

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Monday 12th December, 2005

at 1.00 p.m.

in Committee Room B

MEMBERS: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Cambridge, Cook, Cranney, Fenwick, Flintoff, Hall, Lauderdale, J Marshall, Richardson, Rogan and Tumilty.

Resident Representatives: Steve Gibbon, Alan Lloyd and Linda Shields

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th December 2005 are to be presented to the meeting on the 17th January 2006.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Scrutiny Inquiry into 20mph Zones Outside of Schools within Hartlepool:-

- 4.1 Evidence from Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens:-
- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant*); and
 - (b) Verbal Evidence from the Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens.

ADDITIONAL MEETING – PLEASE NOTE

4.2 Evidence from Members of the Public:-

- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant*); and
- (b) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Public
(subject to response from Press Release and Neighbourhood Consultative Forums)

4.3 Evidence from Headteacher:-

- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant*); and
- (b) Verbal evidence from the Headteacher of Clavering Primary School

4.4 Feedback from the Site Visit held on 7th December 2005:-

- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager / Research Assistant*); and
- (b) Verbal feedback/findings from Members of the Forum in attendance at the Site Visit

5. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

5.1 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2005/06 (*Head of Public Protection and Housing*)

5.2 Sustainability – Environmental Maintenance (*Head of Neighbourhood Management*)

6. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM

No Items

7. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

No Items

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ADDITIONAL MEETING – PLEASE NOTE

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Scrutiny Training and Development Programme 2005/06: Chairing Skills Training Event - 15 December 2005, 9.15 am to 12.30 pm, Civic Centre -** Maximum of 15 places available, allocated on a 'first come first served basis'. To secure your place please contact Lisa Woodward on 01429 (28) 4092 as soon as possible.
- ii) **Site Visit – 16 January 2006, departing from the Civic Centre at 9.00 am** to Darlington Borough Council to share good practice in relation to this Forum's ongoing scrutiny investigation into the town's local bus service provision.
- iii) **Date of Next Meeting – 17th January 2006, commencing at 1.00 pm in Committee Room B.**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12 December 2005



Report of: Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones Outside of Schools - Evidence from Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform Members of the Forum that the Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens have been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing scrutiny inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside of schools within Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 11 November 2005, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, arrangements have been finalised for the Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens to be in attendance at this meeting to submit evidence of a local perspective to the Forum.
- 2.3 During this evidence gathering session with the **Road Safety Team Leader**, it is suggested that responses should be sought to the following key questions:-
 - a) What are your responsibilities in relation to road safety?
 - b) In your role as Road Safety Team Leader how are you working towards the key aims and objectives of the Hartlepool Road Safety Strategy?
 - c) What campaigns/initiatives are being pursued as an alternative to, or in addition to, 20 mph Speed Limit Zones and how successful have they been?
 - d) What traffic calming/road safety measures are in place outside schools in Hartlepool and how effective are they?
 - e) How are these traffic calming/road safety measures enforced? and

- f) What other areas in Hartlepool would benefit from the enforcement of 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones?

2.4 During this evidence gathering session with **School Crossing Wardens** it is suggested that responses are sought to the following key questions:-

- a) What are your responsibilities as School Crossing Wardens?
- b) What problems/issues have you encountered as School Crossing Wardens in relation to road safety?
- c) In your experience what traffic calming/road safety measures outside schools are most effective?
- d) Which Schools do you believe would benefit from 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones?

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Road Safety Team Leader and School Crossing Wardens in relation to the questions outlined in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of this report.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
Rebecca Redman – Temp Research Assistant (Scrutiny)
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- i) Local Transport Plan 2001-2006, Hartlepool Borough Council
- ii) Joint Report of the Scrutiny Manager and Research Assistant entitled 'Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 mph Speed Limit Zones Outside of Schools – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum of 11 November 2005

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12th December 2005



Report of: Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones Outside of Schools - Evidence from Members of the Public (subject to response from Press Release/ Neighbourhood Consultative Forums)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform Members of the Forum that members of the public have been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing inquiry into 20 mph Speed Limit Zones outside of schools within Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 11 November 2005, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny inquiry.
- 2.2 Consequently evidence has been sought from members of the public through correspondence with the North, South and Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and a press release has been issued to the local press, for members of the public to be in attendance at this meeting to submit evidence of a local perspective to the Forum (subject to availability).
- 2.2 During this evidence gathering session with members of the public it is suggested that responses should be sought to the following key questions:-
 - a) Which Area/Ward within Hartlepool do you wish to offer evidence on behalf of?
 - b) What Schools are located in this area?
 - c) What traffic calming measures are currently in operation in this area and how successful have they been in decreasing casualties?
 - d) What problems do these measures cause in this area?

- e) Do you feel schools in your area would benefit from 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones?
- f) Do you have any other views/information which you feel may be useful to Members in forming their recommendations to Cabinet?

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of those members of the public in attendance at this meeting in relation to the questions outlined in Section 2.2 of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- i) Joint Report of the Scrutiny Manager and Research Assistant entitled 'Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 mph Speed Limit Zones outside of Schools – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum of 11 November 2005

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12th December 2005



Report of: Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones Outside of Schools - Evidence from the Headteacher of Clavering Primary School, Hartlepool

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform Members of the Forum that the Head teacher of Clavering Primary School has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing scrutiny inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside of schools within Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 11 November 2005, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation. Consequently, arrangements have been finalised for the Head teacher of Clavering Primary School to be in attendance at this meeting to submit evidence of a local perspective to the Forum.

2.2 During this evidence gathering session with the Head teacher of Clavering Primary School, it is suggested that responses should be sought to the following key questions:-

- a) What particular child road safety issues does your school face?
- b) What traffic calming measures are in place outside your school?
- c) How effective have such measures been?
- d) What are your views on implementing 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside Schools in Hartlepool?
- e) Do you feel your school would benefit from a 20 MPH Speed Limit Zone?
- f) Do you have any other issues/information you wish to discuss to aid Members in forming their recommendations to Cabinet?

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Headteacher from Clavering Primary School in relation to the questions outlined in Section 2.2 of this report.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- i) Joint Report of the Scrutiny Manager and Research Assistant entitled 'Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside of Schools – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum of 11 November 2005

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12th December 2005



Report of: Scrutiny Manager/Research Assistant

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside Schools - Feedback from Site Visit held on 7 December 2005 to Schools within Hartlepool

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To facilitate a discussion amongst Members of this Forum in relation to the Site Visit held on 7 December 2005 to the surrounding areas around schools within Hartlepool in connection with their inquiry into 20 mph Speed Limit Zones outside schools in Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 11 November 2005, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, a Site Visit to a handful of schools (together with their surrounding areas) within Hartlepool was held on 7 December 2005 to enable Members to visually understand the issue under 'scrutiny' together with the appropriateness/inappropriateness of implementing 20 mph Speed Limit Zones outside of schools within Hartlepool.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of this Forum discuss their findings from the Site Visit held on 7 December 2005.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- i) Joint Report of the Scrutiny Manager and Research Assistant entitled 'Scrutiny Inquiry into 20 MPH Speed Limit Zones outside of Schools – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum 11 November 2005

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12th December 2005



Report of: Head of Public Protection & Housing

Subject: FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN
2005-06

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2005/06, which is a requirement under the Budget and Policy Framework.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Food Standards Agency has a key role in overseeing local authority enforcement activities. They have duties to set and monitor standards of local authorities as well as carry out audits of enforcement activities to ensure that authorities are providing an effective service to protect public health and safety.
- 2.2 On 4 October 2000, the Food Standards Agency issued the document "Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement". The guidance provides information on how local authority enforcement service plans should be structured and what they should contain. Service plans developed under this guidance will provide the basis on which local authorities will be monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency.
- 2.3 The service planning guidance ensures that key areas of enforcement are covered in local service plans, whilst allowing for the inclusion of locally defined objectives.
- 2.4 A Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2005/06 is attached as **Appendix 1** and takes into account the guidance requirements.
- 2.5 The Plan has been considered by the Cabinet on 9th December 2005, prior to being considered by Council. It has also been forwarded to appropriate food business proprietors for comment.

3. THE FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN

3.1 The service plan for 2004/05 has been updated to reflect last year's performance.

3.2 The Plan covers the following:

(i) **Service Aims and Objectives:**

That the Authority's food law service ensures public safety by ensuring food, drink and packaging meets adequate standards.

(ii) **Links with Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Departmental and Divisional Plans:**

How the Plan contributes towards the Council's main priorities (Jobs and the Economy, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Health and Care, Community Safety, Environment and Housing, Culture and Leisure and Strengthening Communities.

(iii) **Legislative Powers and other actions available:**

Powers to achieve public safety include programmed inspections of premises, appropriate licensing/registration, food inspections, provision of advice, investigation of food complaints and food poisoning outbreaks, as well as the microbiological and chemical sampling of food.

(iv) **Resources, including financial, staffing and staff development.**

(v) **A review of performance for 2004/05.**

4. ISSUES

The main issues raised in the Plan are summarised below:

4.1 Staff absences as a result of a long-term part-time vacancy and two EHOs on maternity leave from November 2004, have resulted in a shortfall of both food hygiene and food standards (composition and labelling) premises inspections. The shortfall has been minimised by the engagement of consultants to undertake inspections and has resulted in 85% (99%) of food hygiene and 94% (90%) of food standards inspections being achieved (figures in brackets are for 2003/04).

The shortfall increases the possibility of an audit by the Food Standards Agency.

The recruitment and retention of EHOs is a national issue due to a shortage of qualified officers. Consideration is being given to ways of attracting and retaining EHOs employed by the authority. External consultants will continue to be utilised to minimise inspection shortfalls and existing staff are encouraged to utilise the overtime scheme.

- 4.2 No major food poisoning outbreaks were investigated in 2004/05. Six suspected outbreaks were subsequently confirmed as viral in origin. Approximately 200 notifications of suspected food poisonings were received in the year. A new multi-disciplinary working group has been set up to encourage better reporting of infectious diseases by GPs.
- 4.3 No prosecutions or formal cautions were undertaken in respect of food premises. Generally, standards in food premises were satisfactory. However, ten Improvement Notices were issued on businesses to ensure compliance with food safety issues.
- 4.4 A total of 605 premises inspections were undertaken in 2004/05, together with 185 microbiological samples and 84 compositional/labelling samples. 46 of the samples were regarded as unsatisfactory, mainly as a result of high bacteriological counts. Poor results from a survey of ice cream samples, in which two-thirds of samples were unsatisfactory, resulted in a major operation to raise awareness of the correct methods for cleaning and disinfecting ice cream machines.
- 4.5 We have developed and implemented an internal auditing system in conjunction with the other Tees Valley authorities.
- 4.6 Animal feeding stuffs, which are to be included in this Plan, remains a low priority as there are no manufacturers/producers of animal feedstuffs within the Borough. We will, however, undertake a small number of feeding stuff samples, targeting farms on which farmers mix/blend animal feed.
- 4.7 The Food Standards Agency are encouraging authorities to employ an alternative enforcement strategy for low risk food premises by the employment of self assessment questionnaires (as opposed to inspection). Given that low risk food premises often involve other legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act, it is intended to continue to inspect such premises.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Comments on the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2005/06 are invited.



Hartlepool Borough Council

Food Law Enforcement Service Plan

2005/06

FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2005/06

This Service Plan accords with the requirements of the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, and sets out the Council's aims in respect of its food law service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled. Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2005-06, where relevant, longer-term objectives are identified. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2004-05 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

1. **Background Information**

Hartlepool is situated on the North East coast of England. The Borough consists of the town of Hartlepool and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. It adjoins Easington District Council to the north, Sedgefield District Council to the west and Stockton on Tees Borough Council to the south. The residential population is 90,161 of which ethnic minorities comprise 1.2% (2001 census).

2. **Service Aims and Objectives**

Hartlepool Borough Council aims to ensure:

- That food and drink intended for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed in the borough is without risk to the health or safety of the consumer.
- Food and food packaging meets standards of quality, composition and labelling and reputable food businesses are not prejudiced by unfair competition.
- The effective delivery of its food law service so as to secure appropriate levels of public safety in relation to food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs enforcement.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions from the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Approved Codes of Practice, the Enforcement Concordat, and guidance from Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS).

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Programmed inspection of premises for food hygiene and food standards
- Registration, licensing and approval of premises
- Microbiological and chemical analysis of food
- Food Inspection
- Provision of advice, educational materials and courses to food businesses
- Investigation of food and food-related complaints

- Investigation of cases of food and water borne infectious disease, and outbreak control
- Dealing with food safety incidents
- Promotional and advisory work

Effective performance of the food law service necessitates a range of joint-working arrangements with other local authorities and agencies such as the Health Protection Agency (HPA), Meat Hygiene Service (MHS), and the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Council aims to ensure that effective joint-working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute to the on-going development of those arrangements.

3. **Policy Content**

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool's Community Strategy - the Local Strategic Partnership's (the Hartlepool Partnership) goal is "to regenerate Hartlepool by promoting economic, social and environmental wellbeing in a sustainable manner."
- Corporate (Best Value Performance) Plan
- Neighbourhood Services Departmental Plan
- Public Protection & Housing Divisional Plan
- Consumer Services Service Plan
- Food Law Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Consumer Services section's contribution to corporate objectives

The Council's Community Strategy sets out its vision for 'a prosperous, caring, confident and outward looking community realising its potential in an attractive environment'. This Food Law Service Plan contributes towards the vision and the Council's seven main priorities in the following ways:

Jobs and the Economy

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements with regard to food law requirements, and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

Lifelong Learning and Skills

By providing and facilitating training for food handlers on food safety as part of lifelong learning, and promoting an improved awareness of food safety and food quality issues more generally within the community.

Health and Care

By ensuring that food businesses where people eat and drink, or from which they purchase their food and drink, are hygienic and that the food and drink sold is safe, of good quality and correctly described and labelled to inform choice.

Community Safety

By encouraging awareness amongst food businesses of the role they can play in reducing problems in their community by keeping premises in a clean and tidy condition.

Environment and Housing

By encouraging businesses to be aware of environmental issues which they can control, such as proper disposal of food waste.

Culture and Leisure

By exploring ways to promote high standards of food law compliance in hotels, other tourist accommodation, public houses and other catering and retail premises.

Strengthening Communities

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including proprietors of food businesses whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

This Food Law Enforcement Service Plan similarly contributes to the vision set out in the Neighbourhood Services Department Plan “to work hand in hand with communities and to provide and develop excellent services that will improve the quality of life for people living in Hartlepool neighbourhoods”. Within this, the Consumer Services Section has a commitment to ensure the safe production, manufacture, storage, handling and preparation of food and its proper composition and labelling.

The Council has in place a Food Law Enforcement Policy which has been revised and subsequently approved by the Adult & Public Health Services Portfolio Holder on 21 March 2005.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service is offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

4. **Legislative Powers and other actions available**

The Council has a wide range of duties and powers conferred on it in relation to food safety functions.

The Food Safety Act 1990 requires that the Council appoint inspectors, having suitable qualifications and competencies, for the purposes of enforcing the Act and its associated provisions.

The most effective means of checking compliance with statutory requirements is through the inspection of food businesses and premises. This is reflected in guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency that requires Councils to draw up and implement an annual programme of risk-based inspections.

The powers of authorised officers to conduct inspections are derived from Section 32 of the Food Safety Act 1990.

- Standards of hygiene in food premises are currently regulated through the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 or relevant product specific regulations.
- Food standards, the quality composition, labelling, presentation and advertising of food, are regulated through a range of statutory provisions.

A range of legislation sets out requirements relating to the registration, licensing and approval of premises.

- The Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991 (as amended) set out the mandatory requirement for the registration of all food businesses (subject to certain exemptions).
- The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) (Butchers' Shops) Amendment Regulations 2000, set out requirements relating to the licensing of retail butchery premises. At the time of preparation of this plan, consultation is taking place with regard to disposing of these regulations from January 2006, when new European legislation comes into effect.
- A series of regulations applying to specific products such as meat products, dairy products and fishery and shellfish products set out requirements relating to the approval of such premises.

EC Regulation 178/2002, which came into force on 21 February 2002, contained some key provisions relating to protection of human health and consumers' interests in relation to food which became applicable from 1 January 2005. New regulations, namely, General Food Regulations 2004, provide new enforcement powers in respect of the new obligations.

From 1 January 2006, new food hygiene regulations are to come into force as a result of changes to EU legislation. These regulations will replace the existing food hygiene regulations, and product specific regulations.

The sampling of food for the purposes of microbiological and chemical examination and analysis forms an integral part of the inspection process. It is a critical means of ensuring the microbiological and chemical safety of food, checking composition and labelling. The Food Safety (Sampling and Qualifications) Regulations 1990 set out requirements relating to sampling activities.

The inspection of food commodities again forms an integral part of the inspection process and is provided for by virtue of Sections 32 and 9 of the Food Safety Act 1990. The purpose of food inspection is to check that food complies with food safety requirements and is fit for human consumption. Section 9 also sets out provisions relating to the detention, seizure and condemnation of food.

It is recognised that whilst the inspection process is the primary means of securing compliance with food safety legislation, this can be enhanced by the provision of advice, educational materials and training courses.

The service is obliged to investigate complaints relating to the sale of food not complying with food safety requirements, or not of the nature, substance or quality demanded, or injurious to health, or unfit for human consumption, or labelled or presented so as to mislead consumers. Similarly, the service responds to complaints alleging breaches of hygiene requirements.

The investigation of cases of food poisoning and outbreak control is a shared responsibility between the food law service and the County Durham and Tees Valley Health Protection Unit of the Health Protection Agency. Responsibility for the enforcement of measures to control food-borne disease rests with the local authority, with the Health Protection Agency having a statutory duty to designate medical officers to assist the local authority in carrying out their duties in this respect.

A national food incident warning system is in operation throughout the United Kingdom, which acts as a rapid alert system in respect of food related hazards. The food law service is obliged to respond to the receipt of food alerts sent "For Action" from the Food Standards Agency and use its powers under the Food Safety Act 1990 as appropriate in the circumstances.

In addition to legislative requirements as above, local authority food law services are required to have regard to a new revised Food Safety Act Code of Practice (issued in October 2004) which gives detailed direction to authorities on enforcement of food legislation.

There is currently a requirement to report to the Food Standards Agency annually on performance in relation to food law enforcement activities. Annual performance statistics for all authorities are, in future, to be made publicly available by the Food Standards Agency and the best and worst performing councils are to be highlighted.

5. **Service Delivery Mechanisms**

Inspection Programme

Inspections carried out for food hygiene, food standards and for feeding-stuffs are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and procedures on food premises inspections and relevant national guidance.

Information on premises liable to food law inspections is held on the ITECS computerised system. An inspection schedule is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year, in accordance with guidance issues by the Food Standards Agency.

The food hygiene and food standards inspection programmes are risk-based systems that accord with current guidance. The current premises profiles are shown in the tables below:

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Premises
A	6 months	12
B	12 months	131
C	18 months	431
D	24 months	148
E	36 months or other enforcement	115
Unclassified	Requiring inspection/risk rating	
Total		837

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Premises
A	12 months	0
B	24 months	291
C	36 months or other enforcement	298
Unclassified		101
Total		690

The inspection programme for 2005/06 comprises the following number of scheduled food hygiene and food standards inspections:

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Inspections
A	6 months	24
B	12 months	131
C	18 months	317
D	24 months	79
E	36 months of alternative enforcement strategy	44
Unclassified		72
Total		667

Additional to this inspection programme there are 3 manufacturing businesses that are subject to product-specific food hygiene regulations. These are not included in the inspection programme but instead are subject to a minimum inspection frequency in 12 months as set out in the following tables, in accordance with current guidance.

Product Specific Inspections:

	Primary Inspection	Secondary Inspections	No in Hartlepool
Meat Products	1	2	1
Minced Meat and Meat Preparation	1	2	0
Dairy Products	1	1	1
Fish Products	1	1	1
Egg Products	1	1	0
Shellfish Purification or despatch	1	1	0

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Inspections
A	12 months	0
B	24 months	151
C	36 months or alternative enforcement	109
Not classified		101
Total		361

An estimated 10% of programmed inspections are of premises where it is more appropriate to conduct inspections outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to inspect these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if necessary, paid overtime provisions. In addition, these arrangements

will permit the occasional inspection of premises which open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours. Inspections of these premises at varying times of operation is required by the Food Safety Code of Practice.

As a follow-up to primary inspections, the service undertakes revisits in accordance with current policy. It is estimated that such revisits are required in 20% of instances (some premises requiring more than one revisit to check compliance). For the year 2005/06, the inspection programme would generate an estimated 133 revisits. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place as described above to facilitate this.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality programmed inspections by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

The performance against inspection targets for all food hygiene and food standards inspections is reported monthly as part of the Neighbourhood Services Department internal performance monitoring. In addition, performance against inspection targets is reported quarterly to the Adult & Public Health Services Portfolio Holder as part of the Neighbourhood Services Department plan update.

Port Health

Although Hartlepool is a Port Health Authority it is not a boarder inspection post.

Fish Quay

There is a Fish Quay within the Authority's area which has recently been upgraded providing a new market hall and associated fish processing units.

Alternative Enforcement Strategy for Low Risk Food Premises

From April 2005 an alternate enforcement strategy via "self assessment" may be employed for low risk food premises, i.e. those rated as food hygiene risk Categories E and food standards risk Category C, in accordance with guidance. Self-assessment usually consists of questionnaires for these businesses and a subsequent evaluation of the results of this self-assessment by officers. A percentage of those businesses returning questionnaires are visited to validate the information received, as well as businesses not responding. Inspection visits may also be made where a low risk business is the subject of complaint and where notification of change of business use or proprietorship is received. The Head of Public Protection & Housing believes that the best use of resources at this time is to continue to carry out inspections at these low risk premises. These inspections often cover other legislation such as Health & Safety at Work.

Registration, Licensing and Approval of Premises

The Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991 (as amended) require that the proprietor of any food business registers with the local food authority. This provision allows for the service to maintain an up-to-date premises database and facilitates the timely inspection of new premises and, when considered necessary, premises that have changed proprietor or type of food use.

The receipt of a food premises registration form initiates an inspection of all new food premises. In the case of an existing premises, where a change of proprietor is notified, other than at the time of a programmed inspection, an assessment is made of the need for inspection based on the date of the next programmed inspection, premises history, and whether any significant change in the type of business is being notified. It is anticipated that approximately 50 additional premises inspections will be generated for new food businesses during 2005-06.

Butchery premises are currently subject to the licensing and approval requirements of the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) (Butchers Shops) Amendment Regulations 2000. The proprietor of a butchers shop is required to apply for the renewal of his licence annually. In response to a renewal application premises are visited to assess compliance with the requirements of the regulations and a license granted if all requirements are met. This visit may coincide with a programmed inspection, or may be additional to it. The licensing of butchers shops is undertaken in accordance with national guidance. There are currently 17 butchers shops licensed under these regulations.

A proposed legislative change to remove the requirement for licensing of butchers shops is currently under consultation as a result of the new EU based food hygiene regulations which come into force on 1 January 2006.

The Food Safety (Fishery Products and live Shellfish) (Hygiene) Regulations 1998 provide for the approval of premises engaged in the production and placing on the market of fishery products and live shellfish. The approval regime necessitates full compliance with the regulatory standards as they relate to vessels, markets and processing establishments. There is currently one premises approved under these provisions and a further premises in the process of being approved.

The Dairy Products (Hygiene) Regulations 1995 provide for the approval of premises used for the production and placing on the market of milk and milk-based products. The approval of such premises necessitates full compliance with the regulatory standards set down relating to dairy establishments and dairy holding. There is currently one premises in the Borough subject to approval under these provisions.

The Meat Products (Hygiene) Regulations 1994 as amended by The Meat Products (Hygiene) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2000 provide for the approval of premises used for the production and placing on the market of meat products. The approval of such premises necessitates full compliance with the regulatory standards set down relating to meat products establishments. There is currently one premises approved in the Borough.

Microbiological and Chemical Analysis of Food

An annual food sampling programme is undertaken with samples being procured for the purposes of microbiological and chemical analyses. This programme is undertaken in accordance with the service's Food Law Sampling Policy.

All officers taking formal samples must follow the guidance contained in and be qualified in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and codes of practice. Follow-up action is carried out in accordance with the food law service's sampling policy.

Microbiological analysis of food and water samples is undertaken by the Newcastle Laboratory of the Health Protection Agency based at the General Hospital in Newcastle, and chemical analysis of samples by Tees Valley Measurement for informal samples and by the Council's appointed food examiner at the Public Analyst Durham County Council for formal samples.

From April 2005 sampling allocations from the Health Protection Agency, which is responsible for the appropriate laboratory facilities, is to be based on a credits system dependant on the type of sample being submitted and examination required.

The allocation for Hartlepool is 8,300 credits for the year 2005-06 which includes sampling of water supply in food premises and pool waters.

Points are allocated as follows:

Sample type	No of credits
Food	25
Water	15
Dairy	10
Environmental	10
Formal samples	50

A sampling programme is produced each year for the start of April. The sampling programme for 2005-06 includes national and regional surveys organised by LACORS and HPA/Local Authority liaison group.

Sampling programmes have been agreed with the Food Examiners and Tees Valley measurement (a joint funded laboratory based at Canon Park, Middlesbrough). These have regard to the nature of food businesses in

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Hartlepool and will focus on locally manufactured/processed foods and foods targeted as a result of previous sampling and complaints.

A proportion of the planned sampling programme is of imported foods in accordance with guidance from the Food Standards Agency.

Microbiological Food Sampling Plan 2005-06

April Shopping Basket Survey	May Shopping Basket Survey	June Shopping Basket Survey
July Shopping Basket Survey	August Shopping Basket Survey	September Shopping Basket Survey LACORS Cheese Survey LACORS Sandwich Survey
October Shopping Basket Survey LACORS Sandwich Survey	November Shopping Basket Survey LACORS Sandwich Survey	December Shopping Basket Survey LACORS Sandwich Survey
January Shopping Basket Survey LACORS Sandwich Survey Raw Shell Egg Survey	February Shopping Basket Survey Imported Food Various Manufacturers mainly selling by retail - incl. Butchers, Bakers etc.)	March Shopping Basket Survey Approved Premises

The products sampled as part of the shopping basket survey include:

- Salad
- Paté
- Cooked meat
- Home made puddings
- Sauces/Soups/Gravy
- Pease Pudding
- Black Pudding
- Cooked Pasta

Composition and Labelling Sampling plan 2005-06:

MONTH	TEST	SAMPLES
April	Gluten free	4
May	No samples	
June	Fat content of low-carb meals and locally produced foods	18
July	Pictorial representation for locally produced meals (Rye Valley and Bonne Bouche)	15

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Aug	Salt in breakfast cereal (particularly children's)	7
	Added sugar in soft drinks (concentrating on locally produced drinks)	5
Sept	Meat Products -QUID	15
Oct	Meat species in meals (local producers and restaurants, takeaways)	13
Nov	Watering of fruit juices	25
Dec	Alcohol By Volume in drinks (concentrating on locally produced drinks)	25
Jan	Reformed meat in sandwiches (produced locally)	37
Feb	Salt in canned fruit and vegetables	15
Mar	Sandwiches - QUID (produced locally)	15

Total samples 194

In addition, the Authority is a participant in a pilot for a National Food Standards sample database centred on the Public Analysts for Durham County.

It is planned that four informal animal feeding stuffs samples will be taken this year.

At present feeding stuffs sampling has been given a low priority due to the lack of local manufacturers and packers. Informal samples are, however, taken of packed goods.

An annual feeding stuffs sampling plan will be drawn up to carry out informal sampling at the most appropriate time of the year in respect of farms, pet shops and other retail establishments.

Private Water Supplies

There are two premises using private water supplies in their food production, one is a brewery and the other a soft drinks manufacturer. Regular sampling is carried out of these supplies in accordance with relevant legislative regulations.

Food inspection

The purpose of food inspection is to check that food complies with food safety requirements and is fit for human consumption, and is properly described and labelled. As such, the activity of inspecting food commodities, including imported food where relevant, forms an integral part of the food premises inspection programme. Food inspection activities are undertaken in accordance with national guidelines.

Provision of advice, educational materials and courses to food businesses

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) certified Foundation level course and Intermediate level course in Food Hygiene are made available to food handlers. The courses provided by the service are subject to external audit by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

Due to the size of the service, current resources do not permit the provision of advanced level food hygiene courses, nor specific hazard analysis training, but information is provided to businesses on the availability of these courses from other training providers in the North East area.

It is recognised that for most local food businesses contact with an officer of the service provides the best opportunity to obtain information and advice on legislative requirements and good practice. Officers are mindful of this and aim to ensure that when undertaking premises inspections sufficient opportunity exists for business proprietors to seek advice. In addition, advisory leaflets produced by the Food Standards Agency are made available to business proprietors.

Guidance is also prepared and distributed to food businesses relating to changes in legislative requirements. In 2005 written information will be sent to all premises subject to product-specific regulations to outline changes being introduced from January 2006 as a result of new food hygiene regulations. Similarly, information relating to changes for other food businesses resulting from these new regulations is to be provided.

The service also encourages new food business proprietors and existing businesses to seek guidance and advice on their business. It is estimated that 70 such visits will be carried out during the year.

Feeding stuffs advice is available via the Trading Standards area of the Council's web site.

A limited level of promotional work is also undertaken by the service on food safety, with minimal impact on programmed enforcement work.

An area of improvement for the coming year is that of better engagement with businesses.

Investigation of Food and Food-related Complaints

The service receives approximately 30 complaints each year concerning food products, all of which are subject to investigation. An initial response is made to these complaints within two working days. Whilst many complaints are investigated with minimal resource requirements, some more complex cases may be resource-intensive and potentially affect programmed inspection workloads.

All investigations are conducted having regard to the guidance on the 'Home Authority Principle'.

The procedures for receipt and investigation of food complaints are set out in detailed guidance and internal policy documents.

Investigation of cases of Food Poisoning and outbreak control

Incidents of food related infectious disease are investigated in liaison with the Durham and Tees Valley Health Protection Unit and in the case of outbreaks in accordance with the Health Protection Unit's Outbreak Control Policy.

Where it appears that an outbreak exists the Principal EHO (Commercial) or the EHO with specific responsibility for infectious disease investigation, will liaise with the local Consultant in Communicable Disease Control and, where necessary, the Director of Durham and Tees Valley Health Protection Unit, to determine the need to convene an Outbreak Control Team. Further liaison may be necessary with agencies such as the Food Standards Agency, the Health Protection Agency and Northumbrian Water.

Statistical returns are made weekly by the service to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.

It is estimated that approximately 200 food poisoning notifications are received each year. Most cases are sporadic in nature and can be investigated as part of the normal day-to-day workload. It is recognised, however, that in the event of a major outbreak a significant burden is likely to be placed on the service and this would inevitably impact on the performance of the inspection programme.

Dealing with Food Safety Incidents

A national alert system exists for the rapid dissemination of information about food hazards and product recalls, this is known as the food alert warning system.

All food alerts received by the service are dealt with in accordance with national guidance and internal quality procedures.

Food alert warnings are received by the service from The Food Standards Agency via the electronic mail system, and EHCNet during working hours.

The Principal EHO (Commercial) or, if absent, the Consumer Services manager ensures that a timely and appropriate response is made to each food alert.

Out of hours contact is arranged through Richard Court, telephone number 01429 869424.

In the event of a serious local incident, or a wider food safety problem emanating from production in Hartlepool, the Food Standards Agency will be alerted in accordance with guidance.

Whilst it is difficult to predict with any certainty the number of food safety incidents that will arise during any 12 month period, it is estimated that the service is likely to be notified of between 60 to 80 food alerts during 2005/06, a small proportion of which will require action to be taken by the Authority. This level of work can ordinarily be accommodated within the day-to-day workload of the service, but more serious incidents may require additional resources and may have an effect on the programmed inspection workload and other service demands.

Investigation of complaints relating to Food Safety and Food Standards in Premises

The service investigates all complaints that it receives about food safety and food standards conditions and practices in food businesses. Initial response to any complaint is made within two working days. In such cases the confidentiality of the complainant is paramount. All anonymous complaints are also currently investigated.

The purpose of investigation is to determine the validity of the complaint and, where appropriate, to seek to ensure that any deficiency is properly addressed. The general approach is to assist the food business proprietor in ensuring good standards of compliance, although enforcement action may be necessary where there is failing in the management of food safety, or regulatory non-compliance.

Based on the number of complaints in 2004/05 it is estimated that approximately 15 such complaints will be received in 2005/06.

Animal Feeding Stuffs

The Authority does not currently have any premises that require approval, however we have 16 registered premises.

Liaison arrangements

The service actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Food Liaison group

- The local HPA/Local Authority Sampling group
- Cleveland Environmental Health group
- North East Trading Standards liaison group

Home Authority arrangements

The Authority has no formal arrangements with food businesses to act as Home Authority. Informal arrangements are in place with one manufacturer in the Borough. Consideration is to be given during the year as to the possibility of developing formal arrangements in future with this manufacturer.

The Authority is originating authority for two premises, a brewery and a soft drinks manufacturer. Regular visits are made to these premises to maintain dialogue with management and an up to date knowledge of operations.

General

The delivery point for the food law enforcement service is at:

Civic Centre
Victoria Road
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies which occur out of hours.

6. Resources

Staffing Allocation

The Director of Neighbourhood Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the food law service. The Head of Public Protection and Housing has responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the Council's Environmental Health service, including delivery of the food law service, in accordance with the service plan. The Consumer Services Manager, with the requisite qualifications and experience, is designated as lead officer in relation to food safety and food standards functions and has responsibility for the day to day management of the service.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the service in 2005/06 are as follows:

1 x 0.25 FTE Consumer Services Manager (with responsibility also for Health & Safety, Licensing and Trading Standards)

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1 x 0.35 FTE Principal EHO Commercial (with responsibility also for Health & Safety and Animal Health)

3 x 0.75 FTE EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience)

1 x 0.43 FTE Part-time EHO

1 x FTE Technical Officer Food

The Consumer Services Manager has responsibility for planning service delivery and day to day management of the Food Law service, Health & Safety at Work, Licensing, Public Health, Water Quality, Trading Standards, Animal Health & Welfare and I.T. as well as general management responsibilities as a member of the Public Protection and Housing Management Team.

The Principal EHO Commercial has responsibility for the day to day supervision of the Food Law Service, Health & Safety at Work, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health & Welfare.

The EHO's have responsibility for the performance of the food premises inspection programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the food law service, particularly more complex investigations. In addition these officers undertake Health & Safety at Work enforcement.

The food technical officer is also responsible for inspections, as well as revisits, investigation of less complex complaints and investigation of incidents of food-borne disease.

Administrative support is provided by Support Services within Neighbourhood Services department.

All staff engaged in food safety law enforcement activity will be suitably trained and qualified and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

Staff undertaking educational and other support duties will be suitably qualified and experienced to carry out this work.

Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2005/06 is:

	£000
Employees	601.4
Other	133.4
Support Recharges	117.8
Income	(148.5)
Net Budget	740.1

This budget is for all services provided by this section i.e. Health & Safety, Licensing, Trading Standards and resources are allocated in accordance with service demands.

Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the food law service. The service has a documented procedure that ensures the proper maintenance and calibration of equipment and its removal from use if found to be defective.

The service has a computerised performance management system, ITECS. This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the food law service. A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the inspection programmes, the recording and tracking of all food activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

Training Plans

The qualifications and training of staff engaged in food law enforcement are prescribed and this will be reflected in the Council's policy in respect of appointment and authorisation of officers.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the food law service to maintain their professional competency by undertaking a minimum of 10 hours core training each year through attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences. This is also consistent with the requirements of the relevant professional bodies.

The Council is committed to the personal development of staff and has in place Personal Development Plans for all members of staff.

The staff Personal Development Plan scheme allows for the formal identification of the training needs of staff members in terms of personal development linked with the development needs of the service on an annual basis. The outcome of the process is the formulation of a Personal Development Plan that clearly prioritises training requirements of individual staff members. The Personal Development Plans are reviewed six monthly.

The details of individual Personal Development plans are not included in this document but in general terms the priorities for the service are concerned with ensuring up to date knowledge and awareness of legislation, building capacity within the team with particular regard to vertical directive premises, the provision of food hygiene training courses, developing the role of the Food Safety Officer, and training and development of new staff joining the team.

Detailed records are maintained by the service relating to all training received by officers.

7. Service Review and Quality Assessment

Quality Assessment

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the food law service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the food service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

Specifically the Principal EHO (Commercial) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking inspections, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

The Best Value Performance Indicator BV166, applicable to Environmental Health, is subject to scrutiny. The target for attainment by the service against BV166 standard, which includes the provision of written enforcement policies, planned enforcement activity and measurement of customer satisfaction levels, is 100%.

It is possible that the Food Standards Agency may at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

Review

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2004/05.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of the year 2005/06 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year. It is the responsibility of the Consumer Services Manager to carry out that review with the Head of Public Protection & Housing.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Best Value programme will be incorporated into the service plan together with any matters identified through quality assessment audits.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Council approval will be sought.

Performance Review 2004-05

This section describes performance of the service in key areas during 2004/05.

The Consumer Services Section experienced significant staffing difficulties throughout 2004-05. There has been one long-standing part-time EHO vacancy and, from November 2004 two EHO's started their maternity leave, leaving only the Principal Officer, one EHO and the Technical Officer to provide the service. The loss of staff had significant effect on the performance of the service affecting the timetable for programmed inspections, the planned timescale for inspection and approval of premises subject to product specific legislation, the response and resolution of complaints, service improvements, the furthering of work for better engagement with business and promotional food safety activities.

The services of a Food Safety Consultant have been engaged throughout the year to assist in undertaking the shortfall of category B to E food hygiene and medium to low food standards inspections. However, the use of Consultants has generated follow-up work such as revisits, which are carried out by the permanent staff.

An inter-authority audit of the Food Law Service took place in February 2004, as part of a programme undertaken by the Tees Valley Food Liaison group. Following the audit an action plan has been developed to implement its recommendations.

Inspection Programme

The food premises inspection programme for 2004/05 did not reach the target of 100%. Due to staffing difficulties during the year only 85% of Food Hygiene and 94% of Food Standards inspections were achieved. The outstanding inspections will be added to the programme for 2005/06.

Registration, licensing and approval of premises

17 butchers shop licence applications were received from butchers in respect of butchery premises. All but one licence applications were granted on initial application. One application was refused, but granted on re-application.

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There was a review by the service of product specific premises approvals during 2004/05. Product specific premises were inspected and given comprehensive guidance with regard to requirements. Following this review there was a re-issue of documentation.

In addition one fisheries products premises is carrying out the necessary works to obtain an approval.

Food Sampling Programme

The food sampling programme for 2004/05 has been completed. The microbiological results are:

Microbiological Sampling (1/4/04 - 31/3/05)

	Total number	Number of Samples	
	of samples	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<u>Bacteriological</u>			
Surveys	119	105	14
<u>Ice Cream Survey</u>	25	11	14
Complaints	2	1	1
<u>Environmental</u>			
Swabs	10	9	1
Ice Cream Swabs	19	9	10
Ice Cream Finger Rinses	9	7	2
Miscellaneous (Cleaning Cloths)	1	1	-

The composition and labelling results are:

Food Standards Sampling (01.04.04 – 31.03.05):

Nature of Sample	Reason for Sampling	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Margarine/spreads	Sodium declaration	7	-
Cod products	Fish species	12	-
Turkey Sandwiches	Reformed meat	10	2
Orange juice	Vitamin C declaration	15	-
Fish Products	Fish content	4	1
Honey	Country and floral origin	18	-
Ready meals	Meat content/pictorial representation	7	-
Gluten-free products	Gluten-free declaration	11	1

Where unsatisfactory samples are identified, officers carry out follow-up work to identify the cause and take appropriate action.

During July, August and September 2004, a survey was carried out looking at the microbiological quality of ice cream. Almost two-thirds of ice cream samples gave unsatisfactory results. Investigations into the poor results revealed inadequate cleaning of the dispenser nozzles and a lack of awareness of the correct methods for cleaning and disinfecting the ice cream machines. In all cases, officers gave advice and took follow-up samples. To further raise awareness, correspondence was sent to all ice cream manufacturers/retailers advising them of the importance of hygienic practices and cleaning, and recommending that they follow the Code of Practice for the Hygienic Manufacturer of ice cream. This study also shows the importance of carrying out surveillance projects to assess the microbiological quality of ready to eat foods.

The programme of feeding stuffs sampling was not undertaken. Feeding stuffs has been given a low priority due to the lack of local manufacturers and packers.

Food Inspections

The service undertook no formal seizure of unfit food in the year.

Promotional Work

The service was only able to provide two foundation courses during the year. Resources did not allow for any further pro-active activities, although the team has continued to offer advice and information on request with 70 advisory visits to businesses being carried out during the year.

Complaints

During the year the service dealt with 16 complaints relating to the condition of food premises and food handling practice. In addition, 30 complaints of unfit or out of condition food, extraneous matter, mould and unsatisfactory labelling of food items were also received. These investigations have been undertaken all within our target of 2 working days, however, they have had some effect on performance of the inspection programme.

Food Poisoning

The service received 203 notifications of food poisoning during the year and investigated 6 outbreaks of infectious disease, most of which occurred in residential care homes and were found to be viral in nature.

In January 2004, a multi-disciplinary working group was set up consisting of representatives from the health Protection Agency and Hartlepool, Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils to improve surveillance and the reporting of infectious diseases within Teesside. One of the key tasks of this group was to encourage better reporting of infectious diseases by GPs and this could provide a possible explanation for the increased number of notified cases of food poisoning received.

Food Safety Incidents

The Service received 75 food alerts from the Food Standards Agency during the year. All requiring action were dealt with expeditiously and in all but one instance without significant impact on programmed workloads. The latter involved a large-scale national recall of a wide range of Sudan 1 contaminated products, and required intensive initial action to contact businesses and verify product removal. No food incidents were identified by the Authority that required notification to the Food Standards Agency.

Enforcement

During 200/05, no emergency prohibition notices were served on businesses where formal cessation of a good activity was necessary. Ten improvement notices were served on businesses to ensure compliance with food safety issues. No prosecutions or formal cautions were undertaken.

Improvement Proposals 2004/05

The following areas for improvement are identified in the 2004/05 Food Service Plan.

- 1 Internal auditing. The documented management system for the food service has been reviewed and additional auditing has been included in this process.

- 2 An inter-authority audit will be carried out. In February 2005 an audit of the entire food service was conducted. The recommendations of this audit are being implemented and include revising the format of the Food Enforcement Service Plan.

8. Key Areas for Improvement 2005/6

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the inspection programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable. Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement that are to be progressed during 2005/06.

Feeding stuffs

We will develop and implement a documented procedure and sampling programme for feeding stuffs.

Audit recommendations

We will work towards implementing the recommendations of the inter-authority audit and will incorporate good practice identified in other audits carried out within the Tees Valley Liaison Group.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

12 December 2005



Report of: Head of Neighbourhood Management

Subject: Sustainability – Environmental Maintenance

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the scrutiny committee on the progress of the alternate weekly collection pilot operating in the south forum area.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In the autumn of 2004 the Environment and Regeneration scrutiny forum began the sustainability enquiry which covered two parts, Environmental Maintenance and Asset Management. The first phase of the enquiry encompassed the recycling and composting of household waste.
- 2.2 It was recognised that whilst the authority had achieved government recycling and composting targets, as per the local performance service agreement (LPSA) for 2004/5, further work would be required to reach the 2010 target of 30% and for 35% by 2015.
- 2.3 The kerbside recycling service provided across the town is a voluntary scheme enabling residents to recycle cans, glass, paper and textiles on a fortnightly basis. Among the recommendations which came out of the environmental maintenance element of the enquiry, was for the mayor to investigate various options improving the councils recycling and composting rate, which for 2004/5 was 19%. The natural progression from the existing recycling service was to assess the way the standard refuse service operated and seek to make appropriate changes.
- 2.4 An options appraisal was carried out during the summer of 2005 of various methods to increase recycling. The option recommended by officers as the most economical way to increase recycling was alternate weekly collections. In July 2005 a pilot scheme operating on one refuse round (6,800 properties) began. The scheme has involved the collection of green garden waste and plastic and cardboard bottles one week and cans, glass, paper and textiles

together with any residual waste the following week. This type of arrangement is referred to as alternate weekly collections.

3. ALTERNATE WEEKLY COLLECTION PILOT

- 3.1 The area chosen to pilot alternate weekly collections covered the Fens Ward, Greatham, Rossmere, and parts of Rift House and Owton Manor, as this area encompassed a variety of property types including multi occupancy residencies as well as affluent areas and areas of deprivation.
- 3.2 Prior to the implementation of the scheme a comprehensive consultation programme was introduced, this involved the Head of Environmental Management together with various officers and Elected Members attending residents associations, holding evening meetings, distributing leaflets explaining the scheme and employing 'door knockers' to visit every property in the pilot area to ascertain customer views and alleviate any concerns. A dedicated telephone hot line was also installed to enable residents to contact the service area direct.
- 3.3 6,800 residents received an additional brown bin, blue box and bag and a poly bag for the recycling/composting of garden waste, cans, glass and paper and plastic bottles and cardboard respectively.
- 3.4 It would be fair to say that during the implementation stage Elected Members and residents were cautious of the scheme, the majority of concerns expressed related to:
 - a) retaining the weekly collection of the green residual waste bin,
 - b) capacity of the containers,
 - c) storage problems,
 - d) confusion as to what could be recycled (mainly plastic materials) and
 - e) smells.

Support was and continues to be offered to residents who experience difficulty with the scheme, be it from residents who are unsure of what to recycle to the complete refusal to participate.

- 3.5 The waste presented in both the green and brown bins is collected by the councils own refuse collectors, with the blue box and bag by Abitibi Recycling and poly bag i.e. the plastic bottles and cardboard being collected by Foreman Recycling. In the last few weeks due to the reduction in the amount of garden waste being presented, which is understandable, the councils own refuse collection service have taken over the collection of plastic and cardboard (as was always envisaged).

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In general the scheme has been well received by the vast majority of residents, even our own refuse collection and recycling staff have been presently surprised at the smoothness of its implementation. However it is fair to say that in the summer some residents did experience some problems as was originally expected. A minority (less than 10) reported maggots in their bins. Advice was given on how to deal with any problems, residents are asked to complete a waste audit form which informs the recycling staff of how the resident is participating prior to a home visit. Where residents have a large family or had clinical waste problems larger bins have been supplied. The special dispensation service is provided to elderly residents or those who have trouble presenting their containers for collection.
- 4.2 A lot of work was carried out behind the scenes with Housing Hartlepool and other housing organisations to assist in the implementation of the scheme in multiple occupancy residencies. The only problem experienced was Wynyard Mews, despite many attempts to encourage residents to participate, some residents in the complex continued to abuse the scheme which resulted in waste being contaminated. Section 46 notices have been served on these premises and monitoring is currently being carried out by our Environment Action Team.
- 4.3 A large petition was received objecting to the scheme from the 'I' block requesting the return to standard weekly collections. The residents have had their petition acknowledged and have been informed that their views will be taken into account at the end of the six month pilot.
- 4.4 Each property has been visited by our employees a minimum of twice, once during the initial weeks and again during November asking residents to complete a satisfaction survey to assist in the analysis of the pilot scheme. Whilst the survey is still being carried out and has been delayed due to the demand on the staff from residents across the town wanting to recycle and requiring assistance. A snapshot of the results from across the pilot area (**see Appendix A**) shows that on average residents are either satisfied or very satisfied with the scheme.
- 4.5 The councils recycling/composting performance has increased substantially. Prior to its implementation the area in question was recycling 7% of its household waste (remember it was voluntary), at its peak we have been recording rates between 45% – 49%. From October this has fallen due to the reduction in garden waste, yet the rate recorded for the first fortnight in November was still high, 37%. We do expect the rate to fall over the winter period but not significantly due to the holiday season festivities.
- 4.6 The spin off from the scheme, which was not envisaged, has been the level of interest received from residents across the town wishing to recycle. The town wide recycling rate is averaging 23%, (remember the remaining parts of the town do not recycle garden waste or plastic and cardboard).

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The forum is asked for its comments and to support to continuation of the pilot in the south area of the town.

5.2 The forum is asked to recommend the further development and expansion of the scheme across the town.

APPENDIX A

Satisfaction survey (November 2005)

Areas Surveyed – Greatham, Fens, E/F/I/L/K/M/ Blocks (828 households completed the questionnaire)

- 1 – Very satisfied
- 2 – Satisfied
- 3 - Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- 4 – Dissatisfied
- 4 – Very dissatisfied

1. How satisfied have you been with the collections of your:

Green bin 2.01	Brown bin 1.84	Blue Box/bag 1.86	Poly bag 1.87
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2. How satisfied were you with the containers, i.e. did they meet your needs:

Green bin 1.96	Brown bin 1.89	Blue Box/bag 1.99	Poly bag 2.15
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3. How satisfied have you been with the crew collecting your:

Green bin 1.77	Brown bin 1.77	Blue Box/bag 1.82	Poly bag 1.85
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How easy did you find the scheme to use?	1.83
How satisfied were you with the level of communication prior to the scheme?	1.88
How satisfied were you with the level of ongoing communication throughout the scheme?	2.17
How helpful did you find the staff operating the helpline number?	1.81

Comments from the questionnaire survey.

Storage problems	27
Have had missed collections	28
Would like weekly collections of their green bin	128
Have had poly bag problems	118
Are happy with the scheme	283
Smelly bins	27
Litter left in the street after the collection	53
Would like lids for blue boxes	33
No communication	63
Bins not returned to collection point	20
Not happy with the scheme	86