection programme, management of the food premises database, enforcement decisions, and internal monitoring with regard to food hygiene law enforcement. The scope of the audit also included an assessment of the Authorities overall organisation and management. The FSA audit identified a number of areas of good practice these included:

- The assessment of officers competency and qualifications
- The level of detail in officers inspection notes(particularly high risk premises)
- The hygiene initiative for poor performing businesses

8.2.0 **External Quality Assessment**

8.2.2 Third party assessments may be provided by both The Food Standards Agency and the Council's participation in an inter-authority audit co-ordinated through the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Health and Safety Group. An inter-authority audit of the Food Safety service was carried out in 2015.

SECTION 9: HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

9.0.1 Aims

The aim of the health and safety service is to protect the health and safety of those working within the district in workplaces where we are the enforcing authority. We also aim to protect members of the public and others who may be harmed by the work practices of those businesses.

Enforcement is shared with the Health and Safety Executive, with the Council being responsible for workplaces such as offices, shops, hotels, restaurants, nurseries, pubs, wholesale distribution and warehousing.

The range of interventions/activities include:

- Health & Safety Inspections
- Investigation of accidents
- Investigation of workplace complaints
- Advice to businesses
- Workplace project work

9.2.0 Objectives

9.2.1 To comply with all new legislative requirements imposed on the Authority regarding the enforcement of Health & Safety at Work. This includes any relevant guidance, codes of practice, etc., published by the HSE.

To ensure authorised officers within the Food Health and Safety Team complete a competency framework for Health and Safety.

To actively participate in selected national/regional projects along with other Hertfordshire LAs and HSE.

To respond to health and Safety Service request within 10 days.

To carry out a review of all reported accidents and decide on a course of investigation guided by HSE Criteria set out on incident selection.

- To provide advice, information and training to consumers, employees and operators of businesses.
- To promote safety and participate in local and national campaigns.

- To provide efficient, effective and quality services.
- To provide services which are accessible, open and equitable to all.
- To respond promptly and courteously, in accordance with good customer care practice, to all recipients of our services.

9.5.2 The specific objectives and targets for 2023/24 for the Team in Health & Safety enforcement context are:

- to carry out Health & Safety Interventions in line with HSE guidelines by prioritising inspections of higher risk premises and project work.
- to provide high quality, services and strive for excellence through continuous improvement.
- engage with and ensure our services are easily accessible to all, paying particular attention to minority groups, people with disabilities and other people with specific needs.
- work in partnership with other voluntary, statutory, commercial and community organisations to meet the needs of the whole community.
- help people to feel safe and be safe whilst living in, working in the district.
- improve services, facilities and opportunities which provide a healthy environment and healthier lifestyles for all local residents.
- constantly review methods of operation to ensure that best practice and modern processes are adopted and maintained.

9.7.0 Partnership and Joint Working

9.7.1 The Business Compliance Team has active links with many other external organisations and SADC services and is actively seeking to find new ways of joint working. Established links include;

- Herts Business Guidance Group
- Herts & Beds Health & Safety Group
- Health and Safety Executive
- Environment Protection Team (also in Regulatory Services)
- Building Control
- Planning
- Licensing/Street Trading (also within Regulatory Services)
- Chief Executive and Policy
- Legal Section
- Citizens Advice Bureau

- Business Support

The service has links with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and all the Hertfordshire Health and Safety Teams.

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9.7.2 HSE Strategy - National Local Authorities Enforcement Code

This National Code was developed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure that Local Authority (LA) health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to enforcement. This Code provides statutory guidance and a framework to guide local regulators in their approach in intervening with business safety working practices.

It identifies how the Council should use a range of regulatory interventions (rather than simply inspection) in order to influence behaviours and the management of risk. Proactive inspections are to be maintained only in the highest risk premises or where intelligence suggests that risks are not being effectively managed.

The HSE Local Authority Practitioners and Managers Guidance Circular (LAC 67/2) sets out how Councils will comply with the code. To this end councils should prioritise interventions and use different types of intervention to increase reach, influence behaviours and improve management of risks.

Whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business that creates the risk, Councils have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting our communities and contributing to the wider public health agenda.

The main elements of the service are: -

9.7.3 Health and Safety Service Delivery

9.7.4 Programmed Health and Safety Inspections - Regular inspection of all our commercial premises, rated in the "A" category to check on health and safety standards to promote safe practices and secure compliance with the law, whilst having regard to the national/regional priority programmes. Commercial premises rated "B1", "B2" or "C" categories, will not form part of the planned inspection programme. However, these category premises will be subject to other "Intervention strategies" such as planned, local or national campaigns/initiatives on topic-based issues (e.g. gas/electrical safety initiative). The inspections are carried out in accordance with the adopted Health and Safety Inspection Procedure. Enforcement is focused on hazards or sectors where the greatest action will be necessary, to contribute to the HSE's overall strategy.

Revisits are carried out to premises to check if specific action has been taken to remedy faults found at a previous inspection/visit.

Special/Other Health and Safety Interventions – To undertake visits as necessary having regard to the priority programmes within HSE's Strategy, focusing our enforcement on particular hazards or sectors where the greatest action will be necessary. This may come to light having analysed trends in official accident notifications.

Taking into account the characteristics of the LA enforced sector, the HSE has decided that it will be necessary for Councils to prioritise certain hazards. Based on this list the following hazards are a priority for us:

Carry out Inspections of all "A" Risk premises and prioritise the following in other settings:

- Premises with Cooling Towers and evaporative Condensers;
(premises will be subject to a full inspection on an annual basis)
- Open Farms/Animal Visitor Attractions;
(Guidance on infection control issued to businesses followed up either by an inspection or a self-assessment questionnaire)
- Leisure centres;
(Inspections to look at layout of premises and leisure equipment to ensure that any hazards are controlled. In particular looking at mezzanine safety, changes of floor levels and positioning of equipment to prevent slips, trips and falls and impact hazards)
- High Volume Warehousing and Distribution/Industrial retail/wholesale premises; (Inspections/self-assessment questionnaires prioritising working at height, lifting equipment & manual handling)
- Large scale public gatherings cultural events, sports, festivals & live music; (Issuing of guidance followed by either Inspections or self-questionnaires covering general site safety, temporary demountable structures, inflatables, electrical safety, LPG)
- Commercial catering premises (electrical safety/gas safety/LPG)

Priority areas in other premises as a result of complaints, accidents or incidents:

- Leisure Centre/gym hazards;
- Working at Height;
- Inflatable structures;
- Asbestos/respirable silica
- Chemical hazards
- Catering hazards

9.7.5 Health and Safety Complaints - Investigation of complaints relating to health and safety received from employers, employees, and the public.

The investigation of some complaints can be a lengthy process, it is expected that officers will ensure a first response within 6-days of the complaint being received. It is also recognised that certain issues will require a quick response and a duty officer rota is in place during office hours to ensure this

The depth and scope of investigation required will depend on the nature of the complaint and whether the complaint arose within premises for which the Council has health and safety enforcement responsibility.

9.7.6 Accident Investigation - Investigation of accident notifications received via the RIDDOR notification online system. This system is managed by the HSE. The Environmental Health Manager or the officer on duty checks the database 3 times a week. Accidents are investigated in accordance with the adopted Accident Investigation Procedure.

The depth and scope of investigation required will depend on factors such as the nature and seriousness of the accident and whether the accident arose within premises for which the Council has health and safety enforcement responsibility

The table below shows the numbers of notifiable accidents reported to this Council over the last 3 years:

Year	No. of notifiable accidents
2021-2022	68
2022-2023	74
2023-2024	49

9.7.7 Asbestos Notifications

Asbestos notifications are received via a portal on the Health and Safety Executive's website. Contractors and others are required by law to notify the relevant enforcing authority of their intention to carry out both licensed and unlicensed work on asbestos. The Environmental Health Manager or the officer on duty checks the database 2 times a week.

9.7.8 Health and Safety Advice and Promotion Initiatives –

We recognise that most businesses seek to comply with the law and for 2023/24 we are planning to resume providing such advice and assistance as may be necessary. This includes:

- developing and providing business free information sheets, leaflets, practical information, and other guides as necessary to simplify legislation and aid compliance with specific health and safety legislation
- providing on the spot free advice during routine visits and inspections.
- provision of free telephone advice
- the provision of information through the Council's social media pages
- signposting to the Health and Safety Executives website
- we would endeavour to participate in local and national initiatives.

9.7.9 Safety advice group (SAG) participation

The team is core member of the SAG group and are expected to be represented at every SAG meeting. As such, we provide specialist Health and Safety advice (and Food Safety) to Event Organisers and private/public landowners and venue owners who intend to deliver public events within St Albans City & District. It helps to uphold standards of public safety and ensure safe events take place within the District.

9.7.10 Non-Food Premises Database – although not any longer a requirement to have an active health and safety enforcement monitoring system in place, it was decided that in 2023/24 the health and safety database is to be reactivated. Information of non-food premises subject to teams enforcement under the Health & Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998 will be updated, and steps taken to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date.

9.8.1 Statement of Commitment

Councils are responsible for enforcement of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) to the extent as set out in the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998.

Section 18 (4) of the HSW Act requires us to perform our duties in accordance with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The guidance is given effect by the National Local Authorities Enforcement Code The “Section 18 Guidance” is contained is therefore mandatory.

Councils are required to;

Make adequate arrangements for the enforcement within their area of the relevant statutory provisions; and

To perform the duty imposed on them by (a) above and any other functions confirmed on them by any of the relevant statutory provisions in accordance with such guidance as the (Health and Safety) commission may give them,(now superseded by the HSE.)

The HSE considers the following elements are essential for a LA to adequately discharge its duty as an Enforcing Authority:-

- A clear published statement of enforcement policy and practice;
- A system for prioritised planned inspection activity according the hazard and risk, and consistent with any advice given by the HSE/HELA and a Service Plan detailing the LA’s priorities and its aims and objectives for the enforcement of health and safety;

- i) The capacity to investigate workplace accidents and to respond to complaints by employees and others against allegations of health and safety failures;
- ii) Arrangements for benchmarking performance with peer LAs;
- iii) Provision of a trained and competent inspectorate; and
- iv) Arrangements for liaison and co-operation in respect of the Primary Authority Partnership Schemes.

The Council need to ensure that there are sufficient resources for health and safety enforcement to comply with our duties under section 18 (4). HSE will take a view on the performance of LA enforcement and promotional activities, in accordance with its strategy using information supplied by authorities as requested. This information is normally provided through an annual return to HSE (LAE1).

If a Council fails to meet its legal obligation under Section 18 of the HSW Act, the Secretary of State may, after considering a report submitted by the HSE, cause a local enquiry to be held.

SECTION 10: RESOURCES

- 10.1.0 The service budget is contained within Food Safety and Health and Safety budget costs centres, for this reason the figures for the current and previous year are for both functions. The allocation of costs between Food Safety and Health& Safety functions is divided at the ratio- 80% to 20%.

Figure 14

	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2020/21	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£	£	£	£
Salaries	324,240	346,400	395,030	416,970
Car Allowances	6,280	10,950	9,280	9,290
Central Accommodation	6,900	9,560	12,520	16,470
Environmental	38,550	53,330	35,390	52,980
Management & Admin				
Equipment	400	420	460	480

10.2.0 Staffing Allocation

- 10.2.1 All food enforcement activities are carried out by suitably qualified Environmental Health Officers within the Business Compliance Team, administrative support is shared with Environmental Compliance Team.
- 10.2.2 The staffing profile for all officers carrying out food law enforcement work

<u>Authorised Officers</u>	
Environmental Health Practitioners (Chartered)	3.04
Environmental Health Practitioners	1.99
FTE	5.03

10.2.3 Staffing resources detailed in Appendix 4 shows that a total of 4.00 FTE is required for food safety enforcement related activities; 1.15 FTE is required for Health and Safety enforcement work and 0.38 FTE for other duties detailed in the service plan. The existing establishment is 5.03 FTE. The above figures do not include the administration/ regulatory support.

10.3.0 **Staff Development Plan (covered in section 7 jointly for Food Safety and Health and Safety Laws enforcement areas)**

SECTION 11: REVIEW

11.0.0 **Review against the Service Plan**

11.1.0 The performance indicators detailed in appendix 1 are provided to the Lead Councillor annually in arrears.

11.1.1 The Health and safety elements of this plan will be reviewed by the Environmental Health Manager in line with the Corporate Planning timetable.

11.2.0 **Identification of any variation from the Service Plan**

11.2.1 The performance indicators are reviewed on a quarterly basis. Any significant variations are reported together with explanations and remedial action to the Environmental Health Manager and Director of Community and Place Delivery.

11.3.0 **Areas of Improvement**

11.3.1 Any service issues identified during the quarterly reviews or by performance monitoring are recorded and an appropriate action plan is agreed at Departmental Management Team meetings.