

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**FOOD SERVICE PLAN**

**2008/2009**

**May 2008**

## **RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2008/09**

#### **1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.1. Aims and objectives**

- i. To ensure the safe and hygienic production, storage, distribution and sale of food and drink by the enforcement of legislation and the provision of advice and information to consumers and the operators of food businesses.

In particular to:-

- i. Carry out a programme of food hygiene enforcement interventions in accordance with statutory requirements, codes of practice and guidance.
- ii. To maintain a microbiological food sampling programme.
- iii. Act as 'home authority' for certain food manufacturers based in Ryedale.
- iv. To investigate complaints about food or food premises.
- v. To formally licence/approve certain food businesses when they have achieved prescribed standards.
- vi. To provide advice to organisations including local businesses to help them comply with legislative requirements and good practice principles.
- vii. To investigate individual cases and outbreaks of infectious disease, strive to identify the possible source and take action to minimize the problem.
- viii. To receive and action food alerts ensuring any food that may potentially cause a danger to public health is not available for human consumption.
- ix. To evaluate the processing records of food to be exported and prepare and sign export certificates for inspection by authorities in other countries.
- x. To authorise the removal of food determined unfit for human consumption and supervise its disposal.
- xi. To promote food safety standards through a variety of means including the production of in-house information leaflets and the formation of appropriate partnerships.
- xii. To organise and provide formal food safety training which may include running courses specifically for large food manufacturing businesses.

##### **1.2. Links to corporate objectives and plans**

The Food Service Plan is an integral part of the department's annual Service Delivery Plan. This plan sets out the Council's overall statement of aims and corporate objectives. These in turn are supported by a series of guiding principles for the provision of services the Council has adopted. Officers within the food safety field support these principles and endeavour to promote them in their day-to-day work.

### **1.3. Food Standards Agency Priorities**

The Food Standards Agency was set up by the Government in April 2000 to protect public health and restore public confidence in the way food safety decisions are made. Their decisions are based on scientific evidence and they are committed to be open, independent and to put the consumer first. Their current priorities are:-

- reduce food borne illness further (19% reduction since 2000) by improving food safety right through the food chain.
- reduce the risks to consumers from contaminated food.
- deliver proportionate BSE and TSE controls based on the latest scientific knowledge.
- help reduce diet-related diseases
- help people to improve their dietary health.
- develop appropriate policies and standards to help to ensure safety and choice for food allergic and food intolerant customers
- promote honest and informative labelling to help consumers
- promote best practice within the food industry
- improve the enforcement of food law
- earn people's trust by what they do and how they do it.

### **1.4. Ryedale's Food Safety Quality Management System – Registered to ISO 9001 : 2000 Standards**

The food safety quality management system, which is binding on 8 local authorities within North Yorkshire and to which Ryedale subscribes, has 6 quality objectives.

- That the authorities will pursue the aim of consistency in all aspects of food regulation provision.
- Central government direction and the principles of best value will inform the priorities for the development of good practice.
- Any opportunity for enhancing consistency will be taken and acted upon.
- Being willing to question current practices with the aim of improving them.
- That the policies and objectives of the Group are transparent and promoted to recipients of the service in North Yorkshire.
- The views of the recipients of the service will be sought, considered and acted upon.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

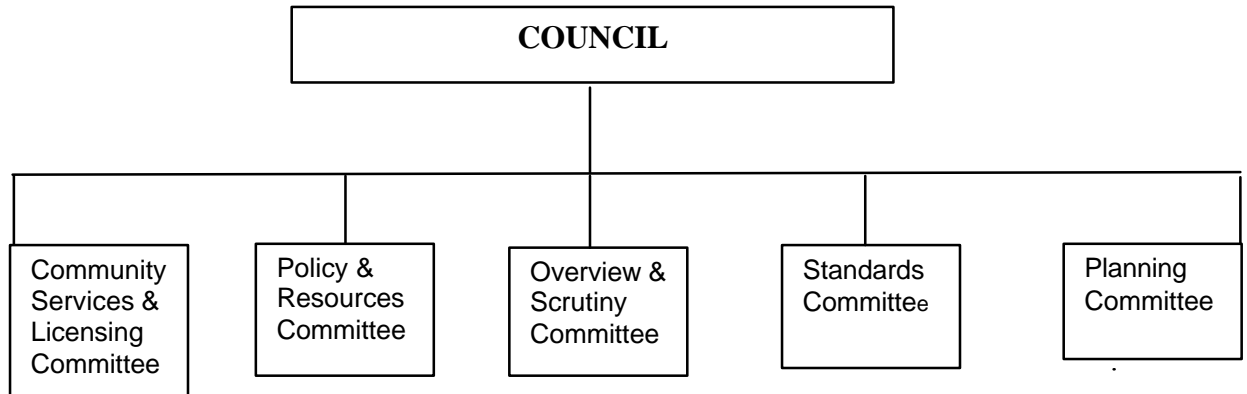
### **2.1. Profile of the local authority**

A district council with a population of approximately 51,000. The area is largely rural in nature incorporating a substantial part of the North York Moors National

Park. The towns of Malton, Norton, Kirkbymoorside, Pickering and Helmsley form the main centres of population.

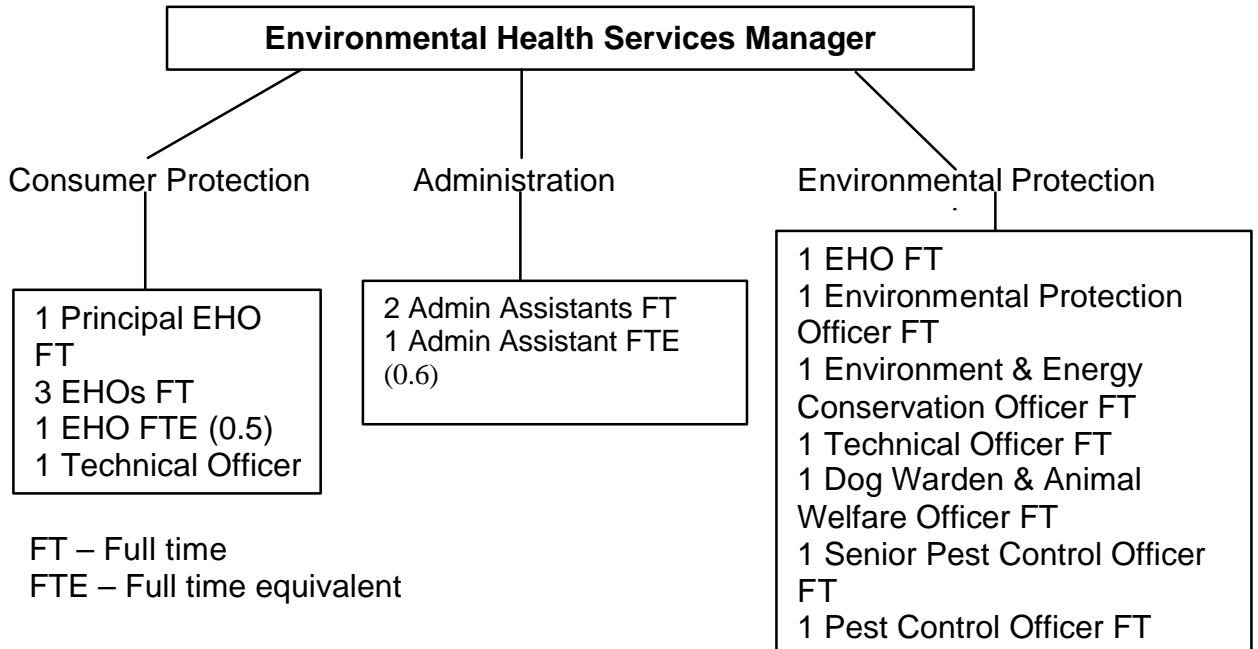
Total area in hectares - 150,966

## 2.2. Committee Structure from May 2008



Number of Councillors – 30

## 2.3. Structure of Service



## 2.4. Organisation within the Service

All the consumer protection staff (with the exception of the Markets Assistant who is attached to another service) sit together within a small defined area. All staff are provided with their own networked computer.

## **2.5. Scope of the Consumer Protection Service**

Ryedale District Council is responsible for food safety enforcement issues. The Consumer Protection Section is managed by a Principal Environmental Health Officer.

The range of duties within the section include:-

- i. Food safety issues.
- ii. Health and safety issues.
- iii. Infectious disease control.
- iv. Alcohol and entertainment licensing.
- v. Licensing of gambling establishments.
- vi. Licensing lotteries, house-to-house collections, street collections etc.
- vii. The management of three retail markets.
- viii. The licensing of a major zoological collection.

## **2.6. Other principal contributing organisations:-**

- i. Microbiological food examination is undertaken by the Health Protection Agency Service based in Leeds. A service level agreement is in place;
- ii. West Yorkshire Analytical Services (Public Analyst) based at Morley near Leeds undertakes food analysis;
- iii. Enforcement of food standards and animal feed stuffs legislation is undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council based in Northallerton.
- iv. Infectious disease control working in conjunction with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control at the Health Protection Agency.

## **2.7. Demands on the Food Service**

**2.71** Ryedale being a major tourist resort has a wealth of hotels and catering establishments. There are several large food factories some of which export product in addition to supplying the national market. For example:-

- A canning factory produces a range of meat and vegetable based products in conventional cans and flexible pouches. Following the detailed verification of safe production standards export certificates are provided to this company to allow the movement of products to foreign countries.
- A rapidly expanding meat products factory producing a range of long shelf life ready meals for national distribution in supermarkets.
- A bakery that makes a wide range of bread products, meat products and confectionary that is distributed throughout North Yorkshire and beyond.

- A large meat factory producing a substantial range of meat products supplying many of the major UK supermarkets with ready to eat chilled product.

## 2.72 Food Premises in Ryedale

Type of Food Premises	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Primary producers	47	42	45	42	44
Manufacturers/Processors	17	16	20	18	19
Packers	1	1	1	1	2
Distributors/Transport	28	28	23	23	27
Retailers	177	170	183	178	182
Restaurants and other caterers	527	525	543	541	539
Manufacturers selling by retail	20	20	20	20	21
<b>Totals</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>834</b>

Ryedale has the responsibility for the approval of, and enforcement in relation to, a wide range of product specific establishments subject to approval under EC Regulation 853/2004. These establishments will be producing any or a combination of the following: Minced Meat, Meat Preparations, Meat Products, Fishery Products, Dairy Products and Egg Products.

## 2.73 Approved Premises in Ryedale

Approval Category	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fish	1	2	2
Meat Products	4	5	5
Minced Meat/ Meat Preparations	1	5	5
Dairy	1	0	0

**2.74** The Service Delivery point is: Ryedale District Council, Ryedale House, Malton, YO17 7HH.

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Thursday 8.30 – 17.00  
 Friday 8.30 – 16.30  
 Telephone: 01653 600666  
 Fax: 01653 600764

Out of hours:

The Council's emergency number provides a 24 hours all year contact point. Food safety concerns will be then passed on to the Service Manager or the Principal Officer if one or other is available Telephone 01653 697737.

An alarmed pager is set to receive food alerts from the Food Standards Agency. The alarm will be read during the weekend at the Council's emergency contact point and the message passed on to available officers.

Ryedale District Council's web site ([www.ryedale.gov.uk](http://www.ryedale.gov.uk)) has an open enquiry page.

## **2.8. External Factors that impact on the service**

The area is popular with holidaymakers and day visitors. It is estimated 3.5 million people are attracted to the area mainly during the summer season. There is a theme park and zoo (licensed within the section) that regularly figures within the top 10 visitor attractions within the United Kingdom. A significant part of Ryedale is situated within the North York Moors National Park and visitors spend time in the many eating establishments as well as being drawn to the North Yorkshire Steam Railway which crosses the Park.

## **2.9. Enforcement Policy**

A documented food safety enforcement policy regularly revised is available to all food safety officers. The policy was revised in 2007 and will be updated in accordance with the Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) guidance.

# **3. SERVICE DELIVERY**

## **3.1 Food Safety Inspection/Intervention**

It is the intention that all food premises that fall for inspection during the year (as determined by the rating scheme set out in the current Food Safety Act Code of Practice) are visited. The new Code of Practice for 2008 (awaited soon) will bring food law enforcement in line with Regulatory Reform and will present officers with a range of interventions from which they make a determination as to the most appropriate/relevant for any particular premises. It is likely that by far the majority of the 349 inspections mentioned in the following table will receive a 'normal' inspection in 2008/09 but this may change in future years. Any inspection must not only comply with all the relevant guidance/codes of practice but also must follow the requirements of the North Yorkshire Quality Management system, which sets auditable standards common to all North Yorkshire Authorities.

The current Code of Practice requires that the frequency of inspection of premises should be dependent on their food safety rating (A - E) which is acquired after a comprehensive assessment of the business including a 'confidence in management' score. It is believed the new Code of Practice for

2008 will not change this direction. More details are given in the review section of the plan.

### Food Hygiene Inspection Ratings (rating system)

Category	Inspection Rating Score	Minimum Inspection Frequency
A	92 to 196	At least every 6 months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	42 to 71	At least every 18 months
D	31 to 41	At least every 2 years
E	0 to 30	Alternative enforcement strategy

### Achieved Inspections for 2007/08

Category	No of Premises 2007/08	Programmed Inspections 2007/08	In year changes 2007/08	Achieved Inspections for 2007/08	Programmed Inspections for 2008/09
A	2	4	2*	2	6
B	38	38	38	38	40
C	342	199	187*	174	245
D	99	52	49*	47	58
E	86	7	7	7	0
Low risk premises that will be subject to an alternative inspection regime	256				
<b>Total</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>349</b>

[\*of the programmed inspections for 2007/08 category A-E – 17 premises closed during the year].

### 3.12 Re-visits

It is anticipated that a substantial number of re-visits will be made during 2008/09. Many of these visits will be to check that food businesses are maintaining their personal documented food safety system as well as seeing whether certain improvements in structural conditions or working procedures have taken place.

### 3.13 Resources required

In order to complete the programmed inspections/interventions, revisits, special initiatives, necessary research etc. it is estimated that 2300 hours/annum will be required. The manner in which inspections/interventions should be undertaken, the records that require completing and the follow up action is very detailed allowing a clear auditable trail. In consequence site visit times vary but 90 minutes for a

catering premises is average with some factory inspections taking 1-2 days.

### **3.2 Food Safety Complaints**

Clear procedures are detailed within national guidance and the North Yorkshire Quality Management System for Food Safety as to how officers should record and investigate complaints. At the outset of an investigation legal action must be accepted as a possibility, therefore procedures with regard to the holding and recording of evidence must be effective. The Quality Management System sets officers' tight time scales for action so that the complainant should receive a good response. All the actions are recorded and auditable.

<b>Estimated Number 2006/07</b>	<b>Actual Number 2006//07</b>	<b>Estimated Number 2007/08</b>	<b>Actual Number 2007/08</b>
30	34	35	29

The estimated time to deal with these complaints is 100 hours/annum.

### **3.3 Home Authority Principle**

LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services) promotes Home Authority Principle to all food enforcement authorities. It has three fundamental objectives:-

- (i) to promote enforcement consistency, efficiency and effectiveness;
- (ii) to prevent enforcement duplication; and
- (iii) to encourage liaison with businesses particularly with regard to legal compliance before problems arise.

The Environmental Health Service currently acts as Home Authority for 4 manufacturing premises.

- Grampian Country Pork Ltd., Norton;
- Thomas of York Ltd., Helmsley;
- Westler Foods Ltd., Amotherby; and
- Pro-Pak Foods Ltd., Malton.

These companies distribute their manufactured goods beyond Ryedale and in some cases to retail outlets throughout this country and abroad. Concerns about their product sold in another part of the country are routed through officers in Ryedale. The Home Authority agreement means that liaison with Ryedale District Council must take place before detailed investigations or legal actions are commenced elsewhere in the country.

The estimated time spent responding to requests for help/advice from 'our' businesses or other local authorities is estimated at 220 hours/annum.

### 3.4 Advice to business

This service routinely provides guidance to businesses with respect to legal compliance and good practice. Those considering new business ventures are actively sought out (e.g. through planning applications) and offered advice. This area of work is very time consuming but it is believed that it is time well spent saving difficulties after the businesses have started trading.

The estimated time spent giving advice is 300 hours.

### 3.5 Food Sampling

Within the food sampling policy there is provision for: -

- i selected routine microbiological sampling;
- ii taking part in all LACORS sampling initiatives;
- iii taking part in all Health Protection Agency Laboratory sampling initiatives;
- iv targeting particular foods to obtain comparative data within Ryedale; and
- v contributing to the Yorkshire and Humberside Pollution Advisory Council's work in connection with radiation monitoring.

It is estimated the time involved equates to 370 hours/annum.

(LACORS – Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services)

#### Formal food samples submitted for microbiological examination

Sample Type	No of samples 2005/06	No unsatisfactory 2005/06	No of samples 2006/07	No unsatisfactory 2006/07	No of samples 2007/08	No unsatisfactory 2007/08
Milk	5	5 * see review	10	6*	5	5*
Cream products	23	1	40	2	63	14
Quorn			6	0	0	
Ice cream					0	
Cooked meats	75	0	64	2	64	8
Sandwiches	91	7	88	1	79	9**
Imported food	1	0			5	0
Butter					0	
Cheese	20	0			0	
Fish			3	0	3	0
Eggs			13	0	0	
Nuts					6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>36</b>

The guidelines given for the microbiological quality of food are based on levels determined by Food Examiners, microbiologists within and outside the Health Protection Agency Services and from Environmental Health Officers. The standards are very tight and it is important to emphasise within this context that the term 'unsatisfactory' does not mean the food is potentially hazardous. An unsatisfactory result indicates to the Environmental Health Officer that further sampling may be necessary or a visit to the business may be required to determine whether or not hygiene practices etc. could be improved. (see review)

### 3.6 Control and Investigation of Food Related Infectious Disease

The investigation of individual incidents of food related infectious disease takes place in line with the standards required by the North Yorkshire Control of Infection Committee. [The North Yorkshire Quality Management System refers].

At the end of every week a return is made to the Health Protection Agency Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre detailing the number of infectious disease notifications that were reported to Ryedale during that week.

Individual Infectious Disease Notifications (Bacterial)

<b>Actual notifications 2003/2004</b>	<b>Actual Notifications 2005/2006</b>	<b>Actual notifications 2006/07</b>	<b>Actual notifications 2007/08</b>
83	92	111	91

It is estimated that the time involved equates to 150 hours/annum for all individual notifications.

Any outbreaks (which are defined as 2 or more individuals linked to the same food source) of food related infectious disease are investigated in line with standards laid down by the North Yorkshire Control of Infection Committee and in particular the current North Yorkshire Community Infection Control Policies and Guidance 2004/05.

There were 5 major viral outbreaks in Ryedale which took up resources within the section for a considerable period. Incidents of gastroenteritis are being increasingly attributed to viruses (usually Noroviruses) and undoubtedly contribute to a large number of notified cases of suspect food poisoning. Outbreaks in institutions and other 'closed' communities are common. Symptoms include the sudden onset of vomiting, watery non-bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pains, fever, nausea and dehydration.

### **3.7 Food Alerts**

Alerts are received from the Food Standards Agency through a pager system followed by e-mail. The food alert system operates mainly through the voluntary co-operation of the food industry in withdrawing food from sale or supply. It is on occasions necessary for food authorities to take immediate action where:-

- (a) food presents a hazard to consumers;
- (b) vulnerable groups are likely to be consumers of the food; and
- (c) there is a possible risk of cross-contamination to other products being stored or sold.

63 separate alerts were received in 2007/2008. It is estimated 90 hours/annum will be spent on this work. This includes the preparation of press releases so that local people are kept informed.

If it should be necessary to consider/issue a food alert in Ryedale the work requires a significant officer resource over a protracted period. Any national withdrawal of food will likely have significant ramifications for the manufacturing company concerned so it is vital that decisions are based on a sound scientific assessment

The work involved in one such alert may take typically 50 hours to resolve.

In addition an increasing number of Allergy Alerts are being sent to local authorities. A total of 41 were received during 2007/08 many relating to a labeling problem at a UK factory which for example has omitted to declare the presence of product in the food which may cause an allergic reaction if unknowingly consumed by an individual.

### **3.8 Liaison with other Organisations**

The arrangements made by the service to endeavour to ensure consistency with respect to enforcement action include:-

- i Ryedale District Council is a member of, and plays an active part within the North Yorkshire Chief Environmental Health Officers Food Liaison Group. The group consists of all 8 food authorities in North Yorkshire and was awarded ISO 9001: 2000 certification in March 2004 for the standard of its food regulation service. Frequent regular meetings are held to debate food safety issues and to agree amendments/additions to the Quality Management System;
- ii Liaison also takes place with other adjacent authorities to discuss consistency issues;
- iii Regular meetings are held with representatives of the North Yorkshire Social Services Department to offer guidance and support in respect of their food safety policies;
- iv Participation along with LACORS advisors in Food Standards Agency meetings to challenge and improve food safety systems;

- v Opinion with respect to food safety issues is provided to Planning Services with respect to food related business developments;
- vi Regular meetings with representatives of the Public Health Laboratory Service with respect to the submission of samples for analysis; and
- vii Attending meetings of the North Yorkshire Control of Infection Committee and the North Yorkshire Group for the Study of Infection.
- viii Frequent liaison with the Commission for Social Care Inspections and OFSTED.

It is estimated that 300 hours are spent per annum on these activities.

### **3.9 Food Safety Promotion**

Food Safety courses are regularly provided by Environmental Health Officers either on Council premises or, if numbers permit, at the client's place of work. During the year 1 level 2 course in food safety in catering was run for 17 candidates who work at a variety of establishments in Ryedale. All 17 passed the exam at the end of the course. In addition 4 courses in food safety for manufacturing were held specifically for a major food factory and the Environmental Health service has already been approached this year to provide more courses.

## **4.0 RESOURCES**

### **4.1 Financial Allocation**

The cost of providing Ryedale District Council's Food Service (including Infectious Diseases) for the year 2008/09 is projected to be £188,530.

[The majority of samples are analysed by the Public Health Laboratory Service without charge through a Service Level agreement].

MVM Software Ltd. supply the computer software currently in use and an annual maintenance agreement is paid.

### **4.2 Staffing Allocations**

The Service Delivery Plan 2008/09 provides a complete breakdown of all staff within the Environmental Health Service. Within the Consumer Protection section there are 4.5 full time equivalent Environmental Health Officers and 1 Technical Officer. Experienced administrative assistants provide support. All the environmental health officers dealing with food safety matters are also well experienced and regularly undergo mandatory continuing professional development training to ensure they keep abreast of new developments. The Technical Officer who was appointed last year is undertaking specialised training in food safety at Teeside University to enable him to fully support his colleagues. Such has been the demand of the new Licensing Act and the Gambling Act that one officer continues to spend most of his time on this work although he did find time during

2007/08 to undertake some valuable food safety work and it is hoped this will be possible in 2008/09.

#### **4.3 Staff Development Plan**

- i A staff appraisal system is in operation.
- ii There are regular minuted staff meetings to discuss the range of work, performance etc.
- iii The North Yorkshire Chief EHOs group is committed to providing funds each year for the training of officers on technical subjects. Food safety staff are able to benefit from any appropriate courses.
- iv All officers working in the food safety field must receive a minimum of 10 hours/year ongoing/update training in line with the requirements demanded of professional officers.
- v All officers have access to the monthly minutes of the North Yorkshire Food Liaison Group, which is attended by the Principal Officer.
- vi Officers work within close proximity of each other and daily the team benefits from the expertise/knowledge of one or more of its members. Such team working is particularly valuable with respect to food enforcement issues.

#### **5.0 QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 A detailed fully documented and audited Quality Management System for Food Safety which is registered to ISO 9001: 2000 is operating throughout all 8 North Yorkshire authorities. Ryedale is subject to a yearly inter-authority audit and a regular external audit by ISOQAR (our accredited ISO certification body). Any issues/non-conformities are discussed at the monthly meetings of the North Yorkshire Chief Environmental Health Officers Food Liaison Group and practices reviewed and altered accordingly. The performance of officers is also assessed through intra-authority audits and records kept.

#### **6.0 REVIEW AND WORK PLAN**

##### **6.1 Review of 2007/08 and looking forward to 2008/09**

##### **Inspections**

Food safety inspections were and will continue to be the bedrock of the food work and it is very pleasing to report that 95% of programmed inspections were achieved, this being an increase of 3% over last years figures which in turn was an 8% increase over the previous year. Again all the highest classified premises (categories A & B) by way of risk were visited and a significant proportion of category C premises were inspected. Most catering premises (hotels, public houses, cafes etc.) fall into category C and there were a number of these types of premises overdue a visit at the start of 2006/07. Good work on the overdue inspections during the year resulted in only a very small number being 'carried over' to 2008/09. It is unlikely a 100% figure will ever be achieved as some businesses for

example operate seasonally and may be temporarily closed when their inspection is due.

The number of revisits to food businesses during the year higher than previous years and this trend will likely continue as the new intervention strategy (described later) takes affect.

### **Food Complaints**

The total number of food complaints, which includes those directed against premises as well as specific food items dropped from 34 to 29 which was encouraging. The majority of the complaints were again as a result of foreign bodies being found in food. All complaints were investigated. Some are as a result of unintentional assumptions being made as to food quality rather than failures in manufacturing. When matched against the millions of items of food made in Ryedale each year it may be reasonably argued that 29 complaints is a low figure. All food manufacturers in Ryedale take any food complaints very seriously and all are quick to review working procedures and make improvements if possible.

Acting as Home Authority for several large food businesses in Ryedale requires a considerable input from officers. All these businesses send food beyond the boundaries of Ryedale within the UK and abroad and advice is often sought with respect to legal issues/standards so that movement of food is not held up. Officers also are required to check the validity and sign food export certificates each of which requires detailed work before certification can be approved.

### **Sampling of food**

The microbiological sampling of food particularly that which is ready to eat is extremely important in that it helps inform officers of the microbiological standards of food being purchased in Ryedale. Last year Members were informed that the Health Protection Agency, whose laboratories undertake the analysis of the food, had told all local authorities that the numbers of samples they would analyse without charge would be restricted to a certain value per authority. Ryedale kept within its allowance. Of the 225 samples were taken from 39 different premises only 36 were found to be unsatisfactory. The effected premises were contacted immediately and all relevant aspects of the foods production, handling, etc were checked and new controls put in place if necessary. All re-sample results were satisfactory. All food business proprietors are informed of the results.

The asterisk against the milk results (in the table under 3.5) indicates failures from an on farm supply. It is important to stress that the standards for heat-treated milk are very tight indeed. Like the previous year although all 5 milk samples had been effectively pasteurised some non-pathogenic post process contamination had taken place. The samples are treated collectively and one 'failure' means the others also fail. It is though fair to report that the actual bacterial counts were much lower than the previous year bordering on a collective pass. Post process contamination is a

common reason for failure of milk from on farm pasteurisers and is often caused by bottles that have not been freshly washed and becoming slightly contaminated. It is hoped that samples taken during 2008/09 will show another improvement following a substantial amount of written guidance being supplied to the farm

The other unsatisfactory results were largely due to the presence of high levels of indicator organisms rather than pathogens but it is important that procedures are corrected before any pathogenic bacteria begin to proliferate on food.

### **Food poisoning**

There was a decrease over last year in food poisoning figures with 91 notifications. Levels are however still well below the numbers that were recorded several years ago. All the individuals were contacted and efforts were made to try and find out the source. It is difficult to pinpoint the source of a single case however by following food histories and the places people may have visited reasonable assumptions may be made. Like last year it was also evident that a significant number of individuals contracted food poisoning whilst abroad.

Mentioned under 3.6 were the 5 viral outbreaks which officers had to investigate. It is important to realise that at the outset of an investigation officers do not know the cause of any outbreak and must assume that it may be connected with food prepared at the particular establishment. It is therefore very important that this possibility is eliminated as soon as possible through the checking of hygiene routines, patients food histories etc.

Noroviruses are highly infectious and are transmitted primarily through the faecal-oral route, or by direct person – person spread. Officers in liaison with infection control staff from the Health Protection Agency visit the affected institutions and advise on a series of control measures that include a suspension of admissions and the discouragement of visitors. Faecal samples are collected from ill patients and sent to the Health Protection Laboratory for culture and are tested for the presence of the Norovirus antigen.

Fortunately there were no food poisoning bacterial outbreaks during 2007/08 although as mentioned above there were a substantial number of individual cases of food poisoning mainly caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*. The decline in the number of individual cases of salmonella continues.

### **Food Alerts**

Again there were a large number of food alerts (67) during the year and the range of issues officers had to deal with was extremely varied. Many of the alerts, which are sent out nationwide, originate from large companies whose products are sold throughout the country. Contamination concerns have risen with respect to packaging, plastic,

metal and glass and some alerts were as a result of bacterial contamination, which made the food unsuitable for consumption. The details of the alerts usually appear in the national press but as mentioned under 3.7 local authorities are notified quickly and officers take any action the same day.

### **Food Safety Promotion**

Food safety promotion work is encouraged by the Food Standards Agency. Although officers did not have a great deal of time to spend on this extra area of work as mentioned under 3.9 five food safety courses were organised four of which were specifically designed for a major food manufacturer.

### **Quality Management – ISO Registration of Ryedale's Food Safety Service**

Members will be aware that Ryedale's food service has been awarded a Certificate of Registration to ISO 9001: 2000. The service is subject to regular inter-authority and external audits which assess compliance with the many standards we have to achieve to maintain our registration. In 2007 an inter-authority audit team spent a day interviewing staff and examining documentation and it was very pleasing indeed to report that no non-conformities were highlighted.

In addition Ryedale's food service was subject to a visit in August by ISOQAR's (our accredited certification body) own auditor. The audit, which include a reality check involving an officer being watched while out on site, went well with the subsequent report commenting on a good control of inspections and from evidenced feedback very good customer satisfaction being noted.

### **Safer Food Better Business – Hazard Analysis**

The legal requirement that all food businesses shall put in place, implement and maintain a permanent procedure based HACCP principles came into force in 2006 and since that time hundreds of food business proprietors/managers have been guided by officers in the most appropriate means to comply.

The HACCP principles are detailed below:

- (a) Identifying any hazards that must be prevented, eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels.
- (b) Identifying the critical control points at the step or steps at which control is essential to prevent or eliminate a hazard or reduce it to acceptable levels.
- (c) Establishing critical limits at critical control points which separate acceptability from unacceptability.
- (d) Establishing and implementing effective monitoring procedures at critical control points.

- (e) Establishing corrective actions when monitoring indicates that a critical control point is not under control.
- (f) Establishing procedures which shall be carried out regularly to verify that the measures outlined above are working effectively.
- (g) Establishing documents and records commensurate with the nature and size of the food business to demonstrate the effective application of the above measures.

The Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business Pack, which is freely available to all food businesses to help with this requirement, has been made available to business proprietors and managers and it has been extensively used throughout Ryedale. It is not a legal requirement that the pack is used but if not the proprietor/manager must design and operate an equivalent system. For many the pack has been in operation at their premises since 2006 and it is important that interest is maintained therefore officers will be reminding businesses during the year to ensure the necessary daily records etc are kept, the pack is up to date and the pack is available for inspection.

### **Food Hygiene Enforcement Interventions**

The new Code of Practice from the Food Standards Agency (mentioned under 3.1) is due to be published soon and it will deal with Regulatory Reform in particular the principles expounded in the Hampton Report by creating a more flexible working environment for officers. It is understood the Code will offer a range of ways officers can undertake their assessments of food businesses. They may select from a variety of official controls, which must be carried out regularly, with appropriate frequency and on a risk basis, or a selection of other interventions. For example:

#### **Official Controls**

Inspections  
Audits  
Sampling visits  
Monitoring visits  
Surveillance visits  
Verification visits

#### **Other Interventions**

Education  
Advice  
Coaching  
Information and intelligence gathering

Although the guidance is not yet available it is quite clear that an intervention strategy will need to be devised. What is not clear is whether the strategy will be centrally set (by the Food Standards Agency) or by local authorities. It is hoped that Ryedale, based on the extensive knowledge it already holds with respect to the food businesses in the district, will be allowed to determine its own strategy. Regardless any intervention strategy should:

- Recognise factors influencing non-compliance
- Consider risks resulting from non-compliance
- Focus on outcomes/outputs not inputs
- Seek to secure compliance with food law

Linked with the intervention strategy is the new National Indicator 184, which is defined as the percentage of food establishments within the local authority area which are 'broadly compliant' with food law. The assessment will be based on a scoring system that will be defined in the forthcoming Code of Practice.

The introduction of this new approach to food safety work will be challenging and businesses may begin to see a different approach to the long established routine of regular inspections but there is certainly no intention of losing the good professional relationship officers hold with many businesses by not continuing to invest effort and time in all although some may receive attention above that which they might normally expect.

Likely to be adopted in 2008/09 is a radical scheme to promote food safety throughout Ryedale entitled 'Scores on the Doors'. A report was presented to Committee in November 2007 seeking approval and support to participate in the scheme. Implementation in Ryedale and indeed the 7 other North Yorkshire authorities has been delayed as the Food Standards Agency seek to consult on a particular scheme that they will recommend to the whole country. The work involved with implementation will be substantial but officers have no doubt that if properly introduced 'Scores on the Doors' will encourage food businesses to be proactive in driving up food hygiene standards and promote consumer choice.

Finally it is perhaps worth commenting on the many questionnaires, which were returned to the office having been sent to businesses following an inspection by an officer. All respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the service they received and it was particularly pleasing to read the many appreciative comments in the free text box provided.