



TEAM SERVICE PLAN

FOOD AND SAFETY

2026-2027

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This Service Plan:

- Sets out the key activities that the service area delivers.
- Sets out the key tasks for the service area and the resources allocated to carry out those tasks.
- Identifies the main risks and challenges to the delivery of the service.
- Provides a high-level action plan for the service

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1.0 Introduction

The Food and Safety Team Service Plan is an expression of Tendring District Council's (TDC) continuing commitment to the provision of Food Hygiene and Safety, Health and Safety, Animal Welfare and other related services.

The Council is designated as a Food Authority under the Food Safety Act 1990.

The Food Service Plan has been produced, as it is a requirement of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in its *Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities*. The FSA is the governing body that oversees all areas that relate to food safety and standards.

2020-2022 were unprecedented years due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The food safety team were involved in the COVID-19 pandemic response. The closure of many businesses and the adaptation of businesses to work in different ways significantly impacted the food safety interventions carried out. Whilst this is a number of years ago the council has worked hard to get the inspection program to a position where it now meets the requirements set out in the Food Law Code of Practice (FLCOP).

The guidance produced by the Food Standards Agency in prioritising interventions during this time was implemented as appropriate. By prioritising these interventions it led to a national issue where food inspections were not inspected within the normal risk rated requirements. Tendring District Council were no exception to this; however, we have now returned to the position held prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is due to the hard work of competent officers carrying out the food inspections and building resilience within the Food and Safety Team.

This plan highlights what the Food Safety Team at Tendring District Council will do moving forward, in relation to our statutory functions.

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Food Safety Team

The Service Plan sets out how Tendring District Council will deliver the food safety enforcement function in accordance with current guidelines for the period 2026 to 2027. This document sets out the following:

- Food safety objectives detailing the Council's responsibilities as set out in legislation, associated statutory code of practice and national Guidelines.
- The current work programme within the Service.
- The Council's policy on food safety, sampling, provision of information to business, investigation of complaints and allegations of Food Poisoning, response to Food Safety Alerts and infectious disease control. Sections of this are within the Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

2.0 Scope and objectives of the Food Safety Team

The Service is currently provided in-house by suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs), Technical Officers (EHTOs) and contracted EHO/EHPs all of which are on permanent contracts with the latter contracted EHO/EHPs being on a rolling program.

2.1 Our objectives are to:

- Ensure that food and drink intended for sale for human consumption, which is supplied, manufactured, produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed within Tendring complies with the law, is free from contamination and is without risk to the health of consumers (for people who work, live or visit Tendring District).
- Be committed to ensuring that satisfactory standards of food hygiene are practised and maintained throughout the district.
- Undertake an effective and planned programme of quality risk-based food safety inspections of food premises (by qualified and suitably trained officers), to ensure compliance with food law and to minimise risks to health and safety.
- Take appropriate enforcement action proportional to the risks involved and in accordance with the Council's Food Safety Enforcement Policy with due regard being given to the Primary Authority Scheme and guidance from relevant external bodies.
- To monitor foodstuffs manufactured, imported, stored or on display for sale in the Tendring district, through a planned yearly sampling programme which includes imported foods. To carry out reactive sampling for microbiological examination. More detail is held within the food sampling policy and procedure
- To carry out official sampling of products of animal origin (POAO) as defined in 853/2004, 2073/2005 and other associated food law.
- Promote good food hygiene and safety by informative updated communication to businesses and consumers in the Tendring District.

2.2 The Service will: -

- Establish and maintain an up-to-date register of all food premises in the district.
- Inspect food premises situated within the district will either be inspected on a risk-based rolling programme in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice or in the case of some lower risk premises (E premises) be subject

to an alternative enforcement action to keep abreast of developments within the business,

- Prioritise where programmed inspections have been missed and inspections within the current program 2026-2027. In that order. Note: within each category A-E will be prioritized in order of risk. *

* Some businesses have been wrongly risk assessed, and officer discretion will be used when inspecting their area.

- Utilise statutory powers as necessary to secure safe practices, premises, procedures and personnel engaged in all commercial food handling activities situated within the district.
- Investigate and resolve food complaints where required and respond in accordance with customer standards of the council.
- Provide assistance and advice to businesses and consumers on food related issues.
- Receive and act on food hazard warnings including the notification of concerns relating to food distributed regionally, nationally and beyond.
- Inspect all food within the district that may be contaminated and take necessary action. Seize detain and destroy, as necessary any unfit food.
- Take action to close food premises which represent an imminent risk to health.
- Approve and inspect premises processing, handling and storing meat products and preparations, dairy, fish, live bivalve molluscs and egg products as required under Assimilated Regulation (EC) 853/2004, 2073/2005, 2017/625 and other associated food law and the Food Safety Enforcement Code of Practice.
- Gather shellfish and seawater samples to maintain classification of the shellfish beds in Tendring and more specifically Walton on the Naze. Samples will be taken as per agreed process with CEFAS and FSA. Including following the Local Action Plan for the harvesting of shellfish
- Undertake a food-sampling programme that takes account of current food problems as determined by the Eastern Region Sampling Group. The action plan is to be up and running in 2026-2027.
- Work in partnership with Public Health colleagues from Essex County Council and other agencies to coordinate and deliver strategies and projects which promote healthy eating.

- Inform the general public of the district about food safety, healthy eating and nutritional issues by issuing press releases and by developing the TDC website.
- Comment on proposed food legislation, codes of practice and other official documents as necessary and as requested.
- Provide appropriate export certifications requested by food companies in the district.
- Carry out Port Health and Ship Sanitation Inspections in line with current legislation.
- Complete and submit timely, accurate statistical returns to the Food Standards Agency requirements.
- Carry out the activities in this Service Plan with an educative approach where possible and in line with our enforcement policy.

In addition to food safety, the officers (EHO/EHPs) of the Food Safety Team are also responsible for the enforcement of health and safety. EHTOs are responsible for Animal Welfare, Tattooing, Piercing and Electrolysis legislation.

All officers are expected to act in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy, which puts the national 'Regulators' Code' at the centre of the Council's approach to regulating businesses and with that, an explicit commitment to carry out regulatory activities in a way that supports businesses to comply and grow.

3.0 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

Tendring District Council adopted its Corporate Plan on the 15th of December 2023. The new corporate plan is for the years 2024-2028. However, work is now underway to get ready for the changes to Local Government Re-organisation. As such we will work with Colchester City and Braintree District Council in forming the North-East Essex Council.

TDC's Vision, encompassed with a Community Leadership approach, and a listening to residents and businesses commitment, it sets out five themes:

- Championing our local environment.
- Pride in our area and services to residents.
- Working with partners to improve quality of life.
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities.
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer.
- Financial sustainability and openness.

The Food Safety Team contributes to the corporate aims in the following ways

- Safe food is a prerequisite of a good quality of life. The team focuses on protecting the public by ensuring good safe, hygienic food is on the market for sale.
- By working in partnership with other agencies and services aimed at improving the quality of life, health, safety, and wellbeing of the people of Tendring.
- A risk-based approach to enforcement. Reducing crime through the investigation of service requests and proactive inspections.

4.0 Profile of Tendring District Council

Tendring District Council covers an area of 33,548 hectares and lies to the east of Colchester between the rivers Stour and Colne and is bounded on the east by the North Sea.

It has 38 miles of varying coastline and has a population of 148,100 inhabitants (2021 Census) and comprises the towns of Clacton-on Sea, Frinton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-Naze, Dovercourt and Harwich, Manningtree and Brightlingsea. In addition to these towns there are numerous small villages including the largest village green in Europe.

The employment in the area includes a significant proportion in tourism, although there is some manufacturing; the area has a high level of elderly residents, and this results in large numbers of nursing and residential care homes and related employment.

There are four ports in the district the most significant being Harwich International Port with the new Border Control Point, along with Harwich Navyard and two smaller ports at Brightlingsea and Mistley. The newly designated Freeport East site encompasses much of the district.

There are 32 wards served by 48 members. The Housing and Environment Service is based at the council's offices in Pier Avenue, Clacton.

4.1 Organisational Structure

An organisational chart is included at Appendix A. This shows the structure of the Service and its position in the organisation.

The Constitution of Tendring District Council ultimately delegates the responsibility for the procurement of the food service in terms of budget and policy framework, to the Cabinet Member holding the Portfolio for Environment.

The power to instigate legal proceedings under legislation relating to the quality, safety and content of food has been delegated to the Strategic Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer.

The Food Service currently has the following staff allocation: -

- Food and Safety Manager (EHP) - **(0.7 FTE** in food service until full complement of staff)
 - Responsible for carrying out inspections for new food business, programmed food inspections, food complaint visits, Health and Safety over a geographical area, resource management and leadership of the service and advice to the Council on Food, Health and safety related issues, alongside partnership working with external Public Health colleagues on strategies and initiatives to promote healthy eating, and other areas such as the Animal Welfare. Priority of inspections (***Described in service delivery***).
 - Nominated Lead Food Officer for the District with additional responsibilities including the monitoring and maintenance of officer competence, preparation of the annual service plan and submission of the annual monitoring returns

- Food Safety Officer – **(1.0 FTE** engaged in food enforcement)
 - Responsible for food enforcement within the district on a geographical basis. **Priority of inspections (*Described in service delivery*)**.

Officer is also engaged in Health and Public Health duties where required and priority allows

- **3 VACANT Environmental Health Officers Posts (to be advertised 2026/27 - (2.3 FTE engaged in food enforcement))**
 - Responsible for food Safety and Hygiene enforcement within the district on a geographical basis. **Priority of inspections (*Described in service delivery*)**.
 - Officer is also engaged in Health and Public Health duties where required and priority allows.
 - Responsible for Health & Safety enforcement within the district on a geographic district basis

- Contract Environmental Health Practitioners **(2.2 FTE** engaged in food enforcement)
 - Responsible for Food Hygiene and Safety enforcement within the district on a geographic district basis Specific to 2023-2024 programmed inspections, complaints and food registrations.

- 1 Technical Officers **(1.0 FTE** engaged in food enforcement **Post (to be advertised 2026/27)**) (currently 2.0 FTE In Animal Welfare, Tattooing and other licensable activities.

- These officers cover a range of duties including programmed low risk food inspections, routine infectious disease investigation and procuring shellfish (in accordance with Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture (CEFAS) protocols), food and water samples throughout the district in accordance with the Eastern region sampling programme. This programme takes account of EC, FSA, HPA and local sampling requirements. The results obtained following the analysis of these samples are now inputted into the UK Food Sampling System (UK FSS) thereby giving a national context into which they can be positioned and thereby interpreted.
- **NOTE: Investment in staff is required to ensure we maintain Official Food Controls as outlined in the FLCOP and 2017/625.**

The Council uses the services of a Public Analyst - Eurofins Scientific, which are approved by Essex County Council Trading Standards. The team also sends bacteriological samples to the UK Health Security Agency Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre at Colindale and shellfish and seawater to the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

4.2 Competencies

The Food and Safety Manager (Lead Officer), EHO/EHPs, Contractor EHO/EHPs/Food & Safety Officers, are fully competent to inspect all risk categories of premises as required by the Code of Practice and take formal food samples. The Food and Safety Manager, EHO/EHPs, contractor EHO/EHPs, are authorised to serve Hygiene Improvement Notices, detain and seize Food and the Food and Safety Manager and EHOs are authorised to serve Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices

5.0 Service Delivery and Demand for the Food and Safety Team

When this plan was initially written (September 2023) the Food and Safety Team was still recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent loss (September 2023) of all competent officers in the team but has been working towards returning to normal operations.

The FSA had published a recovery plan for local authorities to achieve certain milestones by specific dates. This was the minimum expected, and the Council is committed to maintain these. A full outline of the recovery plan published by the FSA can be found on their website. We are now 3 years since this service plan was created, the number outstanding inspections is now below 20. These final cases will be addressed with 2026-2027 inspection program.

The descriptions below are of the service resourced by the Council's core funding and the additional work being undertaken in response to the pandemic

5.1 Demand on the Food Safety Team

Situated within the District are 1275 food Premises, all of which are included within our proactive inspection programme. The team is serviced by a Uniform computer database system which maintains a business database of the district.

The types and number of premises, as of the April 2025, are shown below along with the comparison with the previous year which illustrates an increasing number of new food businesses, the majority of which are restaurants and caterers. They will now be updated every April. It should be noted that the number of businesses fluctuates throughout the year.

BUSINESS TYPE in District	Number In 2023-2024	Number In 2024-2025	Number In 2025-2026	Number In 2026-2027
Primary Producers	2	4	6	6
Manufacturers/packers	19	25	25	29
Restaurant/Café/Canteen/Caterer/Take away	564	477	516	499
Hotel/Guest House/Leisure Facility	40	60	61	59
Caring/Nursing Premises/Hospital School/College	172	175	175	180
Home Caterer / Mobile-Outside Caterer/Retail Bakery/Sandwich Shop / Pub/Club / Butchers /Fishmongers /Fishing Vessels	248	351	285	291
Supermarket/Premises selling food supplement/Retail Premises with food/ Newsagent/Off licence/Convenience Store/Cash & Carry	167	191	193	197
Cash & Carry/warehouse *did have some of the above business types	27	8	10	11
Importers / Exporters	1	1	3	3
Total	1240	1292+	1275+	1275
New Food Registrations 2023-24 New Food Registrations 2024-25 New Food Registrations 2025-26	181	271	273	

Contained within the above premises there is currently only 1 premise which is approved under Regulation (EC) 853/2004. It should also be noted that there were a number of inspections that had not been carried out due to an error in the database. As such these have been prioritised and will be explained further on in the plan. **It should now be noted that this has been substantially reduced due**

to progressive inspections and is currently at 7 A-D risk premises and 4 E risk premises.

The Food Safety Team is based at 88-90 Pier Avenue, Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1TN. Customers can contact the service via the Tendring District Council, Website and or email fhsadmin@tendringdc.gov.uk.

In addition to being a popular tourist area, the Tendring District is very popular as a retirement area being within easy reach of London and having both pleasant rural and urban areas situated on the coast. There are 191 residential care homes and nursing homes situated within the district. Although there are a large number of food premises within the district it does not seem to attract many large food manufacturers perhaps with the exception of EDME Ltd, UK Blending and Surya Rice Ltd as part of the Flying Trade Group.

The oyster fisheries situated around Walton on the Naze and Brightlingsea provide shellfish within the district. The Food team has a responsibility for ensuring that these shellfish beds and associated depuration plants are monitored to ensure that classification and standards are being maintained which involves exhaustive officer involvement. Currently there is no Classification for the beds in Brightlingsea.

The Food & Safety Team also look after Food Import Official controls both inland and at Port Health locations. The district has five ports. The main Border Control Point, Port for Products of Animal Origin (etc) Harwich International is looked after on our behalf by the Port of Felixstowe under the direction of East Suffolk Council who are in contract with TDC.

The Other three ports fall under Tendring District Council, these are Harwich International, Harwich Navyard, Mistley. Brightlingsea port although in Tendring district is looked after by Colchester City Council as this originally fell under Colchester ports which included Wivenhoe and Rowhedge. Inland imported food and feed controls fall to the Authority within whose boundary the food/feed resides when subject to the official control. In the case of Imported Feed coming into the Ports, the responsibility for official controls rests with the riparian port Authority, which in this case is Tendring District Council.

Port Health requests and food hygiene inspections are undertaken in connection with Ship Sanitation Certificates required under international health regulations. Port health inspections which require inspections of food hygiene and standards on board vessels coming into the ports are undertaken at Harwich International and Harwich Navyard. The provision of Ship Sanitation Certificates has just been restarted as part of the new team, currently one officer is trained.

Regular check-ins are conducted with the Port's Head of Operations to assess future intentions regarding feed import plans. Incoming ship manifests (forwarded from the shipping agents) are regularly monitored to check container consignments of feed and potential feed material coming into the Port. No known feed imports requiring official controls have been identified. As a result, the service check importer shipping manifest checks alone as a means of monitoring activity.

The continuation of residents wishing to start up food businesses from the home continues to grow. The trend continues into this year 2026-2027 with more food registrations for home business start-ups; however, these are higher risk food stuffs in terms of what they are supplying to the market. The trend with new businesses on the high street has continued to grow this year. With over 273 of all types registering since April 2025.

5.2 Enforcement Policy

In relation to the Tendring District, the Council has signed up to the Enforcement Concordat and produced an enforcement policy available to all on the Council's website at <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/business/licensing-legislation/food> , or it can be viewed at Tendring District Council, 88-90 Pier Avenue, Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1TN. The Food Safety enforcement policy is attached as Appendix B to this service plan.

To avoid conflicts of interest with premises operated by Tendring District Council, all significant breaches of food law occurring in these premises which are not acted upon swiftly, will be brought to the immediate attention of the Chief Executive. In the unlikely event that contraventions raised were still not addressed the matter would then be referred to the Cabinet of the Council.

6.0 Service Delivery

6.1 Food Premises Inspections

The Food and Safety team adhere to the revised "Food Law, Code of Practice (England) October 2025" and the "Food Law, Practice Guidance (England) October 2025". In doing so, this gives consistency in the rating of premises for inspection as well as ensuring that performance can be benchmarked against other local authorities and can be externally assessed.

The current composition of premises is shown below along with their inspection or alternative enforcement intervention frequency. Officers determine the category into which a premises fall by applying the rating system contained in the Food Law Code of Practice.

Category of Premises	Current list of Businesses in relation to their risk. (Fluctuation due to inspections being added and Ceased Trading) Oct 2024 Dec 2024 Apr 2025 Apr 2026	Inspections or alternative interventions (E premises only) due in 2023-2024. Report run September 2023	Inspections or alternative interventions (E premises only) due in 2024-2025. Report run March 2024 NOTE Number Will Fluctuate due to Enforcement/ reinspection/ rescore	Inspections or alternative interventions (E premises only) due in 2025-2026. Report Run March 2025	Inspections or alternative interventions (E premises only) due in 2026-2027. Report Run March 2026
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Category A	5 (8) (5) (8) (5)	3	2	1	5
Category B	22 (69) (77) (85) (65)	4	5	40	51
Category C	166 (218) (232) (251) (313)	41	63	157	188
Category D	555 (506) (498) (471) (459)	74	168	140	177
Category E	492 (491) (467) (460) (433)	25	58	206	31
Total	1240 (1292) (1279) (1275) (1275)	212	294	544	452
New Food Registrations	N/A	181 23-24	271 24-25	273 25-26	

They are not allowed to extend the frequency calculated but may impose a more onerous one perhaps to adjust for seasonal opening etc. An 'A' rated business is not allowed to be downgraded unless the reasons are discussed with the Lead Food Officer

The alternative intervention initiative for category E premises commenced in June 2013 and is used to monitor for any significant changes in the operation of low-risk premises.

All premises not returning the questionnaires received will receive an inspection visit in the usual manner. Premises where an alternative enforcement questionnaire was completed are not re-rated at this time, this being deferred until the next inspection due date when a premises inspection will be completed i.e. 3 years hence category E premises.

All Local Authorities were expected to submit a return to the Food standards Agency detailing the delivery of official food controls and related activities.

Whilst traditionally this has taken the form of the Local Authority Enforcement Management System (LAEMS) designed for performance monitoring and management purposes, the 2020/21 return is designed to obtain a picture of delivery set against the minimum expectations set out in FSA guidance and advice given to Local Authorities. This has changed and Local Authorities report to the FSA twice yearly.

At TDC, there would normally be returns for the Local Authority, 2020-21, 2021-22 2022-23. However, these are missing from the files at TDC, therefore the last return confirmed on the FSA site currently available is 2019-2020. At that time, of the 1221 businesses, the scheduled inspections of 177 businesses were

completed for the district, of which 97.5% were Broadly Compliant, with a drop to 83.37% of the not yet rated establishments.

Moving forward the Food Team will update the FSA return so that we can be more representative with the figures. In 2025-26, the FSA are yet to publish an up-to-

Category of Premises	Inspection Frequency
Category A	6 months
Category B	12 months
Category C	18 months
Category D	24 months
Category E	36 months
Unrated	New Premises to be inspected in line with the risk as defined in the new (October 2025) FLCoP within 28 days of notification or 3 months

date report to re-confirm figures. **This paragraph will be updated when the FSA publish their figures dating back to 2021**

The Frequency of inspections is listed below:

Currently, the October 2025-26 return indicates we are running at approximately 83%. Which is an improvement on the 70% from 2024-2025.

This figure is less likely now to fluctuate as the programmed inspections over the next few years as most businesses are back in the program where they are still trading and removed from the program where they have ceased trading.

Originally this was primarily down to 600+ inspections falling off the database system or being miss recorded. This was either through a glitch in the system, or a mistake in closing the record. These have now been found and dealt with and are being prioritised below in line with FLCoP. For 2025-2026 we are around the 80% of inspections being complete, this does not include the new registrations.

Action that has been taken since 2023

Action taken: - The team has now worked through a priority system in relation to food inspections and as of April 2026 to March 2027 will be inspecting all programmed inspections as defined in the FLCoP.

Priority 1: 2014-2024 inspections. Category A-Ds are high risk rated and come first. (It should be noted that looking into these businesses as an example, there were businesses given a 0 score but there was no follow-up visits carried out). This number is 130 and will be prioritised accordingly. Again, these are being addressed.

Priority 1: Programmed inspections for this year 2025-2026 plus new food registrations.

Priority 2: (E rated premises are also being investigated, as they are suspected of being Ds and Es as they present a lower risk. Officers are using discretion when checking them.

6.2 Enforcement

The Food & Safety Team endeavours wherever possible to use informal means to achieve compliance with the law. Where there is imminent risk, flagrant breaches of the law, or persistent failure to maintain standards, the Service does not hesitate to use its full statutory powers in accordance with its Enforcement Policy. This can be Formal letters, Hygiene Improvement Notice(s), and through to prosecution.

Where inspections of food premises requiring specialist input or knowledge is necessary, these are specifically allocated to these Officers on an ad hoc basis, or where appropriate, assistance is sought further afield.

There were no businesses prosecuted in the period 2025-2026. However, 22 Hygiene Improvement Notices have been served on 8 separate businesses.

6.3 Food Hygiene Complaints

The team also receives and deals with complaints regarding poor hygiene standards associated with food businesses, poor food handling practices and unsatisfactory refuse storage at food premises. A total of **88** such complaints were received in 2024-2025. In 2025-2026 the number was **103**. It should be noted that now the team have competent officers in place, a number of these complaints are forming part of the inspection program, due in part to the previous missed inspections.

6.4 Primary Authority Principle

The Primary Authority principle is supported by the Environmental Health Service and undertakes its role in this respect in accordance with the guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The Food Service will:

- Have regard to any inspection plans or advice it has received from any liaison with primary, home and/or originating authorities.
- Having initiated liaison with any primary, home and/or originating authority, and notify that authority of the outcome.

There are currently no formal Primary Authority Agreements set up for the businesses in Tendring district.

Primary Authority gives companies the right to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance. It is the gateway to simpler, more successful local regulation.

6.5 Advice to Business

The Food Safety team provides advice to businesses from the planning stage onwards. The team ethos is to help, offer advice and educate before taking formal action. However, the team will not hesitate to take formal action where appropriate.

- Advice is provided to existing or proposed food businesses, members of the public and other Council services on a reactive and proactive basis
- Inspection reports contain a concluding section of advisory matters, which although not relating to specific legal requirements, contain advice on good management practice. Statutory requirements listed in the main body of the report are supported with advice on how compliance can best be achieved.
- The team as part of the Environmental Health Service uses the Council's website as a resource for the provision of information to businesses and the general public. Further information can be obtained from the Food Standards Agency website.
- Officers aim to give advice in accordance with recognised guidance and codes of practice.

6.6 Food Inspection and Sampling

The Food & Safety Team realises that food sampling is an important area of work. Food sampling at point-of-sale can provide useful information about the microbiological fitness of food for sale within Tendring.

A food sampling programme has been devised for 2026/2027 and is based on the UKHPA (UK Health Security Agency) studies / Eastern Region / FSA / Essex Food Liaison group requirements. Local priorities have also been included in this programme.

The Service has been allocated a sampling budget by UKHPA for the 2026/2027 period; this includes the full cost of laboratory analysis and the full cost for sample collection from Tendring. Arrangements are in place with the UKHPA at Colindale to carry out the microbiological examination of samples. Note the budget was not used for 2023-2024. In 2024-2025 some sampling has been completed in relation to the Studies issues by the UKHSA; and further sampling with regards to Cheese and Tattooing has been carried out. 2025-2026 Sampling was carried out in line with UKHPA Program.

Due to Officers leaving the authority, the subsequent backlog of programmed inspections has substantially reduced the amount of time spent on sampling in 2024-2025. This continued into 2025-26, albeit the levels of sampling have increased.

It is anticipated that the sampling programme will be fully implemented by 2026/27.

Food sampling will be conducted where appropriate and in particular,

- Priority will be targeted to sampling at food manufacturers/high risk premises based in Tendring District.
- During the approval process of establishments and intermediaries.
- In response to complaints.
- For identified planned internal, regional and national projects

Between 2025-2026 a total of 66 samples have been submitted for analysis. 50% of tests were for Oyster sampling of the beds in Walton- On-Naze. Others include ship water samples. All samples are classified by the UKHPA laboratory to be of a satisfactory, borderline or unsatisfactory standard. Food classified as borderline or unsatisfactory are rarely considered to be unsafe to consume. Follow up work and further sampling is undertaken where results are not of a satisfactory standard.

Routine food samples are usually purchased anonymously in the first instance and in accordance with the priorities agreed by the Eastern Region Sampling Group which incorporates the EC and UKHSA sampling program. These sampling programmes cover the whole Eastern Region and ensure that sufficient numbers of samples can be collected on each occasion.

The UK Health Security Agency is committed to writing a report summarising surveys and subsequent results and the Local Authorities then agree further action if necessary.

Food complaint samples are submitted to the public analyst or food examiner where necessary and, if any situation is liable to lead to formal action, the samples will be taken in a formal manner.

In 2025-2026, it should be noted that there are no samples being taken from the Brightlingsea beds as they are currently declassified. Walton Back waters are being commercially farmed, Twizzle, Wade and Kirby Creek are all classified.

6.7 Infectious Diseases

The measures to be taken to control the spread of infectious diseases are contained in various Acts of Parliament and their associated regulations. This legislation includes the control of food poisoning and food and water-borne diseases.

During 2025-2026 the has service received **72** formal notifications of infectious disease, mostly food borne. Notifications can include Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, Giardia, E coli O157 and Legionella. The break down can be seen in the table below.

The source of these infections is often unknown for a variety of reasons. Some are attributed to travel abroad, and many may have been acquired in their own home. The Food Safety team look into the cases and look for patterns, clusters and whether a food business maybe linked. Where this is the case the officer for the area will investigate.

One Technical Officer specialises in the initial contact and logging of notifications to trace potential sources and thereafter implement controls. However, in isolated cases these investigations are seldom conclusive. If individual cases are linked or large outbreaks occur the team forms an incident team to investigate the matter.

The Food Service, in conjunction with UKHPA has a documented infectious disease “Joint Plan” that includes the outbreak plan and a detailed written procedure supported by reference material.

The resource requirement for this function for the period between 2023-2026 is impossible to quantify. Outbreaks of this nature are infrequent, individual events. Should the need arise, qualified staff from all disciplines within the Environmental Health Service would be expected to assist with an investigation.

Lower priority work would be cancelled or postponed. The overall Service Plan acknowledges the need for the team to be flexible to accommodate the scale of any outbreak encountered.

The team is represented on a joint Health Protection Agency/Local Authority Working Group on infectious diseases which has produced a Joint Outbreak Control Plan. **Note: Concern has been raised that no reports have been received since October 2025**

Infectious Disease	2022-2023 No.	2023-2024 No.	2024-2025 No.	2025-2026 No.
Campylobacter	11	5	105	58
Salmonella	32	21	21	9
Cryptosporidium	4	14	12	4
Giardia	0	1	2	0
E. coli	4	1	1	0
Shigella	0	0	2	0
Dysentery	0	0	0	0
Viral Hepatitis	0	0	0	0
Total	51	43	143	72

6.8 Food Safety incidents

Food Safety Incidents are dealt with in accordance with the FSA’s Code of Practice and the team’s procedures. The hazard warnings are received by the Food and Safety Manager or the most senior officer present who acts accordingly.

The Council has a 24hr emergency service and they hold the Food and Safety Manager's home details so that he can be contacted outside office hours as well as the Lead Environmental Health officer's details. The FSA can also contact the Food & Safety Manager directly in an emergency.

The Food and Safety Manager is also contacted directly by the FSA Food Alert text messaging service. The team regularly take part in exercises designed to test the emergency call out procedure.

All media releases made in response to a food alert are checked by the Food and Safety Manager to ensure that the local statement is accurate, relevant and consistent with the Agency statement

We have received one FSA Food Safety incident in November 2023, requiring investigation and recall of a product.

6.9 Brand Standard, Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Tendring District Council are part of the Food Standards Agency; 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' (FHRS) also known as the 'Brand Standard'. Since the launch of the rating schemes, we have seen an increase in the number of businesses who are engaging with the Council for advice on how to improve food hygiene and in turn improve their rating.

Under the FHRS food businesses are given a rating for their hygiene, ranging from 0 (urgent improvement necessary) to 5 (very good). The table below provides a breakdown of rated premises. Correct as of March 2026.

Rating	Number 2023- 2024	Number 2024- 2025	Number 2025- 2026	Number 2026- 2027	% Of All Businesses in TDC			
					23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
5 (very good)	1120	1051	1020		90.3	82.4	80.1	
4 (good)	283	351	417		22.8	27.5	32.7	
3 (generally satisfactory)	158	206	232		12.7	16.1	18.2	
2 (improvement necessary)	70	87	95		5.6	6.8	7.4	
1 (major improvement necessary)	70	89	89		5.6	7.0	7.0	
0 (urgent improvement necessary)	17	22	21		1.37	1.7	1.65	

The scheme is a cost effective, well publicised and visible way of promoting food hygiene and empowering consumer choice by making available information to which the Public has a right to access under Freedom of Information Legislation. As well as promoting food hygiene it also gives Tendring District Council a best value method for meeting public access obligations.

The ratings are available as a link from the Councils website and direct on <http://ratings.food.gov.uk>, every eligible business is issued with a window sticker displaying their individual rating. Note: In England it is not a requirement to display the sticker.

6.10 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Food and Safety Manager represent the Council at the Essex Food Liaison Group. This is a formally constituted group.

One of the main aims of the group is to ensure consistency of enforcement across the whole of Essex in relation to food safety matters in accordance with an annually approved work plan. Included in the work plan is the requirement to organise cost effective training events for staff and there are many other efficiencies to be had from the pooling of resources. The group is routinely attended by representatives from the Food Standards Agency, Essex County Council Trading Standards and the UKHPA with guest presentations from other agencies including the Department of Health. We are also now part of the South East Shellfish Liaison Group (SESLG).

There is a close working relationship at officer level with adjoining Local Authorities and UKHPA (formerly the Essex Health Protection Unit), especially where there are food-borne illness related outbreaks.

The team is represented on the local Infection Control Committee which is chaired by the Local Consultant in Communicable Disease Control.

7.0 Resources

7.1 Staffing Allocation

The numbers of full-time equivalent staff employed within the Food & Safety Team at Tendring District Council is as shown at 3.9 above. The team will only authorise appropriately qualified, trained and experienced officers on the recommendation of the Food and Safety Manager.

7.2 Staff Development Plan

It is the intention of the Council to ensure that all staff are qualified to an appropriate level and are able to receive sufficient training to keep them up to date in the service area where they work.

The Food and Safety Team is committed to continuing professional development and the Technical Officers have agreed to comply with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers scheme.

The team will have meetings every month and cascade information and training where appropriate. The Council has a formal annual performance management system which includes the preparation of a Personal Development Plan listing identified training needs which are also necessary to meet continual professional development needs.

The team members standardise practices by attending shared training events, team meetings and when new legislation or processes are introduced.

All EHO/EHPs that are corporate members of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) are required to undergo at least 20 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per year. In addition, the Code of Practice requires food inspectors to have undergone a minimum of 10 hours food training per annum in accordance with FSA requirements.

Authorised Officers must also complete the FSA Competency framework agreement where required. Whilst officers are responsible for monitoring the amount of training they have done in a year; the Service recognises this need and supports staff in achieving the minimum amount required by the CPD scheme. Officers with Chartered Status must complete 30 hours of CPD per year.

Training needs are identified by examining:

- Operational requirement arising from Service Demands.
- Individual needs highlighted at Personal Performance Plan review meetings.
- The introduction of new legislation/Code of Practice and FSA.

How these needs are met may vary, but the typical sources of training include:

- Day release courses.
- On the job training.
- In house short courses.
- External short courses and seminars.
- E-Learning Subscriptions e.g. ABC Food Law

Training must be approved before it is undertaken, and it is evaluated after the event. All training received will be documented as part of the Service's assessment competency.

One to One appraisals and Performance programs are completed and will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Food Safety Manager.

8.0 Review

8.1 Review against the Service Plan

The Food Service Plan is a statement of the Council's commitment to food safety and should serve to re-assure the public that their best interests are being looked after.

Performance against this Food Service Plan will be monitored and reviewed in line with the team's overall Service Plan and will follow the same process as outlined in the Council's 'Performance Management Guide'.

The plan is based on the financial year since all statistics and budget information are produced on this basis. The plan will be reviewed and amended annually.

9.0 Quality Assessment

The Food Service is delivered within a documented quality system with strategies in place covering most areas of food safety. Within these strategies a documented system is in place for management monitoring of the quality, uniformity and consistency of enforcement.

Within the framework of these documents the following activities are planned:

Internal Audits of:

Food Safety Inspections

- a) Post Inspection review of case records and documentation
- b) 33% of contractors' inspections are currently checked
- c) Accompanied inspection

Food Complaints (service requests)

- a) Food Safety
- b) Foreign Bodies
- c) Allegations of Food Poisoning
- d) Food Alerts

Formal enforcement activities, including.

- Hygiene Improvement Notices
- Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices
- Prosecution Files.
- Detention / Seizure / Voluntary Surrender cases.

There are management systems which monitor the response times for complaints received (food & hygiene complaints etc.). The target response times are 10 working days.

10.0 Review against Plan

The Service Plan going forward will be monitored to establish:

- Inspections of premises against target, that being 85%
- The percentage of premises broadly compliant with food hygiene.
- Number of food samples taken.

In addition, the Food and Safety Manager will evaluate:

- Actual resource allocation versus projected allocation.
- Responses to complaints
- Reactive work, formal actions and investigations.

A key aim of the Service is to continually improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its Services. It is also to recover from the loss of staff and to catch up on all the missed food programmed inspections, hence the 2-year plan. Now Complete. Although Staff numbers are once again below what is required to run the service.

Where the review process identifies areas for improvement or development, these will be adopted in accordance with current in-house documented procedure, the FSA Framework Agreement, Statutory Code of Practice and National guidance.

Any variation from this policy will be agreed through the team's management review process. Situations requiring amendment or addition to this policy must be approved by the Food and Safety Manager and will be made as soon as possible.

11.0 Areas for Development

The following Service developments are planned for the period 2026-2027:

- The team will continue to work in accordance with the Food Standard Agency Recovery Plan and return to normal operating within the new FLCoP.
- Continue the review and updating of the Standard Operating Procedures and Policies for this Service (specifically the Sampling program).
- Adapt to any changes as a result of the FSA "Achieving Business Compliance Program"

- Review procedures in relation to export certificates for food not of animal origin. (There has been a significant increase in export certificates since Brexit.)
- Follow guidance provided by FSA/APHA/DEFRA to ensure officers are competent to carry out duties such as export health certificates.
- Continue with the full recovery of the sampling program.
- Review the existing team enforcement policy to ensure it reflects national and local policy and guidance. (Note Completed November 2023)
- Develop the Idox Uniform Enterprise IT application. The Enterprise system is a management tool which helps ensure high quality service delivery and the App on tablets.
- Update website to provide best practice advice to businesses.

The signatories below hereby confirm that Tendring District Council is committed to maintaining high standards of food safety within its area, and that sufficient resources will be made available to provide the service capacity to achieve this.

.....
Corporate Director-Operations and Delivery

.....
Date

.....
Portfolio Holder- Environment

.....
Date

Appendix A

