



Subject:	Food Service Delivery Plan 2026-2027
Date:	9 June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	David Cuthbert, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Food Standards Agency, in their monitoring and oversight role, require all NI District Councils to prepare an annual Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the Council's key functions and planned activities for delivery of food hygiene, food standards and other food safety related responsibilities.
1.2	This report presents Belfast City Council's draft Food Service Delivery Plan for the 2026/27 year and seeks Committee approval of the draft plan so that it can be submitted to the Food Standards Agency for review.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to approve the draft Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan 2026-2027
3.0	Main Report
	Background – Food Safety Service
3.1	The Council's Food Safety Unit works with local businesses to build compliance with Food Law and to ensure that food produced and sold in Belfast is safe and can be trusted. This not only protects the consumer and public health but also protects and enhances the reputation of the city, our local businesses and their competitiveness, thereby supporting economic growth.
3.2	Food related illness costs the local economy, individual businesses and the consumer- people may suffer from food poisoning and food related illness, potentially resulting in hospital admissions for some patients, and costing the Belfast economy through work related absences and consumer claims.
3.3	To protect consumers, the Council is required to implement a programme of planned food hygiene and food standards inspections for food businesses across the city. These inspections are programmed based on food safety risks presented by the businesses. Food sampling programmes are also delivered throughout the year, and the Council responds to and investigates food complaints as well as cases of food borne illness.
3.4	The Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 requires businesses to display their food hygiene rating, improving the opportunities for consumers to make informed choices and encouraging improved compliance. Currently at least 86% of food businesses are rated as 3, 4 or 5 (broadly compliant or better).
3.5	An important element of the Food Safety service includes work to ensure allergen requirements placed on food business are being adhered to, protecting consumers who have food allergies from harm (it is estimated that around 2 million people living in the UK have a food allergy). Following a number of high-profile cases resulting in fatalities, legislation was introduced requiring additional labelling for food that is prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) i.e. food that has been packed on the same premises from which it is being sold. Council officers monitor compliance and offer support to businesses during inspections.
3.6	The Council's imported food control function continues to facilitate trade while ensuring food safety and public health is protected by undertaking official controls at Belfast Port. From the 1 st October 2023 the Windsor Framework introduced the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS "green lane" scheme) to facilitate qualifying traders to move retail goods from GB to NI. Whilst DAERA oversee the NIRM arrangements, both DAERA and local Councils undertake official controls on other food products arriving at NI ports that are

destined for, or at risk of entering the EU (red lane). For Belfast City Council this includes controls on fish products, high risk food not of animal origin, plastic kitchenware from China and Hong Kong, and organic products. Whilst the UK and EU have announced intention to negotiate a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement in the future, in the meantime they have restated their commitment to full and timely implementation of the existing agreements in advance of any future SPS arrangement. The Port Health service continues to work closely with the Food Standards Agency, DAERA, DEFRA, other government departments, local businesses and other stakeholders to ensure adequate arrangements are in place to facilitate trade and protect consumers.

Annual Food Service Delivery Plan

- 3.7 Each year, the Council produces a Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the activities, techniques and approaches to be taken during the year to support businesses in ensuring food safety, food standards and to promote informed healthy choices. The Plan provides the basis on which the Council's regulatory activities are monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency, and it is a requirement that it is presented to the Council for approval.
- 3.8 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a key role in overseeing local authority regulatory activities to ensure that official controls are delivered. Powers to enable the FSA to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. The Food Law Code of Practice on local food law enforcement has been produced by the Agency, in conjunction with local authority representative bodies, to provide guidance on how regulatory service plans should be structured and what they should contain. The Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan for 2026/27 has been drafted in line with requirements of the FLCOP.
- 3.9 The FLCOP requires that Food Service Delivery Plans should be submitted to the relevant Member forum, in this case the People and Communities Committee, for approval. This is to ensure local transparency and accountability. The Food Service Delivery Plan for 2026/2027 is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.10 Members should note that during the Covid pandemic (between 2020 and 2022), food hygiene and food standards inspection programmes were significantly impacted, as visits were paused due to business closures during periods of lock down, and subsequent restrictions on social distancing etc. The FSA worked with Local Authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland during 2022/23 to develop recovery plans for food safety services, setting priorities for service recovery at that time.
- 3.11 Belfast City Council's Food Safety team successfully achieved the key service recovery milestones and objectives in 2022/23 and 2023/24, these were designed to focus interventions on the highest risk businesses, bringing these back into the routine inspection programme. In 2025/26, further significant progress has been made towards returning to normal inspection frequencies for the vast majority of businesses across the range of high, moderate and low risk categories. Whilst a small backlog of inspections remains, Officers are working to eliminate this over the 2026/27 year.
- 3.12 The Food Standards Agency introduced a modernised Food Standards delivery model in 2024/25. This has resulted in changes to the risk scoring matrix for such inspections to take account of allergen compliance, and results in some businesses being categorised in higher risk categories and requiring more frequent inspections. This has inadvertently created a backlog of inspections and officers are working to eliminate this in 2026/2027. Officers will continue to assess the impact of these changes going forward.
- 3.13 Reforms to the food hygiene delivery model are currently being developed by the FSA and they anticipate that pilots for the new model will commence in 2027.

	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p> <p>3.14 The Food Standards Agency provides some grant funding to help support these services on an annual basis to all District Councils in NI. This funding is allocated based on population size of each District as well as the profile of food businesses located within each area. In 2026/27 the funding allocated to Belfast City Council is approximately £343,817. Additional funding is provided by DAERA and FSA for delivery of the imported food function at Belfast Port.</p> <p>3.15 The remaining resources required for this core service are included within the City and Neighbourhood Services existing budgets and no additional resources are anticipated.</p> <p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessments</p> <p>3.16 None</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1 – Food Service Delivery Plan 2026-2027