



Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27

This document has been classified as: Official

Joanne Chastney, Service Lead, Environmental Health

**Licensing and Regulatory Committee
10th July 2026**

Report to Licensing and Regulatory Committee

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Karen Pittuck, Lead Member for Highways, Neighbourhoods and Community Safety

Report of Stuart Wright, Director of Place Strategy

Subject: Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27

Date: 10th July 2026

Wards affected: All

Council ambitions: Safer, stronger Communities, Healthy and Well

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: General Exception Rule / Special Urgency Rule? No

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: Cllr Alan Rice

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Committee of the development of the Food and Feed Law Service Plan for 2026-27, and to increase member awareness of the work of the Council's Environmental Health team in respect of Food and Feed Law Enforcement.

Background Information

2. Ensuring the safety of food for human consumption is a long-standing, statutory, public-health role of the Council, delivered through the Environmental Health team.
3. On an annual basis Local Authorities are required to prepare a service plan, the content of which is prescribed in the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Codes of Practice and the 'Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities'. This agreement prescribes in detail the areas of the Food and Feed service that should be covered by the plan.
4. The Food and Feed Law Service Plan demonstrates the Local Authority's commitment to delivering an effective food and feed service, while also serving as a key document used by the FSA to assess the Authority's performance and compliance with regulatory requirements.
5. The Plan sets out how the Feed and Food Law Service takes account of the five principles of good regulation when planning and delivering services, namely:
 - targeting (to take a risk-based approach)
 - proportionality (such as only intervening when necessary)
 - accountability (to explain and justify service levels and decisions to the public and to stakeholders);
 - consistency (to apply regulations consistently to all parties); and
 - transparency (being open and user-friendly).
6. The plan sets out the general aims, objectives, and scope of the food service, and how it is delivered. To this end it also contains a breakdown of the resources available to deliver the service. It provides a framework upon which a scrutinising body, such as the Food Standards Agency, can conduct an official audit.
7. The plan details the numbers, types, and priority ratings of the Borough's food premises, the frequencies of planned interventions, sampling programmes to be undertaken, specialist project work and reactive work including the service's response to food/feed complaints and hazard warnings, and the investigation of infectious disease cases/outbreaks.

8. The plan reviews service performance over the previous 12 months and sets out priorities for the year ahead, considering national strategic drivers alongside local operational demands, risks, and resource capacity.
9. To help ensure local transparency and accountability, and to show their contribution to the authority's corporate plan, food and feed service plans are approved at the relevant level established for the local authority, which for South Tyneside Council is the Lead Member.

Main issues and Options to be Considered

Key Achievements 2025-26

10. The main achievement in 2025-26 was the mapping and migration of the food business database to accommodate the FSA's new Food Standards Delivery Model. This allowed the Food Authority to feed back the statistical performance returns for the second part of 2025-26 using the FSA's new reporting facility by the April 2026 deadline.
11. Two of the main food business questionnaires used to manage and regulate lower risk rated food businesses and determine the need for site inspections, were transitioned to the Council's web-based on-line forms service. This aims to reduce the number of paper questionnaires sent out annually and deliver significant savings in postage costs.
12. 99.9% of due official hygiene interventions were completed for high-risk food premises in the Borough equating to 132 full inspections and verification interventions.
13. A further 197 lower-risk, D-rated premises received an official intervention, equating to 88% of due official food hygiene controls completed. An external consultant was engaged to address the 2024–25 backlog and support delivery of all Category D interventions by March 2026. Following assurance that the programme was on track, the FSA closed the associated action plan in May 2026.
14. In addition to the programmed inspections, 134 new business inspections were completed compared to 108 in the previous year, showing a steep rise in new businesses setting up in the Borough, many choosing to operate from home or trade exclusively online
15. 49 revisits and 44 hygiene rerating assessments were recorded for food hygiene and safety related matters, to check for compliance and to determine the need for more formal intervention, these figures compared to 45 and 32 respectively for the previous year.

16. 10 voluntary and formal detention and seizure notices were served to remove unsafe food from the market in 2025-26 mainly in respect of imported sweets and confectionery containing illegal colourings, additives or labelling contraventions.
17. The service received 110 general food service requests in 2025-26 compared to 71 in 2024-25 and food officers responded to 247 complaints relating to premises conditions and or microbiological or physical contamination incidents.
18. The team continues to offer advice and support to businesses as part of its regulatory role, running a small training session at the local mosque, on allergen controls and compliance. The session was attended by with food business operators and food handlers from the Bangladeshi community.
19. Although not part of the Service Plan, the Council contributed to the North- East Regional LA Food Allergy Group, which received a Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Outstanding Team Award in June 2026. The award recognised the group's collaborative work to reduce food allergen incidents, including business engagement, allergen awareness initiatives and the development of a regional single point of contact for reporting concerns, which has since informed consideration of a national scheme by the FSA.

Priorities for 2026-27

20. **Deliver High-Priority Hygiene and Standards Interventions** – through 2026-27 the Commercial Food and Safety team will aim to continue to focus resource on the high-risk rated A-C Hygiene inspection programme, the High Priority and Medium Risk 1 Food Standards Programme, and unrated businesses
21. **Manage Impact of New Food Standards Delivery Model** – in view of an additional 300+ interventions being required as a result of the new model (the majority of which are medium risk, 3yr or less frequency), the team will need to focus on scaling up Standards interventions and ensuring accurate risk ratings and prioritisation within the system.
22. **Address the Backlog of Lower-Risk Hygiene Inspections** – competing priorities mean there is a risk the backlog will persist without additional resource or consultancy support. The team will focus on clearing the D and E category backlog if funding permits.
23. **Improve Management Information System (MIS) and Data Quality** – current management of the MIS places a high administrative burden on professional officers. In 2026-27 the team will continue to focus on cleansing migrated data, aligning hygiene and standards records and improving reporting for the FSA's KPIs.
24. **Intelligence-led Enforcement of Emerging Food Risks** – the team will build on its intelligence-led approach to identify and tackle emerging risks from online

and home-based businesses, illegal imports and food fraud, by strengthening data use, improving information-sharing, and delivering co-ordinated, targeted interventions.

25. **Improve Compliance in Poor Performing Businesses** –. The team will focus on improving compliance in poorly performing food businesses by targeting 0–2 rated premises and repeat offenders, strengthening follow-up interventions and enforcement, and addressing key causes of non-compliance including poor premises conditions, allergen management failures, and high staff turnover.
26. **Maintain Strong New Business Controls** – the team will focus on managing a high volume of new food business registrations and associated risks from business turnover and unsuitable premises, by ensuring timely risk-based triage within 7 days and prioritising high-risk inspections within 28 days.
27. **Protect Public Health Through Sampling and Targeted Projects** – the team will continue to undertake microbiological and compositional sampling and allergen testing, helping to maximise impact and build on recent successes where sampling has driven improved compliance, especially in respect of allergens.
28. **Sustain Workforce Capacity and Competency** – the team will aim to maintain the existing authorised officer base and competency, contribute to apprentice development and seek to secure additional resource to establish technical support within the team

Implications

29. The Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27 is essential to the delivery of the Council's food service, as it sets out the aims, objectives and regulatory priorities for the year ahead. It directs food and feed regulatory activity across the borough, ensuring resources are targeted effectively. The plan also reviews performance over the previous year and provides a mechanism to identify and address any variances from the intended outcomes of the previous service plan.

Financial and Resources

30. There are no financial or resource implications arising from the proposed recommendations in this information report.

Legal and Governance

31. There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from the proposed recommendations in this information report.
32. Local authorities have a statutory duty to enforce food and feed law, and the Service Plan forms a key element in demonstrating how this duty is discharged.

The plan supports compliance with the Food Safety Act 1990 and associated legislation, as well as aligning service delivery with the Food Standards Agency's Framework Agreement and regulatory expectations.

Risk

33. There are no significant risks arising from the recommendations in this report

Equality and Diversity and Community

34. There are no significant equality, diversity, community and integration implications arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The Service Plan appended to this report will be published on the Council's website to further improve communication with food businesses and the public and to increase transparency about the way in which the Council delivers the Food and Feed service in South Tyneside.

Environmental and Sustainability

35. Routine food safety interventions provide opportunities to raise awareness of food-related health issues, to promote healthier food choices for consumers and to encourage the use of sustainable and locally sourced food supplies. Through implementation of the Food and Feed Law Service Plan, the food service contributes to the development of policies aimed at achieving a healthier, sustainable, and more equitable food system in South Tyneside.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

36. **Healthy and Well:** the service ensures that our communities can live safe from harm and that public health impacts are minimised through:
- the inspection of food and feed premises for hygiene and standards compliance,
 - the investigation of complaints and cases of food poisoning, including taking action to prevent the spread of infection,
 - taking appropriate action in response to food incidents and
 - the promotion of key food safety messages
37. **Connected to Jobs:** the service aims to open up opportunities for business growth and job creation by:
- working with new food business operators to help them understand and meet legal standards,
 - offering advice and guidance as part of routine inspections,

- providing on-site advisory meetings for Food Business Operators,
 - providing Food Hygiene Scheme rating visits and targeted training to high-risk businesses on key food safety matters and
 - providing food hygiene guidance in languages other than English.
38. **Targeting Support to Make Things Fairer:** the provision of both proactive and reactive interventions helps to ensure a comprehensive and reliable food safety service which promotes confidence in regulation for businesses and consumers alike, with specialist and focused support where it is needed most.

Consultation and Engagement

39. Not applicable

Recommendations

40. It is recommended that the Committee note the content of this report

Reasons for Recommendations

41. Not applicable.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27.

Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location
South Tyneside Council Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2025-26		southtyneside.gov.uk South Tyneside Council Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2025-26
The Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Regulation		The Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Regulation (<i>password protected</i>)
Food and Feed Codes of Practice		Food and Feed Codes of Practice