

Policy Committee

16 September 2026



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	Food Service Plan 2026-2027
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Katie Heath, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Food & Safety
Lead Councillor	Cllr Rachel Eden – Education & Public Health
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	1. That Members note the content of the statutory Food Service Plan for 2026-2027

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the updated Food Service Plan for the period 2026-2027 (Appendix 1). The Food Service Plan is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities who undertake official food controls and is detailed within the Food Law Code of Practice set by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Food Service Plan outlines the Local Authority's commitment to development of the food service.
- 1.2. The FSA set a standard template for the Food Service Plan which must be drawn up in accordance with the FSA Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities. The Food Service Plan must include qualitative and quantitative performance reviews of delivery against previous plans and outline how national priorities and standards will be addressed and delivered locally. The Food Service Plan serves to assist Local Authorities in aligning with the principles of good regulation, focus on key delivery issues, provide an essential link with corporate and financial planning, set objectives, manage performance and provide information on service delivery to key stakeholders.
- 1.3. The Local Authority must put in place arrangements for the regular review and update of the Food Service Plan. We find it useful to complete this on an annual basis after the close of year figures have become available (end of April). There has been a delay to the availability of close of year figures this year due to ongoing works to improve data on our Management Information Service (MIS). Unfortunately, some data remains incomplete at this time.
- 1.4. It was recommended in a previous FSA Audit that the Food Service Plan be presented to Members.
- 1.5. This Food Service Plan outlines the Food Service's key achievements for 2025-2026 and outlines service objectives and work plans for 2026-2027.
- 1.6. The Food & Safety Team would like to draw particular attention to its enforcement achievements in 2026-2027. These are detailed within the Food Service Plan at

paragraph 6.4.4 and demonstrates a significant increase in the number of Hygiene Emergency Prohibitions (formal closures). The Authority also initiated and completed legal proceedings under food hygiene legislation against a persistently non-compliant business and has further increased the number of written warnings issued for both food hygiene and food standards (based on available data). The Authority has had a number of high-profile enforcement matters publicised throughout the year including 3 prosecutions against premises found to be trading in unhygienic conditions and exposing the public to harm.

- 1.7. The Authority has worked hard throughout the year to realign with the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice (FLCOP) and has inspected a high percentage of all premises (categories A-D). As detailed in Table 1, below, the Authority has marginally fallen short across each rating category however, despite the reported percentage, the Authority completed all Category A premises that were open and available for inspection as at the end of 2025-2026. Following completion of our returns and upload of data to the MIS, a small number of premises that were not previously identified as requiring inspection have come to light. These are being inspected as quickly as possible but unfortunately contribute towards our inability to report 100% inspection completion across the board. Whilst we have marginally missed our 100% target we view that we have reasonably realigned with the Code of Practice and are in a position to report positive performance.
- 1.8. The Authority has continued to liaise, throughout 2025-2026, with the FSA's Performance Management Team. The Authority provided a further action plan in January 2026 after satisfying the FSA that they had resourced the team as far as possible. A copy of this action plan is available on request. The focus of January's action plan was in relation to data management and use of the MIS. The FSA has continued to be encouraged by the Authority's performance and efforts to document and complete the actions drafted however remains under monitoring. The FSA provided the Authority with a further deadline of 18th August for submission of accurate returns for 2026-2027 and a full establishment profile. The Authority has resubmitted updated returns to the FSA based on data updates carried out however a percentage of data uncertainty remains which is being addressed through a dedicated digital programme.
 - 1.8.1. Marginal differences exist as to the number of inspections, service requests and enforcement action carried out across the period 01/10/2025 31/03/2026.
 - 1.8.2. There is currently a 5% uncertainty factor of premises registered within this period.
 - 1.8.3. We are reporting estimated completion rates of: 100% of our food hygiene inspections for A and B rated premises, 94% of C premises, 90% of D premises and 71% of E premises that were due in the period 01/10/2025 to 31/03/2026. The data for unrated and outside of scope premises is not sufficiently accurate currently, so we are working on closing that gap.
 - 1.8.4. Current data indicates our food hygiene establishment profile to be:

Risk Rating	No of Premises
A	5
B	68
C	347
D	591
E	412
Unrated	150
Out of Scope	35
Total	1617

1.9. The FSA has also indicated that it will be monitoring the Authority's performance in delivery of official controls for Food Standards and required us to fully implement the new risk rating model.

1.9.1. The Authority carried out the conversion to the new risk rating model on 5th August 2026. We have successfully converted 94% of our premises to the new risk rating model and continue to work through the remaining premises.

1.9.2. The conversion has allowed us to run an establishment profile, which indicates our profile to be:

Intervention Frequency	No of Premises
1	0
3	0
6	6
12	59
24	324
36	366
48	118
60	148
72	75
120	17
Unrated	479
Out of scope	25
Total Number of premises	1617

1.10. The Food & Safety Team is currently fully resourced.

1.11. The Food Service Plan makes reference to Dark Kitchens, these are businesses that operate without a customer facing premises and supply food direct to the final consumer through online aggregators. Known dark kitchens operating within Reading are registered with the Authority and undergo the same level of inspection scrutiny as any other registered food business. The Authority also seeks to investigate any information or intelligence provided about these businesses, whether currently registered or not. As they provide food direct to the final consumer their food hygiene rating score is also displayed publicly online. Nationally the central competent authority, the Food Standards Agency, liaises with the online aggregators to try and achieve compliance and high standards of hygiene across the businesses they represent.

2. Policy Context

2.1. The FSA is an independent Government department responsible for protecting public health and consumers' wider interests in food. Part of their role is to ensure that local authorities comply with the 'Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities'. The Agreement details:

- that publicly available local service plans to increase transparency of local enforcement services should be published (i.e. the Food Service Plan);
- agreed food law enforcement standards for local authorities;
- enhanced monitoring data with greater focus on inspection outcomes and which provides more detailed information on local authority performance;
- an audit scheme aimed at securing improvements and sharing good practice.

- 2.2. The Framework Agreement recognises that all Food officers should be correctly authorised, and a documented procedure must be in place for the authorisation of officers based on qualifications, competence and in accordance with the Food Safety Act Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance.
- 2.3. Food Officers carry out inspections of food premises, undertake food sampling, investigate complaints about food premises including infectious diseases or food poisoning cases. Environmental Health Officers consider the hygiene of food premises (including operating the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme) and ensure that food is microbiologically fit and safe for consumption while Trading Standards and Environmental Health Officers consider food standards. Food Standards includes ensuring food is described accurately and not in a misleading manner as well as ensuring food is not chemically contaminated.

3. The Proposal

3.1. Current Position:

- 3.1.1. As part of the Framework Agreement, the Council submits monitoring data to the Food Standards Agency, this is carried out bi-annually. Monitoring data is used to form the basis of the Food Service Plan and review of the previous year's performance. It also informs the forthcoming targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 3.1.2. Throughout 2025-2026 the Food Service focussed its resources on carrying out priority work in line with internal key performance indicators and to address our remaining longstanding overdue premises, including those considered to present a low risk to the public. Details of achieved inspections in 2025-2026 and remaining inspections that have been carried over into 2026-2027 can be found in sections 3.1.14, 3.1.15, 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 of the Food Service Plan. Table 1, below, provides an overview of the completed inspections in 2025-2026 and the number of targets that were met. A comparison against the previous year 2024-2025 is also provided.

Table 1¹

Objective	Priority/Source	Target Set (2025-2026) (%)	Achieved (2025-2026) (%)	Met/Not Met (2025-2026)	Target Set (2024-2025) (%)	Achieved (2024-2025) (%)	Met/Not Met (2024-2025)
Inspection of Food Hygiene Premises risk rated A (due/overdue)	Corporate KPI Food Law Code of Practice	100 100	88	Not Met Not Met	100 100	100	Met
Inspection of Food Hygiene Premises risk rated B (due/overdue)	Corporate KPI Food Law Code of Practice	100 100	93	Not Met Not Met	80 100	100	Met
Inspection of Food Hygiene Premises risk rated C	Food Law Code of Practice	100	97	Not Met	100	99	Not Met
Inspection of Food Hygiene Premises risk rated D (overdue)	Food Law Code of Practice	100	99.6	Not Met	100	97	Not Met
Inspection of Food Hygiene Premises risk rated E (overdue)	Food Law Code of Practice	100	94	Not Met	100	51	Not Met
Inspection of Food Standards Premises risk rated A	Corporate KPI Food Law Code of Practice	100 100	100	Met Met	100 100	100	Met
Inspection of Food Standards Premises risk rated B (due/overdue)	Food Law Code of Practice	100	48		100	45	Not Met
Inspection of Food Standards Premises risk rated C (due/overdue)	Food Law Code of Practice	100	74		100	44	Not Met
Unrated (newly registered) Food Hygiene Premises	Corporate KPI Food Law Code of Practice	75 100	99.4	Not Met	70 100	92	Met Not Met
Unrated (newly registered)	Food Law Code of Practice	100	44	Not Met	Not reported		

Food Standards Premises					
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1. Numbers are approximate.

Key –

Risk Rating A – These are the premises presenting the highest risk to consumers either from the methods of processing, distribution reach and clientele served, poor levels of compliance or a combination of the above. Food Hygiene premises risk rated A require an intervention/inspection every 6 months. For Food Standards this is every 12 months.

Risk Rating B – the risk rating is again determined through scores awarded under the categories of processing methods, distribution, clientele served and level of compliance. For food hygiene those premises rated B require an intervention/inspection every 12 months.

Risk Rating C – for Food Hygiene these premises require an inspection every 18 months.

N.B. The risk rating categories are set nationally by the FSA in the Food Law Code of Practice.

- 3.1.3. Please see paras 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 of the Food Service Plan for further details on inspections completed in 2025-2026.
- 3.1.4. From the total number of inspections due and overdue in 2025-2026 the Food Service achieved 95.2% of the total number of Food Hygiene Inspections due and 66.5% of the total Food Standards Inspections due, these numbers have increased significantly since 2024-2025. The number of completed inspections do not provide a full account of inspection activity carried out. A significant number of premises close within the year which is not accounted for. The Food & Safety team also carry out re-rating inspections of previously inspected premises.
- 3.1.5. The breakdown of food hygiene ratings of food premises in the borough as at 9 July 2026 is:

Food Hygiene Rating	Descriptor	Number of Premises
5	Very Good	882
4	Good	247
3	Generally Satisfactory	147
2	Improvement Necessary	38
1	Major Improvement Necessary	40
0	Urgent Improvement Necessary	5
Awaiting Inspection		82
Exempt from scheme		72

N.B. The information in this table has been obtained from our upload to the food hygiene rating website. The total number of premises recorded with food hygiene ratings does not correlate with the total number of food business premises within Reading. Not all premises on our register fall within the scope of regular inspection and are considered outside of scope, these premises do not have a food hygiene rating.

- 3.1.9 There has been an increase in 2025-2026, from the previous year, in the number of premises that are not broadly compliant, that is those with a Food Hygiene Rating of 2 or lower.

- 3.1.10 The Food & Safety Team has carried out enforcement activity throughout 2025-2026; 27 food related notices have been served. Enforcement activity includes closing of premises that present an imminent risk through service of a Hygiene Improvement Notice or Voluntary Closure, Detention, seizure and destruction notices for contaminated food and service of Hygiene Improvement Notices or Imported Food Notices for non-compliant premises/food. Additionally, the team has concluded 2 food related prosecutions. 1,007 written warnings were issued to food businesses for food hygiene matters and a further 108 written warnings were issued for food standards matters. A breakdown of the notices served can be found in para 6.4.4 of the Food Service Plan.

3.2. Options Proposed

- 3.2.1. The Local Authority is required to deliver all official controls as detailed within the Food Law Code of Practice. The Authority has continued to not meet this requirement in 2025-2026 but by a very small margin. Following ongoing monitoring of the Authority the FSA retains an area of concern where further improvement is required and is in initial correspondence regarding our delivery of food standards official controls. The area of concern is:

a) address issues with the MIS to enable accurate reporting.

The Authority continues to work with the FSA and to respond to their requests for action. There are currently no plans to provide further resourcing for food standards activities.

- 3.2.2. The Food Service Plan identifies the amount of work required to deliver not only our food safety responsibilities but the wider work of the Food & Safety Team, this is outlined in Appendix 5 of the Food Service Plan. Officers delivering the Food Service are also responsible for delivering a wider remit of work including sports ground safety, health and safety enforcement, accident investigation, special treatment licensing and infectious disease investigation. We continue to prioritise resources towards our highest risk activities and work with the FSA to maximise efficiency.
- 3.2.3. We are continuing to engage with a single contact point at the FSA and continue working and engaging on the food service plan and improvement plans.
- 3.2.4. The Food Service will continue to prioritise the following key pieces of work which align with the Council's corporate objectives:
- Carry out a planned inspection programme focussing on high-risk activities first and foremost which keep consumers safe, whilst supporting the business to improve.
 - Continue to operate a reactive food hygiene and standards sampling programme to support interventions carried out within Reading's premises and ensure that the food sold is safe to eat and not misleading to the consumer whilst supporting wider national programmes to achieve this across England.
 - Continue to advertise our paid advice service for food hygiene and standards within our local community and Reading-based businesses.
 - Improve digital access to our Food Service through our webpages and enable interaction through social media platforms.
 - Undertaking a review of officer authorisations in line with a larger corporate piece on delegations and enforcement to ensure that all officers are appropriately and correctly authorised to carry out their remit of work.
 - Ensure that all officers are appropriately qualified, trained with documented competency in line with Food Law Code of Practice.
 - Ensure that the service works to correct and up to date standard operating procedures to ensure consistency and to work within the parameters of the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance.

3.3. Other Options Considered

- 3.3.1. The Food Service has a number of other responsibilities beyond delivery of Food Hygiene and Food Standards Services, this includes but is not limited to investigation of infectious disease, health and safety accidents, sports ground safety work at our designated

stadium and regulated stand and registration and inspection of Special Treatments. A number of these work streams are also high priority to ensure the safety of residents and visitors to Reading. A full breakdown of the Service's work responsibilities can be found in Appendix 5 of the Food Service Plan.

- 3.3.2. The Service continues to risk assess incoming and existing work to focus resources on priority matters.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Food Service Plan 2026-2027 supports the Council's Vision 'To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its successes at its core'. The Service Plan supports and aligns with the following corporate priorities, and the Food & Safety Team Plan has prioritised work activities around these:

Promote more equal communities in Reading	Providing advice to existing and potential food businesses. Investigation of food safety, labelling and composition complaints Investigation of allegations of food borne illness and outbreak management. Management of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and encouraging higher food hygiene ratings through the re-rating process.
Secure Reading's economic and cultural success	Providing advice to existing and potential food businesses. Providing a paid advice service for complex and bespoke business needs.
Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint	Undertaking food hygiene and standards inspections, revisits to non-compliant premises and enforcement action where necessary. Investigation of food safety, labelling and composition complaints Investigation of allegations of food borne illness and outbreak management. Management of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and encouraging higher food hygiene ratings through the re-rating process. Providing advice to existing and potential food businesses Encouraging the adoption of good hygiene practices at all stages of the food chain
Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children	Undertaking food hygiene and standards inspections, revisits to non-compliant premises and enforcement action where necessary. Investigation of food safety, labelling and composition complaints Investigation of allegations of food borne illness and outbreak management. Management of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and encouraging higher food hygiene ratings through the re-rating process. Providing advice to existing and potential food businesses

	Encouraging the adoption of good hygiene practices at all stages of the food chain
Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future	Developing our social media and web presence to ensure our services are accessible to all.

4.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

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4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. The environmental or climate implications arising from the Food Service Plan 2026-2027 or its implementation is 'Net Nil'. Consideration has been given to the potential implications that could arise from this Plan and there are no additional points outside of general Council working practice that apply.

5.3. The most significant activity from the Plan is inspection activity. The Food Service have access to pooled bus passes and a large number of premises are based within Reading Town Centre where inspections can be carried out by foot. In general, use of public transport and travel by foot or bicycle is encouraged over the use of personal or pool vehicles. Interventions are recorded on paper which requires a copy to be left at the premises at the time of the intervention. The Food Service Plan supports the wider request for mobile working solutions which will reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

5.4. A Climate and Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 2.

6. Community Engagement

6.1. There is no requirement to consult the community on the Food Service Plan.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 3 to this report. Agreement to and implementation of the Food Service Plan 2026-2027 does not have a differential impact on; racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. The work of the Food Service contributes to positive public health outcomes by ensuring that food businesses operating in the borough are required to comply with relevant food law and are safe places for residents and visitors to dine. The Service investigates incidents of infectious disease, complaints, and food incidents to ensure that businesses are legally compliant and do not pose a risk to consumers. Where businesses are found to be non-compliant a staged enforcement approach is undertaken to reach compliance. The Service also undertakes health and safety investigation work to reduce the risk to employees and visitors' health, safety in welfare, within business.

8.2. The Food Service Plan 2026-2027 has due regard for the relevant legal provisions, Food Law Code of Practice, and other statutory guidance. The Food Service Plan comments upon upcoming regulatory changes where applicable Work streams commented on within the Food Service Plan are prioritised in accordance with public health implications.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. The Food Service Plan is written in accordance with the nationally agreed Framework Agreement with the FSA. No delegation is required to implement the recommendations of this report or the Food Service Plan. The Plan sets out how the Authority will meet its statutory obligations. There has been no change to the Public Protection Enforcement Policy or Food Enforcement Policy since consultation with the Legal Team in May 2025.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. The Food Service Plan sets out the service budget and resources required to deliver the Council's statutory services. There are no changes to agreed Revenue budgets as a result of this report, all costs will be delivered within the Approved Revenue budget.

10.2. The revenue Budgets arising from running the service are set out below for information:

	2026-2027 £000
Employee costs	539
Other running costs	39
Expenditure	578
Income from: Fees and charges	-24
Other income	-2
Total Income	-26
Net Cost	552

10.3. There are no capital implications arising from implementation of the Food Service Plan or operation of the Food Service.

10.4. The current resource allocation does not permit full delivery of the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice and other work allocated to the Food & Safety Team. The Team is therefore focussed on delivering an effective service, focussed on risk, within the approved budget provision.

10.5. Value for Money (VfM)

10.6 The Food Service Plan 2026-2027 outlines statutory work required to be undertaken by the Council. The Food & Safety Team Plan, which can be found at Appendix 5 of the Plan, details additional non-statutory work which is required to deliver a fit for purpose service. As part of this, revenue generating activities including expanding our paid advice service for local businesses, have been included within priority work.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. Not Applicable

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are None.

Appendices

1. Food Service Plan 2026-2027
2. Climate and Impact Assessment
3. Equality Impact Assessment