

Commercial Team Service Plan 2026/2027



Environmental Health & Licensing Department

Food Safety and Health & Safety at Work

Service Plan - 2026/2027

PAWS 
ON THE
DOORS



This document is available in alternative formats upon request, such as large print or electronically. Please contact the Principal Environmental Health Officer (Commercial Team) on email paul.hobbs@horsham.gov.uk telephone 01403 215421

This Plan is Approved by the Director of Communities

Signed:



Date: 19 June 2026

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1. Introduction

This is the annual Service Plan for Environmental Health & Licensing's Commercial Team. We are responsible for regulation of environmental health matters at most commercial premises within the Horsham district.

The Commercial Team is the competent enforcing authority for both food safety and health & safety at work in commercial business premises that fall within our jurisdiction, within the Horsham district. This is undertaken through proactive interventions to ensure the required standards are continually maintained through inspection, support, reactive complaint investigations, and acting on local intelligence.

We are also a consultee to Development Management on all Planning Applications that relate to commercial premises with the view to protecting local amenity, as well as investigating and abating any disturbances considered to be statutory nuisances caused by businesses that affect their neighbours or local communities.

The Commercial Team also holds obligations over a range of public health matters including the investigation and control of certain reportable infectious diseases, operating as the practical enforcement arm of the UK Health Security Agency. Related to this, the administration of tattoo and body piercing licensing schemes is also our responsibility, in addition to maintaining standards and issuing licences for animal boarding, dog breeding and dangerous wild-animal activities.

Some commercial premises will fall outside of our role of enforcement authority due to statutory regulations, but in such cases, we work closely with our governmental partners to support their work and maintain the Service's local knowledge. These organisations include the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) who hold the relevant regulatory power at a comparatively small number of businesses within the district.

This document provides guidance on how we intend to deliver our Service's statutory obligations within the period of April 2026 to March 2027.

2. Service Aims & Objectives

Horsham District Council's Commercial Team aims:

- To ensure food businesses have adequate arrangements in place to enable safe hygienic food production and handling.
- To control the spread of infectious diseases through the investigation of cases and outbreaks.
- To secure and maintain a safe and healthy environment, in those establishments for which we have a health and safety enforcement responsibility.
- To support businesses by providing food/health export certification.
- To provide advice and assistance to businesses and consumers

Regulators Code

The Regulators' Code has statutory effect under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and provides a clear, flexible, and principles-based framework for how we as regulators should engage with those we regulate.

The Regulators Code states that we should avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens on those we regulate through our regulatory activities. We are required to support businesses and choose proportionate approaches, based on relevant factors including, for example, business size and capacity.

Horsham District Council Plan 2023-2027

Protection of public health is our priority, but at Horsham, we also have a history of working with and supporting local businesses to encourage regulatory compliance.

In many cases, such improvements in the management of occupational health and food safety have led to cost savings for the Service, through reducing the number of reactive interventions we are required to respond to, such as complaints of food poisoning, workplace accidents and general ill health.

One of the Council's main objectives is to encourage local businesses to work together to promote the local economy and we are proud to have assisted many of our local businesses to improve and prosper. We believe that the best way to protect people is not just through legal compliance but also by continuous improvement.

Enforcing legal standards when necessary

However, where businesses are found to be not of compliance – when advice and support fail to improve standards informally – we have a wide range of regulatory powers to tackle offences and non-compliance ranging from:

- Fixed penalty notices for smoking offences,
- Improvement Notices for food safety and health & safety at work
- Prohibition of work activities, equipment or processes that present imminent risk
- The control of infectious disease or contamination using powers that can be exercised in the Health Protection (Local Authority Powers) Regulations 2010
- Closure of business premises
- Prosecution for serious breaches of the law
- Prohibiting persons from operating a food business in the future.

Risk based approach.

This is fundamental to our public health principles and guides all our service delivery priorities. Its intention is to focus our efforts to protect our most vulnerable residents first and dealing with offenders who have the widest or most significant impact of local communities urgently.

Working with other relevant stakeholders

To deliver our services effectively we work closely with many national organisations, including the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Health and Safety Executive, (HSE) UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA), Office of Product Safety & Standards (OPSS), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), etc.

In addition, we also work closely with our local authority colleagues throughout Sussex on numerous countywide forums sharing knowledge, experience and expertise. We actively participate in pan Sussex projects and incentives to raise awareness among the Sussex Business communities.

In 2024, the Commercial Team began hosting the Sussex EH portal for the benefit of all the Sussex Environmental Health teams, allowing bookings and payments for training and other events to be offered from a single point of contact.

This project was aided greatly by our everyday close working relationship with other departments within Horsham District Council, particularly Finance, but also Planning, Building Control, Economic Development, Legal Services, etc.

This Service Plan is in conjunction with –

- Council Plan 2023-2027
- Horsham District Economic Strategy 2017-2027

- The Environmental Health and Licensing Department's Service Plan 2026/2027

3. Demands of the Service

Officers within the Commercial Team deliver the service in conjunction with a wide range of environmental health functions in commercial premises. The Commercial Team routinely operate during office hours, although some inspections or interventions will be conducted outside of normal hours where this is necessary for access or in response to time sensitive matters of public health.

The Future of the Local Government.

There are plans for historic changes to local government across England. Local government reorganisation is the process of restructuring local authorities, specifically to move to a single level of councils in areas of England where there are currently two levels, such as Horsham District Council and West Sussex County Council.

Consultation is underway on how Councils across Sussex can effectively merge their operations with partner authorities in the new structure. There will be inevitable impact on the residents of Horsham once the new combined authority and proposed geographical area are determined.

Cross Boundaries

The Commercial Team cross several service boundaries in the following main areas:

- Food hygiene enforcement duties may coincide with and/or facilitate health and safety enforcement duties.
- Enforcement of Smokefree legislation to protect the health of employees and members of the public in the workplace and public places.
- Licensing and inspection of skin piercing establishments such as tattooists, acupuncturists, etc.
- Investigation of cases and outbreaks of notified infectious diseases, other than food poisoning incidents.
- Enforcement of the Sun Beds (Regulation) Act 2010 which prohibit under 18s from using tanning salons and sunbeds.
- Pleasure Boat Licensing for operators of a boat or vessel for carrying passengers for hire.
- Consultation on planning and building control applications with a focus on environmental health topics (food safety, health & safety, nuisance/ local amenity, water neutrality) at the development stage for commercial premises.
- We act as a Statutory Consultee on all premises licence applications made under the Licensing Act 2003
- Investigation of nuisance complaints in commercial premises relating to, light, drainage, noise & odour

- Licensing and inspection of animal boarding establishments, dog breeding premises, zoos, pet shops, horse riding establishments, the keeping of dangerous and wild animals and enforcement of the microchipping of dogs & cats.

Food Hygiene Inspection Programmes

The frequency of inspections of food businesses is determined by a food safety risk rating given to it at the last programmed inspection. Guidance on the rating system is contained in the Food Law Code of Practice (FLCOP).

- Category A rated premises inspected at least every 6 months,
- Category B premises at every twelve months
- Category C premises at least every 18 months.
- Category D premises at least every 24 months
- Category E premises. A programme of Alternative Enforcement Strategies or interventions every three years.

The FSA allow Enforcement Authorities to adopt an alternative inspection programme for low-risk premises (Category E) however to receive a Food Hygiene Rating these premises must receive a physical inspection.

Under previous requirements, initial inspections of new food business establishments were required within 28 days of registration or from the point at which the Competent Authority became aware the business was operating.

The new FLCOP (October 2025) introduces additional flexibility, allowing competent authorities to use information supplied by Food Business Operators (FBOs) during registration to determine the timing of initial inspections. Where appropriate, lower-risk food businesses may now receive their initial inspection up to 3 months after registration, providing more proportionate and risk-based regulation.

In addition, the updated FLCOP expands the scope of tasks that may be undertaken by non-food qualified staff, enabling better allocation of professional officer time.

Authorities may now:

- Use registration information to conduct a desktop assessment of risk.
- Prioritise higher-risk establishments for early inspection.
- Allocate up to 3 months for initial inspections of low-risk businesses.

This provides increased operational flexibility and supports risk-based service planning as we can explore how non-food qualified officers may now legally undertake certain non-official-control functions, including:

- Education, advice, and coaching
- Information gathering, including initial desktop assessments of new businesses
- Gathering, processing, and sharing intelligence

These tasks do not require authorisation as an Official Control Officer, opening opportunities to redesign workflows and reduce demand on qualified Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).

In April 2025, the Commercial Team lost a contracted food officer who historically completed 200–250 programmed food hygiene inspections per year. Although another contractor has been engaged, they are unable to deliver the same volume, resulting in increased workloads for the remaining qualified officers.

This is creating:

- Reduced capacity for advisory work
- Increased pressure on statutory inspection targets
- Less resilience to fluctuations in demand (e.g., seasonal increases in registrations)

The changes introduced by the new FLCOP offer tools to mitigate this emerging capacity gap.

As from the 1st of April 2026, EH&L's Agile database showed a number of 1329 food business in the Horsham District broken down as follows:

Type of Premises	Number
Primary Producers	23
Manufacturers/Packers	52
Importers/Exporters (EU)	2
Importers/Exporters (3rd Countries)	0
Distributors/Transporters	38
Retailers	219
Caterers, Restaurants, Pubs, etc	995
Total	1329

The premises on the Council's database fall into the following risk rating categories:

Category	Number
A	2
B	22
C	164
D	484
E	622
New premises not yet rated	35
Total	1329

2026/27 Food Service Programme

813 programmed food hygiene inspections are due to be undertaken in 2026/2027. This number will increase as new businesses register during the year and represents a 349 premises increase from the previous year, although such variation can occur due to the nature of differing inspection frequencies.

Although a replacement food safety contractor has been appointed following last year's loss, they are unable to deliver the same volume of inspections. In addition, the service has lost a part-time food safety officer. This is expected to have an adverse impact on our ability to meet inspection targets.

Priority will continue to be given to higher-risk premises (A, B and C categories); however, delays are anticipated for lower-risk businesses and new food registrations.

The premises due for inspection fall into the following risk rating categories:

Category	Number
A	2
B	19
C	105
D	309
E	378
Total	813

The bulk of the food premises fall under the scope of Assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 852/2004, as applied by the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013. This lays down general hygiene requirements.

However, there are some food businesses, where certain food is processed into meat products, dairy products or fishery products and then sold "other than to the final consumer". This means that the food is supplied wholesale or to other retail or catering outlets and then sold to the public.

These premises come under the scope of Assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 853/2004, as applied by the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations. This lays down specific hygiene rules for products of animal origin. Such premises require Product Specific Establishment Approval from the local authority for the specific processed food and are given an Approval Number which is incorporated in an oval shaped Identification Mark.

Horsham's unique approval code is **HJ**.

The Council currently has 5 approved establishments operating in the district, an increase of 2 from last year. It should however be noted that there has been a significant reduction in numbers over previous years, when we regulated many more premises. The loss of these businesses is generally due to economic factors.

	3 Meat Products Establishments 1 Egg Packing Establishment 1 Dairy Products Establishment
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Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

The Food Standards Agency's national scheme provides consumers with information about hygiene standards in food businesses at the time they are inspected.

The standards are judged on three key factors observed during the inspection:

- How hygienically the food is handled (how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored)
- The condition of the structure of the buildings (the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other facilities); and
- How the business manages and records what it does to make sure food is safe.

The level of compliance with the food law found is rated on a scale. At the bottom of the scale is '0' – this means urgent improvement is required. At the top of the scale is '5' – this means the hygiene standards are very good.



The highest rating is achievable in every food business.

Food businesses in England are not legally required to display their rating at the premises. Ratings are however, displayed on the FSA website for the public to view.

Evidence suggests that a poor rating has a negative impact on trade and food businesses have come to appreciate that a good score is good for business.

Business awarded a rating of less than five, are entitled to request a re-rating inspection providing they have undertaken the necessary improvements highlighted at the programmed inspection. Our rates for 2026/27 are as follows:

- 'Standard' requested FHRS revisit: this is a full inspection which will be carried out unannounced, within 12 weeks of the formal request and received payment **£198.00**
- 'Urgent' requested FHRS revisit: this is a full inspection which will be carried out unannounced, within 14 days of the formal request and received payment **£272.00**

In 2025/26 received 9 requests of which 8 were 'Urgent Requested FHRS Revisits'. Only one premises did not received a higher rating at the re-visit

Food/Health & Safety Advisory Visits

As part of our commitment to the Better Regulation agenda to support businesses and promote local growth, the Service have always provided advice and guidance to new food businesses where requested. This has generally been informally and provided at no cost to the business. Such advice will cover food safety aspects such as pre-start-up advice to new businesses and the viability of proposed building works or alterations to existing premises.

In addition, we have previously offered a suite of more technical support, allowing a business to request a visit at any time:

- Pre-inspection coaching on how to improve Food Hygiene Rating, or how to maintain a current Food Hygiene Rating of 5.
- Expert advice on any new or proposed food manufacturing, as well as drafting of related food safety management documentation where required.
- Help with statutory food safety or occupational safety documentation.

Although we have no statutory duty to provide advisory visits, we always make every attempt to assist businesses who request our advice. Many businesses have found these services valuable, particularly as they see the regulator as being the ideal source of such advice and that we have offered it cost, significantly cheaper private sector consultants.

However, we are currently reviewing the paid additional services and costings we intend to offer going forward.

Food Export Certificate Service



The trade arrangements put into place in the wake of Great Britain leaving the EU provided the Service with an opportunity to offer the service of providing export health certificates (EHC) to businesses exporting food abroad.

We have set up a service that can be offered to any business in the UK for foodstuffs which we have certification authorisation for and charge a fee of **£87.00** per consignment. Some consignments incur additional administrative costs due to duplicated certificates or last-minute amendments.

This service has proved successful and a significant number of the businesses from outside the Horsham District are using this service.

All members of the food team have successfully completed a Food Competent Certification Officer qualification and registered with DEFRA, giving us authorisation to inspect & certify foods as being safe and issue food export certificates. Each officer has their own uniquely numbered certification stamp issued by the Agency.

EHCs can provide a challenge to the Service based on their complexity and size of consignments being exported, as well as often being time sensitive and requested with no prior notification, requiring rapid turn-around to meet export deadlines. However, the certification is undertaken as a streamlined and now well-practiced process, having only moderate disruption on officers' time resource. In 2025/2026 we issued 56 Export Certificates generating an income of **£4593.00**

Food Inspection and Sampling



Food sampling and environmental swabbing at food premises is an integral part of our food hygiene interventions to verify hygiene standards, processes, and food safety systems. UK Health Security Agency is funded to provide an allocation for the microbiological sampling of food and water samples in the Horsham District.

We actively participate in proactive National and European Community Co-ordinated Food Sampling Programmes and surveys organised by Sussex Food Liaison Group. Details of the national sampling plan for 2026/27 are:

- *STUDY 83: Nuts/Seeds/Dried-fruits/Dried Snacks*
- *STUDY 84: Root Vegetables*

- *STUDY 85: Reactive study Fresh and Frozen Raw/Non-ready to eat Chicken*

Reactive food sampling is also used to investigate routine food complaints and food poisoning incidents.

Food Alerts, product withdrawals and recalls.

The FSA provide local authorities with Food Alerts, which give information on potentially hazardous foods. The FSA detail what if any specific action is required to protect consumers. Categories of Food Alerts are:

- 'Food Alert for Action',
- 'Food Alert for Information',
- 'Recalled from Customers'
- 'Withdrawn from Sale'.
- 'Allergy Alerts',

We take appropriate action as requested and often work in partnership with colleagues from Trading Standards at West Sussex County Council, as there is there is very close liaison between various enforcing bodies.

The FSA notifies this Service directly of all Food Alerts, and while all are reviewed, those designated as 'Food Alert for Action' will require coordination of an appropriate response; Some require physical visits, inspection and enforcement at affected food business, but often involves working with the Communications team to distribute information to businesses and the public.

The Future of Food Regulation

The food system and the context for food regulation is rapidly evolving. Consumer habits are changing, with more online sales and emerging business models that are primarily technology-based. Businesses are also navigating a complex change environment. They are struggling with increasing costs and, at the same time, advancing the way that they operate, including innovating with data and technology. Over the past 15 years, while the number of businesses has risen, the local authorities that regulate these businesses have seen resourcing levels decrease significantly.

In recent years, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been working with local authorities and businesses to modernise the regulatory assurance system. They have rolled out the new flexibilities in the food hygiene delivery model.

But these changes alone are not enough. We continue to see increasing pressure on local government resources, skills shortages, high volumes of businesses awaiting their first inspections and backlogs of inspections at lower risk-premises.

There is also a programme of local government reorganisation underway in England which will see many food safety teams in district and borough authorities and trading standards teams from county council unitary authorities merge into one unitary council.

The November 2025 budget included a statement that: *“The government is asking the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to streamline food standards and hygiene regulation for large and regulation-compliant supermarkets. The FSA will develop a consistent, national approach in England for the regulation of large food businesses. Using centralised data and streamlined processes, this reform will ensure the sector and consumers can benefit from modern, efficient and effective regulation which supports growth, reduces unnecessary burdens, and keeps consumers safe.”*

The FSA have announced that they want to take this opportunity to pursue reforms that have been long called-for in the local authority led delivery model. This will include exploring the feasibility and appetite for issues such as sustainable funding of food services, including a permit to trade and pursuing the statutory display Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) sticker.

There remains a strong pride in FHRS across businesses and local authorities, with colleagues in Northern Ireland and Wales proud of its statutory status. Local authorities and businesses in England are keen to see the same mandatory display in England.

Partnership Working with Trading Standards

We will continue to work with colleagues at both West Sussex County Council Trading Standards and East Sussex County Council Trading Standards to raise awareness among local businesses on a range of regulatory issues including food safety, alcohol licencing, etc.



Primary Authority Partnerships.

Horsham DC's support of the Primary Authority (PA) scheme is well established and nationally recognised, having previously won the title of Primary Authority of the Year on two occasions.

This scheme allows businesses to enter into a legal agreement with one local authority which will act as a single point of contact for local regulation. That authority will then provide advice, guidance and an informed view on the interpretation of legislation to the businesses, which they can rely on.

When being inspected by officers of another local authority, the regulator cannot ask the business to do anything different than what has been assured as legally compliant by the PA. The general idea is to promote consistency of enforcement across the country. The Environmental Health Department at Horsham have eleven PA partnerships to provide a single point of guidance and legal advice on food safety and health & safety.

We gained a new direct partnership last year. A red meat wholesale company located in London. We now have five direct partnerships include two restaurant chains, a food manufacturer, a food wholesaler and a go-kart operator.

In addition, we have seven coordinated partnerships which three trade associations representing high street food retailers & barber shops, three food safety consultants acting as a coordinator for several caterers, and the professional body of UK's go-karting industry.

Our partners and areas of legislative advice provided	
Organisation	Scope
National Craft Butchers (National)	Food Safety
Mountain Valley Ltd (London Borough of Camden)	Food Safety
Craft Bakers Association (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
The Evolv Collection (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
Boparan Restaurant Group (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
Food Hygiene Solutions (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
The Society of Food Hygiene and Technology (SOFHT) (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
Lloyd's Register Group (National)	Food Safety/Health & Safety
British Master Barbers (National)	Health & Safety
Piglet's Pantry (Worthing BC)	Food Safety
National Karting Association (National)	Health & Safety
Go Karting for Fun Limited T/A Team Sport (National)	Health & Safety

The Commercial Teams support of its PA partners involves dedicating time to setting up the partnership and outlining their objectives, followed by review of the organisation's procedures and business systems with a view to 'assure' them against enforcement action from other regulators.

The time spent on this, and any other subsequent reactive advice issued can be agreed during the set-up, but additional time pressures from unforeseen demands, incidents, etc remains a risk for officers' workload. However, the scheme is operated on a cost-recovery basis, and additional or unforeseen resources can be recovered financially.

During 2026/27 we are to consider some potential research with our partners at the Craft Bakers Association (CBA). The current Primary Authority Advice we have issued to CBA members includes the upward variation in temperature for cream cakes whereby fresh cream cakes can be stored at 12 °C for one single continuous period of 16 hours.

This advice is supported by a well-founded scientific assessment of the safety of the food at the specified temperature. The research was conducted in 1992 by Weston Research Laboratories Ltd (NAMAS accreditation No 1033).

This advice is highly valued by some members of the CBA but is being constantly challenged by Food Safety Officers across the country. We have agreed with the CBA that the scientific assessment is now more than thirty years old and should be reviewed. New strains of bacteria, testing procedures/techniques, pasteurisation practices, etc have all evolved since 1992 and we think it prudent to verify the validity of this assessment.

The CBA are currently looking at potential funding streams to finance the project as excessive costs may prove to be prohibitive.

Health and Safety Inspection Programmes

There is no statutory requirement for non-food businesses to register with the Council unless they require a licence, permit to trade, etc (premises selling alcohol, taxis, dog boarders, skin piercers, etc).

The environmental health database does not hold a record of the non-food businesses located in the district. According to the latest statistics (2025) on Total Population Co. Uk Website there are 7,620 businesses in Horsham. 90.5% are micro businesses. 7.9% are small businesses. 1.3% are medium businesses. 0.3% are large businesses*

The planning and frequency of inspections of business premises for health and safety compliance is determined by **LAC 67/2 (2025/26)** which provides LAs with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code).

- Occupational lung disease
- Legionella
- Work-related stress
- Musculoskeletal disorders

However, most Sussex local authorities also act on local intelligence and reactive issues to determine which interventions are most appropriate. This approach is regularly shared within the Sussex Health and Safety Liaison Group and often helps reduce the burden of limited regulatory resources. Sharing proformas, guidance, and practical experiences has proved especially valuable, given the wide variation in district demographics.

For example, Sussex authorities manage a broad spectrum of events and fixed risks, ranging from motorsport, fireworks, and music festivals to airports and ports. This diversity presents unique regulatory challenges, but collaboration within the group supports consistency, best practice, and effective regulation across councils. Examples of projects adopted from this support are the new proposed cosmetic licencing, inflatables, care homes and LPG use in catering.

We will still investigate complaints and workplace accidents where appropriate. We will take enforcement action if necessary where there are serious breaches of legislation or blatant disregard to health and safety.

* <https://totalpopulation.co.uk/authority/horsham>

Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme

Since 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) have funded the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme via local authorities in England. West Sussex County Council (WSCC) coordinate free holiday provision with a healthy meal and enriching activities for children eligible for means tested Free School Meals (FSM). The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme is currently delivered during the three main school holiday periods.

Due to a recent change in requirements from the DfE, all HAF providers will now need to register as a food business with Horsham District and will need all relevant training to support this application.

From summer delivery 2026, all providers must be registered as a food business with their local council. This will create several new food business registrations as any providers not registered as a food business will not be considered for HAF funding. Some providers have contacted the Food Team to enquire about training and the food business registration process.

To assist providers, we agreed to a request from WSCC to attend the HAF Provider Conference, held at Ashington Community Centre, in March 2026. We participated in the conference to offer food safety advice to Holiday Activities Providers and staff.



Kathryn Hopkin, Environmental Health Apprentice on hand to give advice to Holiday Club Providers at the HAF Provider Conference

Continued Food Safety and Health & Safety Support to Local Businesses.

We will continue to help and support businesses, particularly small medium enterprises (SMEs), by providing clear, accessible, and relevant advice. This helps facilitate proportionate, appropriate, and effective risk management and improve health in the workplace.

Partnership Working

We are active members of the Sussex Health & Safety Liaison Group, and we continue to take active participation in the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) which is a multi-disciplinary working group involving numerous Sussex agencies including the Police, Fire Brigade, Licensing, Emergency Planning, etc. The group holds regular meetings to discuss safety issues at planned events, festivals, carnivals, etc.

4. Service Delivery

Food Safety

In 2025 /2026, the Commercial Team inspected the following numbers of food businesses:

Category	Number
A	1
B	21
C	83
D	122
E	22
Unrated	151
Re-visits to check progress	12
Total	412

Food Complaints

Consumer food complaints dealt with in accordance with departmental policy and procedures.

Food Premises Complaints	
Hygiene of premises	14
Hygiene practices	26
Total	40

Food Product Complaints	
Foreign body	9
Poor quality	13
Unfit	3
Food alleged to have caused illness	5

Total	30
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FSA Food Alerts

In 2025/26, interventions for 2 National Food Alerts for Action were undertaken by the Service, involving issues of press releases and physical visits where necessary. These involved a listeria outbreak linked to desserts supplied to NHS hospitals and care homes, and food businesses selling Jolly Rancher Confectionery Products containing Mineral Oil Aromatic Hydrocarbons, (MOAH), and Mineral Oil Saturated Hydrocarbons, (MOSH), making them unsafe to eat and not compliant with UK laws.

Food Safety and Health & Safety Training Courses for Businesses

In 2025/26 the Commercial Team ran accredited training courses for food handlers engaged at local businesses & voluntary organisations. All candidates who sat the exams passed

Food Safety Foundation (<i>Basic/Level 2 Eqv</i>)	
Date	Number Candidates
29/05/2025	11
14/07/2025	6
15/10/2025	6
26/03/2026	6
Total	29



Safer food better business

Infectious Disease Control

The UKHSA aims to detect possible outbreaks of disease and epidemics as rapidly as possible.

The primary objective in outbreak management is to protect public health by identifying the source and implementing control measures to prevent further spread or recurrence of the infection.

Local Authorities have a duty to work with UKHSA to respond to incidents that present a threat to the public health. The Commercial Team undertakes these investigations following receipt of reports of certain infectious disease cases from the UKHSA.

Sussex Red Cases Pilot

In 2025 the Health Protection Team for Kent, Sussex and Surrey (HPT KSS) initiated a pilot whereby the HPT took on management of certain infectious diseases classified as red cases. During the pilot HPT took over contacting all cases from Environmental Health Teams to complete questionnaires, undertake risk assessments, give public health information and advice, and identify potential outbreaks or clusters.

Evaluation of the pilot showed that this new process has been successful for both the HPT and EH teams. This is therefore now becoming a permanent arrangement.

Red cases are:

- STEC,
- Hepatitis A,
- Typhoid and Paratyphoid,
- Shigella (flexneri/ boydii/ dysenteries),

- Botulism
- Legionella.

Continued assistance is still required from Environmental Health Teams in providing support for exclusion and clearance, as guided by the HPT. The current agreement is that:

- The HPT will flag EH teams OF any cases/contacts requiring exclusion and clearance.
- The HPT will share clearance results received from Southampton lab.
- The HPT will flag EH teams any key contexts or potential sources that require further investigation by EH officers. This will also include any clusters or outbreaks identified from common contexts.
- For cases that do not require any EH action, the HPT will send a 'for information only' email to the EH team to advise that a questionnaire has been completed
- The HPT team will continue to notify the relevant EH team of any Shigella sonnei and listeria cases that require EH officer follow up.

Reported cases of Campylobacter have reduced significantly, which is consistent with the Health Protection Team (HPT) no longer routinely reporting single cases. Historically, this department receives more than 100 Campylobacter cases annually. Each case was followed up to obtain the individual's recent food history and to provide appropriate advice.

These investigations frequently identified concerns relating to the consumption of undercooked chicken livers, particularly chicken liver pâté served at catering premises where the practice of routinely undercooking chicken livers was common.

This practice was actively discouraged by the Food Standards Agency, as undercooked chicken livers present a significant risk of Campylobacter food poisoning.

However, incidence has reduced markedly in recent years, and single cases are no longer routinely reported. Current reporting focuses primarily on clusters or multiple cases within the same household.

Cases of infectious diseases reported & investigated in 2025/2026	
Infectious Disease	Numbers
Campylobacter	0
Cryptosporidium	4
Escherichia coli (VTEC)	0
Giardiasis	19
Hepatitis A	0
Hepatitis E	8
Salmonella	0
Shigella	6
Suspected Food Poisoning	16

Other	14
Total	67

Planning Applications

In 2025/26, the Commercial Team responded to 112 Planning Application Consultations. This can involve site visits, noise surveillance, analysing acoustic data, providing expert advice on mechanical extract ventilation systems, meetings with applicants, agents and consultants to ensure local amenity is protected from every commercial development.

Premises Licence Applications

Also in 2025/26, the Team consulted on 32 Premises Licence Applications and over a hundred Temporary Event Notices. Again, work related to licencing activities involves visit to sites, noise surveillance, analysing acoustic data, providing expert advice, attending Licensing Hearings, meetings with applicants, agents and consultants, and again is undertaken on a reactive basis.

Licensing

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 impacts on the Commercial Team resources taking a full time Officer away from front line duties for a significant period.

In addition, each establishment required inspection under the new regime and are risk rated against a standard 14-point criteria checklist, which considers several factors relating to compliance history, complaints, welfare standards and management standards. This scoring system determines a risk rating level.

Licences issued are for a period of either one, two or three years depending on the risk rating and level of compliance. This regime also introduces a Star Rating for each establishment.

At the time of writing this Service Plan we currently hold 92 Animal Licences. Some are renewed annually whilst other are renewed 3 yearly

Licenses issued in 2025/26 for the following:	
Home Boarders of Dogs	13
Selling Animals as Pets	1
Dangerous Wild Animals	0
Dog Breeders	2
Boarding Cats	2
Boarding Dogs in Kennels	3

Day Boarding	1
Boarding both Cats & Dogs	3
Hiring out of Horses	3
Exhibition of Animals	2
Zoo	1
Total	30

Paws on the Doors

In 2025 Horsham District Council became one of the first councils to adopt a new environmental health rating scheme for local businesses associated with the care and sale of animals.

The scheme helps pet lovers to make informed decisions when selecting a whole host of pet services. Rather than rely on word of mouth, the scheme's website helps consumers to search across council boundaries, check that operators are legitimately licensed and find out what star rating they have.

By publishing the details of animal operators on a single site www.animal-licensing.uk members of the public are now able to find out about businesses providing Dog Boarding, Breeding, Daycare and Home boarding as well as Catteries, Horse hire and Pet shops. Cross-boundary searching will start to take effect as more authorities' data is published. For each operator we provide all (authorised, disclosed) contact details as well as information such as the valid licence number and expiry date, star rating and capacity.

Health & Safety

In 2025/2026, the Commercial Team undertook the following numbers of health & safety interventions of local businesses:

Category	Number
Proactive Inspections	11
Visits to investigate accidents	5
Visits to investigate complaints	101
Non-proactive visits/face to face contacts	24
Non-inspection interventions or contacts	21
Visits to give advice	0
Follow up visits/revisits	5
Total	167

Asbestos

The Department continues to receive numerous enquiries from members of the public, employers, asbestos contractors and others with duties under asbestos regulations. We give expert advice & guidance regarding controls to prevent exposure to asbestos.

Sussex EH Booking System & Central Financing

In 2024, Horsham DC undertook the set-up and operation of a Sussex-wide online booking service on our website that the various local authority Environmental Health teams' Liaison, study and other working groups could use to receive payments from Councils for the training and other events that they organised for Sussex EH Officers.

The intention was to replace the facility lost a number of years ago when the CIEH Sussex Branch disbanded and allow the groups to build of a revenue surplus in a managed and structured way, that could then be put towards future training requiring special arrangements, such as reimbursing a barrister for providing practical court room training at a reduced cost for LA officers, or held to underwrite any organised events that unexpected encountered operating losses.

Horsham Officers instituted the idea and – when agreed by the Sussex Chiefs – spearheaded the work to introduce management of the centralised account and an online booking system to facilitate ease of delegates attending events.

This project initially placed a significant burden on Officer time organising the set-up as well as learning to administer the systems, as well as develop procedures for receiving monies and paying creditors from a ringfenced area of the HDC account. This was complicated due to such procedures not existing previously, as although the money was being held in a HDC account, it was not the Council's to control, and this caused confusion on the practical processes that should be followed.

However, the systems are now working efficiently for the benefit of all Sussex EH teams and helped raise the profile of HDC within the county. In addition, plans are being developed to offer the system to the wider region, with plans to incorporate fees for cost recovery purposes.

Promoting our Service

The Commercial Team has taken a proactive approach to help promote awareness and inspire actions for safer food to both the public and local businesses.

We regularly attend national meetings of the Primary Authority Joint Hospitality Panel and Local Authority Reference Panel through national initiatives with the objective of supporting local businesses.

We also work jointly with collages in Economic Development to encourage businesses to proactively approach and discuss how this Service can support them in achieving and maintain regulatory compliance.

YouTube videos promoting our Advisory Visits and raising awareness on the importance of food allergen management have been produced and are available on the site, as well the council's own website.

We have also delivered numerous messages on the Councils social media post on a range of subjects including allergen awareness, food alerts, and Christmas food safety tips.

5. RESOURCES

Financial Allocation

The Council has made the following budgetary allocation for Food Hygiene in 2026/27

EXPENDITURE HEAD	£
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	314,360
SUPPORT SERVICES	2,350
GROSS EXPENDITURE	316,710
TOTAL INCOME	5,000
NET EXPENDITURE/INCOME	311,710

The Council has made the following budgetary allocation for Health and Safety at Work in 2026/27

EXPENDITURE HEAD	£
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	115,516

SUPPORT SERVICES	910
GROSS EXPENDITURE	116,016
TOTAL INCOME	500
NET EXPENDITURE/INCOME	115,516

Staffing Allocation

Officers carrying out the food safety and health & safety functions also carry out other duties.

Only a percentage of Officer time is spent on food safety and health & safety. Some work takes place outside of normal working hours including evenings and weekends to cover events, investigate complaints where incidents occur late night or weekend, to inspect premises with restricted opening hours, etc.

The table below shows a full-time equivalent post e.g., 37 hours a week, and typical work breakdown. Figures and time have been divided into “Food Hygiene” and “Health & Safety” as required by the FSA & HSE. These are adjusted to incorporate the loss of our now retired food safety contractor.

Post	Post Number	Food Competency	Health & Safety Competency
Principal EHO	916305	CATEGORY A-F	CATEGORY A-C
Area EHO	916310	CATEGORY A-F	CATEGORY A-C
Area EHO	916314	CATEGORY A-F	CATEGORY A-C
Area EHO	916316	CATEGORY A-F	CATEGORY A-C
Area EHO	916318	CATEGORY A-F	CATEGORY A-C
Technical Officer	916312	N/A	CATEGORY A-C

- 2.8 FTE Professional staff allocated to Food Control
- 0.8 Professional staff allocated to Health & Safety
- 0.4 FTE equivalent staff provided for administration & support.

Various agencies have for some time raised concerns about the resources available for the regulation of food safety. There is a shortfall of food safety inspectors employed by LAs, an aging competent workforce and lack of newly qualified Food Safety Inspectors have raised concerns about potential shortages in the key professionals needed to maintain food safety and ensure consumer confidence.

During 2024/25 the Sussex Food Liaison Group conducted an exercise to assess LA resource across the County. Although the Food Standards Agency does not produce any

official figures on the numbers of Officers required, they have developed a 'Resource Modelling Tool' as general accepted guidance:

- 250 premises per FTE is a well resources LA
- 350 or more premises per FTE is a stretched LA
- 450 or more premises per FTE is an LA which is likely to flounder and not deliver all the statutory functions

1-5 subjective opinion on resource level (1 = very under resourced 5 = very well resourced)

These ratios are based on premises per FTE and assume the FTEs can undertake the full range of interventions and controls. It also assumes a proportionate split across types of premises and categories, and, that Officers will only be doing statutory functions and other activities such as advisory services.

At the time of the exercise the result for Horsham 443 premises per FTE which put us just under the criteria of 'LA which is likely to flounder and not deliver all the statutory functions.'

The part-time Food Safety Officer will be retiring at the end of April 2026. We have not yet advertised the post. However, it is worth noting that the Local Government Association's 2023 Local Government Capacity Survey identified food safety officers as among the most difficult vacancies to fill within local government.

Earlier this year, we also lost our food safety contractor. The key benefit of using a contractor is that 100% of their time can be dedicated to food hygiene inspections. Unlike full-time Environmental Health Officers who must divide their time across multiple statutory duties contractors help maintain a consistent inspection rate, preventing the build-up of 'outstanding' or 'overdue' inspections.

Although we have secured a new food safety contractor in the short term, she is unable to match the inspection output previously achieved. We need to act quickly and be resourceful in what is a very difficult jobs market for fully qualified food safety officers. There is a risk that Horsham District could end the year with several outstanding food hygiene inspections.

Any shortfall will be captured in our annual statutory return to the Food Standards Agency (FSA). As the national regulator, the FSA has a statutory responsibility to monitor local authority performance in delivering official food controls and is required to act where authorities are identified as poor performers. This could result in increased scrutiny, formal intervention, and reputational implications for the Council.

The Future of Staffing Resources at National & Local Level

Evidence from professional bodies, local authorities and wider sources suggest a severe shortage of qualified and experienced food safety officers. An aging workforce and lack of newly qualified officers, suggests that Councils are experiencing significant issues around the recruitment and retention of suitably / appropriately qualified and competent staff to undertake official food controls and related activities.

The Food Standards Agency have expressed concern that Councils are facing capacity and recruitment challenges and as a result many are struggling to meet their statutory targets. This dilemma will have a major impact on securing food safety if not quickly addressed.

Horsham's Plan

The new Environmental Health Apprenticeship Scheme, incorporating a degree qualification, offers a practical and effective response to the recruitment challenges identified by stakeholders. It is an increasingly attractive pathway for both students and councils, enabling talent to be developed in a structured and sustainable way. While apprenticeships require an upfront investment of time and resources, Horsham has proactively adopted this approach as a key element of its long-term workforce strategy.

We now have several apprentices progressing through the Environmental Health degree programme, and the scheme is already delivering clear benefits. It provides a defined career pathway for individuals while strengthening the Council's future regulatory capacity. Notably, one apprentice has successfully qualified and secured a position within the Private Sector Housing Team, with another due to qualify this summer.

This progress presents a timely opportunity to address current resourcing gaps. By combining the part-time vacancy with existing contractor provision, there is potential to establish a full-time Food Officer post. Although a newly qualified officer will require a period of development to achieve full competency, appointing to this role will immediately release experienced officers to focus on more complex work. With targeted training, mentoring, and support, the new officer can be brought up to full effectiveness in a relatively short timeframe.

Staff Development Plan

The Council adopts a very positive attitude towards personal development to ensuring that staff maintain competence and are equipped with the latest information regarding legislative requirements.

Each member of staff receives an annual appraisal with their Line Manager where a review of learning and development takes place to determine personal development plans.

This considers the requirement for Continuous Personal Development (CPD) in accordance with the Food Safety Code of Practice and the HSE Competency Framework.

Officers are encouraged to attend training courses, seminars, on-line training and reading of technical papers considered appropriate and relevant to their job. It is usual for Officers who have attended courses to cascade the information learnt to the team at staff briefings.

Due to our experience and expertise with Primary Authority and our knowledge of some local novel food processes, Officers from the Commercial Team are regularly invited to speak at various events throughout the U.K.

6. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Environmental Health Department has a food hygiene inspection monitoring procedure in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and a health & safety inspection monitoring produce in accordance with based on HSE Section 18 Guidance.

This involves the Principal Environmental Health Officer accompanying each individual officer on an inspection at least every quarter to assess competency and consistency of every officer in the undertaking inspections in the Commercial Team. Inspection records, letters and notices are also checked for accuracy.

Corrective action is taken as appropriate, and the details reported back to the Environmental Health & Licensing Manager.

Regular peer review takes place in the form of:

- Monthly Commercial Team meetings to allocate workloads, set targets, review performance, review training requirements, update on topical issues, exchange views and discuss problem areas
- Feedback to Commercial Team from officer attending quarterly Liaison Group meetings
- Feedback to Commercial Team from officer attending quarterly meetings of the CIEH Sussex Branch Food Discussion Group (comprises EHOs from all the Sussex authorities).
- Officer feedback from training courses attended.

Inter Authority Reviews

The Department continues to cooperate in Inter Authority Auditing to ensure consistency of approach pan Sussex for both the food and health & safety service.

7. REVIEW

The Plan is approved by the person delegated responsibility for operational and administrative matters relating to Environmental Health and Licensing. The Plan is published on the Council website.

The Plan is reviewed annually.

Reviews against the Service Plan

The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing will continuously review the performance of the Service Plan. The on-going review will address resource management, performance indicators and results of any inter authority audits plus outcomes of the routine health and safety inspection monitoring.

Planned improvements to the Service Plan will be incorporated in the revised plan for the following year subject to elected member approval.

Identification of Any Variation from the Service Plan

The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing shall consider, as part of the annual review, any non-conformance identified by audit and failures to achieve performance indicators. He will monitor progress during the year. Reasons for any variance should be clearly identified where appropriate.

Areas of Improvement

The Service Plan will be approved by the Director of Communities. This is because it is 'operational and administrative' in nature, and the Director of Communities has been delegated responsibility for operational and administrative matters relating to Environmental Health and Licensing.

The Service Plan is a working document which will be revised annually to take account of changes, current trends, and political ethos and to satisfy the requirements of the regulatory frameworks for Food Law and Health & Safety Enforcement.

APPENDIX 1

Profile of Horsham District Council

The Horsham District has an area of 205 square miles with a population of approximately 151,521 according to population figures published by the ONS. The principal commercial and administrative centre is Horsham Town. The remainder of the district is 85 % rural, consisting of 23 rural market towns and villages.

Horsham town, the commercial and administrative centre of Horsham District, is located midway between London and the South Coast. The district it gives its name to, is an area that stretches between Gatwick Airport and the edge of the South Downs National Park.

The Health Profile for Horsham compiled by Public Health England states that health of people in Horsham is generally better than the England average.

Organisational Structure of Horsham District Council

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council operates a Cabinet/Leader structure.

Departmental Structure

Health & Safety at Work and Food Safety enforcement is carried out by the Commercial Team in the Environmental Health and Licensing Department.

Attached at Appendix 2 is the structure diagram of the Commercial Team within the Environmental Health and Licensing Department.

APPENDIX 2

Commercial Team Environmental Health and Licensing Department

