

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND HEALTH

Decision Made: 14 July 2022

Food Service Plan 2022 - 2023

Issue for Decision

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) require all food law enforcement authorities to prepare a Food Service Plan to reflect achievements, plan for future challenges and identify resource to meet this need.

Decision Made

That the Mid-Kent Food Service Plan 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Given the impact the Covid_19 pandemic has had on the hospitality sector, together with the recruitment difficulties the Council is experiencing, due to a national shortage of competent enforcement officers, the food service plan outlines the challenges that lie ahead for the service and how managers and officers intend to respond.

At this point in time, with the UK position of importing food into the country, the impact of the UK leaving the EU is not anticipated to impact on the service.

The FSA require the Food Service Plan to demonstrate we follow principles of:

- Good regulation
- Focus on key delivery issues and outcomes
- Provide an essential link with corporate and financial planning
- Set objectives for the future and identify major issues that cross service boundaries
- Provide a means of managing performance and making performance comparisons; and
- Provide information on the authority's service delivery to stakeholders, including businesses and consumers.

The format for the plan is set down by the FSA, and as a shared service we benefit by providing comparison information for all partnership local authorities, Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the delivery of food enforcement over the last two years. The effect of numerous lockdowns on the hospitality sector is well documented, but for food enforcement this

meant that the inspections that were due during times of lockdown have caused a backlog of inspections, that need to be addressed.

Locally, Kent has seen the creation of a new Border Inspection Post at Ashford and the reinstalment of Dover as one the busiest ports of entry to the country from Europe. This has had an impact on our ability to recruit and retain competent officers for food enforcement by creating even more competition for staff, on top of the competition from London authorities, plus individuals making life changes.

Lockdowns saw a surge in new food business registrations, a trend which is continuing. Some of these businesses are transitory (furloughed individuals) but they impact on officer time as the Council must process their registration, arrange visits for an initial hygiene risk rating, provide guidance and advise them.

The pandemic also required the service to respond to the numerous Covid enforcement measures, diverting resource to projects and activities as the county went through Tiers, Steps and eventually the opening of the economy.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

1. Approve the Mid Kent Food Service Plan 2022-23 (Appendix 1)
2. Don't approve the Mid Kent Food Service Plan (Appendix 1) - This would be counter to the requirement of the FSA Framework Agreement and suggest that the authority was not having due regard for their food law enforcement responsibilities.
3. 3. Do nothing – as point 2.

Background Papers

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.

Signed: _____
(Lead Member for Housing and Health – Councillor Simon Webb)

Full details of the report for the decision can be found online at:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

This issue was also considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee and the details of that Committee's consideration can be found online at:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

Call-In Waiver: This is an urgent decision due to the Food Standards Agency's deadline of 15 July 2022 for receipt of the Council's Food Service Plan 2022-23. This decision will therefore not be subject to call-in and will be implemented immediately.