

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **BELFAST CITY COUNCIL CITY & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES DEPARTMENT SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT 2026 - 2027**

This service plan for food law enforcement describes the techniques and approaches to be taken by Belfast City Council during 2026 – 2027 to ensure food is safe and food is what it says it is. The Council will mix and balance the four common approaches to enforcement:

- Demand driven
- Education driven
- Inspection driven
- Intelligence driven

Food safety is a priority for the Council's regulatory service, with staff in Food Safety, Port Health and Business Support providing the majority of the service.

#### **1 – Service Aims and Objectives**

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

The key aims and objectives of the food service are to:

1. Protect consumers and ensure food produced, imported through or sold in Belfast is safe to eat and meets the necessary legal standards
2. Support the local economy, including the regeneration and investment in the City Centre by minimising the cost of food related illness and supporting individual businesses through clear advice, guidance and good regulation which are effective, risk based and proportionate.
3. Respond to all complaints or service requests within target response times and meet the needs of local people through effective delivery of quality and customer centric services.
4. Help consumers and businesses understand about safe food and help to ensure that consumers have the information they need to make informed choices.

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

The Belfast Agenda 2024 sets out the vision for Belfast to become a city which will drive a successful economy, a magnet for investment and a great place to live for everyone. It reflects the priorities of community planning partners and the public.

The Food Safety Service has an important contribution to make to the achievement of the city's priorities, particularly by supporting the economy and creating a safe city. The service also helps the Council in its efforts to stimulate the local economy, supporting other key strategies including the Bolder Vision for Belfast which aims to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city.

In promoting food safety, the Food Safety Service also contributes to delivering the cross-government Food Strategy, published in June 2022, setting out a joint vision for the UK food system in 2030 and the Food Standards Agency's Strategy for 2022-2027.

The Service, by improving food safety in the city, plays an important role in promoting Belfast to visitors and tourists.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

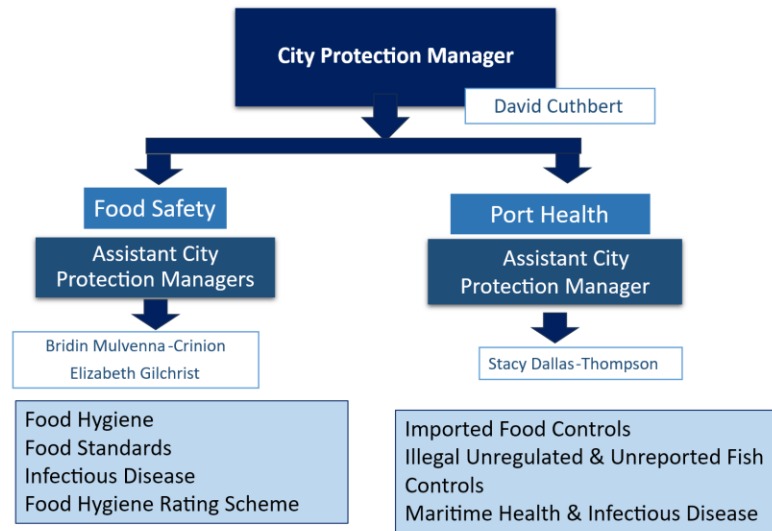
The Council is the largest of the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland with almost 3000 employees. The Council has 60 Councillors over 10 election wards. It serves a population of 348,000 (with a daytime population of over 400,000). The area is predominantly urban in nature with the Council offices being located in the city centre. The city is the major centre for both employment and entertainment with two thirds of the population of Northern Ireland being within 50 km of the city.

Within the city boundary is the Port of Belfast, a significant port within the United Kingdom. Around two thirds of Northern Ireland's seaborne trade, and a quarter of that for Ireland as a whole, is handled at the port.

### 2.2 Organisational Structure



## Business Portfolio



City Services

### 2.2.1 Appointed laboratories for analysis

The Northern Ireland Public Health Laboratory based at Belfast City Hospital, provides specialist services in food microbiology and pathology. The Council has appointed Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd as Public Analysts to provide specialist analysis and advice on food composition, labelling and chemical and physical contaminants of food. Identification of pests associated with food and food premises is sourced on demand.

### 2.3 Scope of the Food Service

Belfast City Council carries out all functions relating to food safety and food standards matters, including the following:

- Registration and approval of food premises
- Inspection of food premises including manufacturing, catering and retail premises in accordance with a range of legislation and guidance, and taking into consideration the Council's Regulation and Enforcement Policy
- Implementation of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme including publication of food hygiene inspection results on the national website
- Dealing with potential food hazards including food alerts
- Inspection of foodstuffs and the formulation and implementation of sampling programmes for analysis in relation to composition and labelling and/or microbiological examination.

- Investigation of complaints relating to food and hygiene of food premises and investigation of cases of suspected food poisoning
- Providing advice and information on food safety matters
- The provision of specialist food safety education programmes, and signposting to other commercially available training services
- Food safety promotional activities
- Provision of practical food safety and port health training to environmental health students
- Investigation of incidents of statutorily notifiable food and water related illnesses on behalf of the Director of Public Health of the Public Health Agency
- Inspection of third country (non-EU) imported food of non-animal origin
- In partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs the operation of the Port of Belfast Border Inspection Post and the inspection of Products of Animal Origin.
- Enhanced screening of Maritime Declaration of Health documents for all vessels arriving in Belfast.
- Inspection of vessels (ships – including passenger ferries) arriving at the Port to ensure compliance with International and United Kingdom health and hygiene requirements including food safety and control of infectious diseases and to issue Ship Sanitation Certificates as required.
- Enforcement of legislation relating to import control of Organic products
- Enforcement of legislation to control illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in order to ensure food safety and protect marine ecosystems
- The issuing of attestations and export health certificates required for the export of consignments of non-animal foods and fish from NI to third countries

The service is currently provided by members of staff employed by Belfast City Council. All staff involved in the inspection of food and food premises meet the qualification and competency requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice and the FSA competency framework.

## **2.4 Demands on the Food Service**

### **2.4.1. Food Safety Service**

Belfast City Council has 3557 food businesses within the city.

A profile of premises classified in accordance with the FSA monitoring returns are given below.

| TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT     | NO. OF PREMISES                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Primary Producers         | 16                             |
| Manufacturers & Packers   | 149                            |
| Importers/Exporters       | 41 (including shipping agents) |
| Distributors/Transporters | 82                             |
| Retailers                 | 732                            |
| Restaurant/Caterers       | 2537                           |

11 manufacturing premises and 8 cold stores in the city are approved under EC Reg 853/2004.

The majority of food premises in the city are caterers or retailers reflecting the fact that Belfast is a major regional centre for shopping, entertainment, business and tourism. However, within the City there are a number of major manufacturers including 2 multi-national bakeries, 2 flour mills, 8 cold stores, 5 meat preparations and other meat products premises, an animal fat rendering plant, and 5 fish processors approved under EC Regulations which manufacture and process food for distribution throughout Northern Ireland and Great Britain and export to the Republic of Ireland.

An External Temporary Storage Facility (ETSF formerly known as Enhanced Remote Transit Shed – ERTS) is a warehouse designated by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), where goods are temporarily stored pending clearance by HMRC, and prior to release into free circulation. ETSFs are periodically examined to ascertain if foods are stored.

There are a large number of distribution centres located in the city many of which distribute across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Eleven of these premises specialise in ethnic foods of non-EU origin and are monitored to ensure imported food controls are being adhered to.

It is estimated that over 5% of Belfast's food businesses, across a range of business types, are owned by people whose first language is not English. Whilst this adds significantly to diversity and customer choice, it requires particular effort from the service to ensure equal access to advice and information, including the facility for the translation of documents and provision of interpreters for on-site visits and meetings.

The Council's food safety services are delivered from the Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast, usually between the hours of 0830 and 1700, Monday to Thursday, and between 0830 and 1630 on Fridays. The Port Health services are delivered from the Port Health Unit at 21 Dargan Drive, BT3 9JG, delivering the imported food control service on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis.

Out of hours work is undertaken as necessary, such as for businesses that only open late at night and/or at weekends and for additional Port health work such as ship inspections.

An Environmental Health Officer is on standby outside normal office hours, to deal with urgent notifications from the FSA and also infectious disease incidents at the discretion of the Public Health Agency (PHA). A Port Health Officer is on standby out of office hours to deal with issues arising in the Port. This service extends 24 hours per day for 365 days per year.

Historically there has been a continued increase in the number of large outdoor events which have significant catering facilities associated with them, such as farmers' and continental markets, festivals and concerts. These events sometimes require evening, weekend and Bank Holiday visits to monitor food hygiene standards. We will continue to strengthen relationships with promoters and organisers this year in order to ensure that adequate attention is given to planning for food safety. Significant events this year include the Fleadh Cheoil Na hÉireann, Christmas Continental Market, St Patricks Day, Feile, Orangefest, Mela, Belsonic and Vital music festivals, among others. The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is estimated to bring approximately 800,000 visitors to Belfast over a nine-day period with significant food safety resources required in relation to preparation and planning, as well as site visits throughout the event and responding to any food safety complaints or incidents as they arise. There will be

several dedicated food court areas as well as increased mobile licensed street trading within city centre and potential for pop-up food stalls.

#### **2.4.2. Port Health Service**

The Port Health service operates a 24-hour service to deliver the additional responsibilities resulting from the UK's exit from the EU for imported food checks on some foods arriving from UK. Windsor Framework arrangements agreed by the UK Government commenced from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, and the Council is working alongside our partners in DAERA, DEFRA and FSA to apply the relevant statutory requirements. In May 2025, the UK and EU Governments announced their intention to negotiate a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. Once agreed, this may reduce the need for some checks, however in the meantime, the UK and EU have committed to full implementation of the existing arrangements.

The Port Health team comprises 4 shift-based teams who operate a 24/7 service, in addition to a small team of 4 daytime officers deliver imported food controls for goods arriving from other 3<sup>rd</sup> countries, ship sanitation inspections, infectious disease duties, public health nuisances and some food hygiene work within the Port.

It is intended that a further review of the Port Health function will be undertaken once the operating and funding models for delivery of Windsor Framework obligations and any future SPS agreement are clarified and progressed in the coming years. An appropriate and sustainable longer term service model, including sustainable financing arrangements is required and we continue to advocate for this with key partners, including FSA, DAERA and DEFRA.

Belfast City Council's Port Health operations relocated to a newly constructed purpose-built Inspection Facility at 21 Dargan Drive in August 2025. This site is managed and maintained by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). These facilities have been approved by the Food Standards Agency on behalf of the European Union as a Designated Point of Entry into the EU for the carrying out of official controls on high-risk products of non-animal origin imported from outside the EU. The facility is also approved for the examination, sampling and clearance of third country imports of products of animal origin and for inspection of certain food contact materials.

#### **2.5 Enforcement Policy**

The Council has prepared a Regulation and Enforcement Policy which was formally adopted by the Council in December 2011. The purpose of this policy is to secure an efficient and effective approach to all regulatory and enforcement activities carried out by Belfast City Council. The policy is consistent with the principles set out in the Government's Better Regulation Agenda and with the principles of the Enforcement Concordat and it is also intended to improve compliance with legislation while minimising the burden on businesses, individuals, organisations and the Council. The policy sets out the principles which will enable the Service to ensure consistent and open enforcement and is considered when determining appropriate enforcement action. Management controls are in place to ensure that all decisions on enforcement are consistent with this policy.

In preparing the Policy, the Council has considered the Regulator's Compliance Code and the "Statement of Intent" between the Local Better Regulation Office, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, and District Councils.

The Regulation and Enforcement Policy is available on the Council's website and can be accessed at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk). Businesses are advised of the existence of the policy together with how it can be obtained on all standard letters and reports left following the inspection of premises.

### 3. Service Delivery

#### 3.1 Food Premises Interventions

The Council plans and delivers a risk-based Food Premises Intervention Programme based on the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice. The frequency and type of intervention planned aims to concentrate resources on the worst offenders and higher risk businesses whilst at the same time reducing the burden on the better businesses.

There are 1500 premises due a food hygiene intervention plus a backlog of 158 from previous years. At the start of April 2026 there were 606 premises due a food standards intervention plus a backlog of 397 from 2025-2026. The significant increase in standard inspections due in this financial year is due to the move to a new Food Standards delivery model.

#### 3.2 Food Hygiene Intervention Strategy

As per the Food Law Code of Practice the following premises have been prioritised for inspection in 2026-2027:

| Risk category                         | Inspection planned |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| A                                     | 6                  |
| B                                     | 133                |
| C                                     | 480                |
| D                                     | 482                |
| E                                     | 389                |
| Unrated at 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025 | 10                 |
| Backlog                               | 158                |

#### 3.3 Food Standards Intervention Strategy

As per the Food law code of practice the following premises have been prioritised for inspection at the start of April 2026 in 2026-2027:

Total FSDM interventions due 2026-2027 including backlog:

| Risk Category | Inspection planned |
|---------------|--------------------|
| PI1           | 1                  |
| PI2           | 9                  |
| PI3           | 6                  |
| MR1           | 42                 |
| MR2           | 267                |
| MR3           | 238                |
| LR1           | 36                 |

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| LR2 | 9 |
| LR3 | 1 |

### **3.4 Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES)**

Normally those food businesses which present the lowest risk to public health will be subject to an alternative approach to inspection. This AES consists of a Food Safety Hygiene and Standards Self-Assessment Questionnaire which is posted out to the businesses along with tailored advice and information. Completed questionnaires are reviewed to monitor compliance and confirm that there have been no significant changes to the business or a change in ownership. Premises that do not provide the necessary information or indicate a significant change to their activities may be subject to an inspection.

The introduction of FSDM has reduced the number of premises eligible for food standards AES.

### **3.5 Revisits**

In line with the statutory Food Law Code of Practice all food businesses that fail to comply with significant statutory requirements shall be subject to appropriate enforcement action and revisit to verify compliance. As a minimum they will receive a written warning letter. It is anticipated that approximately 300 revisits following food hygiene inspections shall be completed and approximately 150 revisits following food standards inspections.

### **3.6 Revisits for FHRS rerating**

Under the requirements of the Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 additional revisits will be carried out on request to 're-rate' an establishment, subject to criteria being met and a fee of £150 being paid. Approximately 80 rerating inspections are anticipated for 2026-2027.

### **3.7 Food Complaints**

The Council will investigate food complaints received from members of the public or food businesses in line with the service's response times for urgent and non-urgent service requests. In determining the appropriate course of action, the Council will take into consideration any reports received from the Home, Originating or Primary Authorities and the food business identified as the cause of the complaint and will have regard to the Council's Regulatory and Enforcement Policy. For 2026/27 the Council estimates that it will receive approximately 590 complaints relating to food or the hygiene of food premises.

### **3.8 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme**

The Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme is not a legal requirement in NI. We will however take cognisance of any relevant advice given by the Home or Primary Authority.

While the Council does not enter into formal written home authority partnerships with any business, it has established a close liaison with the majority of businesses, including the Education Authority, for whom it informally acts as a Home Authority on behalf of the other 10 District Councils. Our remit extends to providing advice, guidance and the follow up of non-compliances in relation to policy or procedures identified by our own officers or by officers from

the other District Councils. Advice is also provided during programmed inspections and other visits.

On request the Council will investigate all matters referred to it by other local authorities and where appropriate will provide a written response to requests for information. For 2026/2027 the Council estimates that it will receive over 250 requests for information from other Local Authorities.

The Council liaise closely with the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and carry out work on their behalf under a number of MOU's and SLA's. This includes work relating to egg, beef and poultry meat labelling and traceability and the issuing of export health certificates and attestations for trade to non-EC countries.

### **3.9 Advice to Business**

The Council is committed to the improvement of standards in food businesses and advice to businesses is an important dimension of that strategy. Advice is given through site-visits, provision of compliance tools such as the Butchers' HACCP Pack, and the Safe Catering (HACCP) Pack, the Council's website, dealing with enquiries and requests for advice, through correspondence, meetings with trade groups, distribution of printed materials, and educational and online training programmes. The service will continue to support all businesses with the implementation and maintenance of Food Safety Management Systems based on HACCP principles, in conjunction with a graduated approach to enforcement.

In order to promote a positive image and promote the reputation of the Council the unit publishes articles in City matters and interlink.

It is estimated that 500 new businesses will receive advice in the year.

Our system of recording service requests, response times and actions help plan, improve and monitor this part of the service. It is estimated that in addition to complaints relating to food or premises a further 1250 requests for service will be received this year.

The Port Health Service is an active member of the local shipping community, having extensive business contacts with the Maritime Coastguard Agency, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, N.I. importers, customs, clearance agents, hauliers, shipping companies, ferry operators and stevedores. Advice is given on Port Health related matters, including food safety, to the shipping community on a regular basis and when requested help and advice is given to local importers and members of the general public on the importation of third country foodstuffs including products of animal origin. The Port Health service has also engaged together with DAERA, FSA and other Councils with trade and businesses to provide advice and assistance in relation to additional requirements following Brexit, and the service continues to receive requests for information and advice in this regard.

### **3.10 Food Sampling**

The Food Safety Unit has prepared a Food Sampling Policy outlining its general approach to chemical and microbiological sampling as well its approach in specific situations. This approach recognises the important role of sampling in protecting public health and product quality, detecting fraudulent activities and unhygienic practices and to ensure that food standards are maintained.

Food sampling programmes are produced annually for both chemical and microbiological samples, after consultation with the Public Analyst and the Food Examiner. The programme has regard to national, regional and local co-ordinated sampling surveys.

Several areas of intelligence are used to identify priority sampling and premises. Such intelligence may include Incident reports sent to FSA, Food Alerts, FSA Annual Incident report, RASFFs, Food standards complaints; UK Food Surveillance System annual reports, FSA Imported Food Annual Reports & Food Fraud Database bulletins.

In 2026/2027 we aim to sample 300 for chemical analysis and 1000 products for microbiological examination.

### **3.11 Port Health – Imported food inspections and sampling**

The Unit receives approximately 25 manifests for containerised shipping cargoes per month and also up to 77 manifests from roll on-roll off ferry sailing arrivals at Belfast Port each week. From these manifests Council officers identify vessels and their cargoes. Cargo manifests are scrutinised, and all third country imported foodstuffs are identified to ensure compliance with import processes and food safety legislation.

Documentary, identity and physical checks, including sampling, are carried out on all third country products of animal origin in accordance with the EC veterinary checks regime. Following introduction of the NI Protocol and Windsor Framework, this has extended to relevant food products arriving from GB (red lane).

EU legislation requires that specified import conditions will apply to certain imported consignments of third country products of non-animal origin. These products all require a documentary check, and a proportion will be subject to identity and physical checks (including sampling) at a level laid down in the legislation. Products not subject to the specific legislation will be risk assessed and appropriate checks, including sampling, carried out to ensure compliance with relevant imported food legislation. When possible, the Unit carries out imported food sampling programmes devised by the Food Standards Agency or the E.U.

A sampling plan for this year is based on trade volumes and commodities. Samples taken will include mandatory samples required by imported food legislation as well as surveillance samples guided by the UK's National Monitoring Plan. We anticipate the numbers of samples to be taken from imported food consignments in 2026/2027 to be in the region of:

- Microbiological 45
- Chemical 250

The International Health Regulations (2005) require that all ships must be inspected at an authorised port such as Belfast and where necessary a Ship Sanitation Certificate issued for the prevention and control of public health risks. The unit also responds to Ship Sanitation inspection requests from ships that operate out of Larne Port. Certificates are valid for a period of 6 months. As the number of inspections are dependent upon requests from Ships Agents, the volume of inspections vary each year. In 2025/2026 we carried out 70 ship sanitation inspections, which is a decrease from the previous year in which 103 ship sanitation inspections were completed.

Food hygiene and food standards inspections of Passenger Ferries registered with and operating out of Belfast are undertaken. Some of these ferries are large food businesses producing up to 7500 meals per day. We will inspect between 2 and 4 ferries in 2026-2027.

The unit also regularly inspect External Temporary Storage Facilities (formerly known as ERTS), fishing vessels operating out of Belfast and other vessels in dry dock for repair. Food Hygiene and Standards inspections are also carried out at George Best City Airport as well as ensuring the safety of water delivered to aircraft.

### **3.12 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related and other Infectious Disease**

The Council will attempt to investigate all notifications of infectious disease received from the Public Health Agency (PHA), within one working day of receipt. Specifically trained and competent environmental health officers within the Food Safety and Port Health Unit are authorised by the PHA for the investigation of notifications.

Investigation of outbreaks of food related infectious disease is conducted in liaison with the Consultant in Public Health Medicine of the PHA, and in accordance with the existing Outbreak Control Plans and protocols.

The Council estimates that it will receive 150 notifications of food related infectious disease during the year, with an additional 100 alleged food poisoning complaints from the public.

The Port Health Division will respond immediately it is notified of any complaint or incident of food poisoning or food related infectious disease occurring on board a ship or premises within the Port of Belfast or relating to a passenger using Belfast City Airport.

### **3.13 Food Safety Incidents**

The FSA receives and issues information about foods within the supply chain which have been found to be unsafe or do not meet legal requirements. These include notifications about Product Withdrawals, Product Recalls and Allergy Alerts. Where necessary, the FSA will issue direction to councils to take specific action to protect consumers.

All notifications that require action are recorded on our database with details of the actions taken recorded against the relevant premises.

The Council estimates that it will receive 150 notifications from the FSA during the year that will require investigation and further action to protect public safety.

### **3.14 Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food (RASFF).**

With EU Exit, the UK has lost access to certain EU information systems including full access to the RASFF. As a result, the Food Standards Agency has developed the Risk Likelihood Dashboard to create a platform to enable more efficient and effective collation and sharing of relevant data for stakeholders involved in protecting public health in relation to imported food and feed. The Risk Likelihood Dashboard provides intelligence from consolidated data sources including historic TRACES data, RASFF Portal, refusals from other 3rd countries. Local Authorities can still create RASFF notifications but have view only of RASFF notifications.

Belfast City Council have access to the Risk Likelihood Dashboard and use it routinely to identify potential risks with imported foods and target surveillance accordingly.

If a consignment/product is to be rejected or destroyed due to a direct or indirect risk to human health, an incident report and rapid alert notification must be completed and forwarded to the FSA Food Incident Branch after consultation with FSA Northern Ireland for onward notification to the European Commission. It is likely that 5-10 notifications will be generated in 2026/2027.

### **3.15 Liaisons with Other Organisations**

The Food Safety and Port Health Unit has extensive liaison in place with a wide range of other organisations:

- Food Standards Agency NI (FSANI) through enforcement stakeholder meetings, the Northern Ireland Food Managers Groups (NIFMG), and numerous other formal and informal meetings.
- The Public Health Agency (MOU exists) in relation to the investigation of sporadic cases and outbreaks of food related infectious disease.
- NIFMG reporting to Environmental Health NI
- National Food Hygiene Focus Group (UK)
- Association of Port Health Authorities. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Port Health) is a member Port Health Liaison Network.
- The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to the operation of the Border Inspection Post.
- Merchant Navy Welfare Board (NI)
- HM Customs and Excise nationally and locally in relation to imported food controls.
- Planning Service to review related applications.
- Department for Infrastructure Water Quality Liaison Group.
- Safe Food through projects and working groups on the Island of Ireland
- The Northern Ireland Area Medical Advisory Committee - Infectious Disease Sub-Group.
- Belfast Resilience-Harbour Working Group
- Maritime Coastguard Agency
- Belfast Harbour Commissioners
- The Education Authority for NI School Meals Service
- NI Takeaway association

Close liaison is maintained with the Council's Building Control Service, Pest Control and Waste Management Service, as well as with the other regulatory units.

### **3.16 Promotion of Food Safety**

The Council carries out educational and promotional activities as an integral part of its food safety duties. In addition to this, specialist promotional activities are carried by the Food Safety Unit.

Educational and promotional activities planned for 2026/2027 include the following:

| <b>Promotional Activity</b>                                       |
|---|
| Maintain and promote and manage the Food Hygiene Rating scheme    |
| Provide an Imported Food/Port Health training day for UU students |
| Provide training for year 3 and 4 UU students on Food Safety      |

|  |
|--|
| Promote Environmental Health Placement with year 2 UU students   |
| To publish at least one article in City Matters  |
| To develop relevant advice / information for businesses to assist them to comply with enforcement / legislative requirements |
| Promote EH as a profession within local schools  |
| Participate and assist with Safefood food hygiene training   |
| Promote and assist with FSA food safety campaigns  |

## 4.0 Resources

### 4.1 Financial allocation

Details of the budget for the delivery of the Council's food service in 2026-2027 are within the City and Neighbourhood Service's revenue estimates and were approved by Council in February 2026.

### 4.2 Staffing allocation

#### 4.2.1 Food Safety and Port Health Unit

The full staffing compliment in the Food Safety & Port Health Unit has the equivalent of 19 full-time staff engaged in food safety work. All officers hold specific qualifications and are assessed for competencies as required by the Code of Practice and are authorised for duties in accordance with the Council's documented procedure. (See table below).

| Position                          | Hours (Full or Part Time) | Authorisation                      | FTE |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Food Safety</b>                |                           |                                    |     |
| City Protection Manager           | FT                        | None                               | 0.1 |
| Assistant City Protection Manager | FT                        | Full including Approvals           | 0.7 |
| Assistant City Protection Manager | FT                        | Full including Approvals           | 0.7 |
| Senior EHO                        | PT                        | Full including Approvals           | 0.8 |
| Senior EHO                        | PT                        | Full including Approvals           | 0.8 |
| Senior EHO                        | FT                        | Full including Approvals           | 1   |
| Senior EHO                        | FT                        | Full including Approvals           | 1   |
| Senior EHO                        | FT                        | Full including Approvals           | 1   |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Full including Coldstore Approvals | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Partial                            | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | PT                        | Full                               | 0.5 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Partial                            | 1.0 |
| EHO                               | FT                        | Partial                            | 1.0 |
| Technical Officer                 | PT                        | Full                               | 0.8 |
| Technical Officer                 | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |
| Technical Officer                 | FT                        | Full                               | 1.0 |

|                   |    |                                  |          |
|-------------------|----|----------------------------------|----------|
| Technical Officer | FT | Full                             | 1.0      |
| Senior EHO        | 1  | Vacant (seconded to Port Health) | 1        |
|                   |    | Total FTE                        | 19.4     |
|                   |    | Total Allocated FTE hours**      | 28091.20 |
|                   |    | Total Occupied FTE               | 28091.20 |

\*\*FTE = 200 working days @ 7.24 hr per working day = 1448 hours per FTE

| <b>Port Health/Imported food</b>                 |    |                                     |      |
|--|----|-------------------------------------|------|
| City Protection Manager                          | FT | None                                | 0.1  |
| Assistant City Protection Manager PORT (daytime) | FT | Full with Approvals inc Port Health | 0.7  |
| Senior EHO PORT (daytime)                        | FT | Full inc Port Health                | 0.7  |
| Senior EHO PORT (daytime)                        | FT | Full inc Port Health                | 1.0  |
| EHO PORT (daytime)                               | FT | Full with approvals inc Port Health | 1.0  |
| Team Leader EHOs x4 (shift based)                | FT | Port health                         | 4.0  |
| EHOs x10 (shift based)                           | FT | Port Health – 1 post vacant         | 10.0 |
| Technical Support Officer x8 (shift based)       | FT | Full compliment                     | 8.0  |
| Port Health Support Assistants (shift based)     | FT | Full compliment                     | 8.0  |

Current short-term vacancies that cannot be covered by temporary contracts are on occasion covered by agency staff.

The Port Health shift-based staff (including Team Leader Environmental Health Officers, Environmental Health Officers, Technical Support Officers and Port Health Support Assistants) are employed on a temporary basis for Port Health to carry out required official controls on goods from GB following temporary funding from FSA.

\*Full Authorisation: authorised by Belfast City Council to enforce the provisions of The Food Safety Order (Northern Ireland) 1991 and any Orders or Regulations made thereunder or relating to the foregoing or having effect by virtue of the European Communities Act 1972.

#### 4.2.1a Estimate of Resource (Time) Requirements

##### Food Hygiene/Food Standards

| Activity                                    | No Tasks | Time/task | Total Hours |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Cat A inspections Hygiene                   | 6        | 5.5       | 33          |
| Cat B inspections Hygiene                   | 133      | 5         | 665         |
| Cat C inspections Hygiene including backlog | 482      | 4         | 1928        |
| Cat D inspections Hygiene including backlog | 636      | 4         | 2544        |

|  |      |                      |        |
|--|------|----------------------|--------|
| Cat E inspections Hygiene including backlog  | 301  | 1.5                  | 451.50 |
| AES Category E Hygiene   | 100  | 0.5                  | 50     |
| Unrated and unplanned events (Hygiene)   | 500  | 5                    | 2500   |
| PI1 1 month  | 1    | 5                    | 5      |
| PI2 3 months   | 9    | 5                    | 45     |
| PI3 6 months   | 6    | 5                    | 30     |
| MR1 12 months  | 42   | 4                    | 168    |
| MR2 24 months  | 267  | 4                    | 1068   |
| MR3 36 months  | 238  | 2.5                  | 595    |
| LR1 48 months  | 36   | 2                    | 72     |
| LR2 60 months  | 9    | 1                    | 9      |
| LR3 72 months  | 1    | 0.5                  | 0.5    |
| Backlog Standards  | 397  | 1                    | 397    |
| Unrated and unplanned events (Standards)   | 500  | 5                    | 2500   |
| Revisits   | 320  | 1                    | 320    |
| Advisory and other visits  | 75   | 1                    | 75     |
| Micro sampling   | 1000 | 1                    | 1000   |
| Chemical sampling  | 300  | 2                    | 600    |
| Food Complaints  | 590  | 7                    | 4130   |
| ID investigations  | 150  | 2.5                  | 300    |
| Food Alerts For action   | 100  | 2                    | 200    |
| Prosecutions   | 3    | 74                   | 222    |
| Other Service Requests   | 800  | 7                    | 5600   |
| Staff Development  | 19   | 30                   | 570    |
| Working groups and initiatives with other external partners and stakeholders including NIFMG and Sub-Groups, FSA, APHA | -    | -                    | 200    |
| Management of service and staff  | -    | -                    | 2,500  |
| Staff meetings   | -    | -                    | 240    |
| Projects e.g., web development, procedures, campaigns  | -    | -                    | 50     |
| Mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme   | -    | -                    | 30     |
|  |      | Total activity hours | 29098  |

There are 28091.20 FTE Hours allocated to the service. The anticipated activity hours are 29098 are not inclusive of the additional time and resources required to service the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann event in Summer of 2026. This identifies that even if the total allocated FTE was available, the service demands are anticipated to exceed the available FTE resources at the Council's disposal. A key driver of the demand on the service has arisen from significant impacts of changes to inspection frequencies of the food standards delivery model – increasing

the numbers of food standards inspections due. The Food Safety service will therefore need to continue to prioritise its activities to maximise the most efficient and effective use of the available resource in service delivery while addressing the areas of greatest risk. It should also be noted that in-year changes to risk ratings may result in multiple inspections for same premises in one year. Such changes are not always possible to predict.

## Port Health

| Activity  | No Tasks                | Time/task                       | Total Hours |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Inspect all shipping and ferry Manifests  | 4300                    | 0.5                             | 2150        |
| To screen Maritime Declaration of health documentation to monitor compliance with International Health Regulations and infectious disease | 2000                    | 0.5                             | 1000        |
| To inspect vessels for the issue of Ship Sanitation Certificates.   | 140                     | 6.00                            | 840         |
| Documentary & phys. checks, including sampling, of foodstuffs imported from outside EU.   | *<br>(Estimated 40,000) | *<br>(varies depending on task) |             |

\*This estimate reflects documentary, identity and physical checks on products of animal origin (fish and fish products), high risk food not of animal origin, plastic kitchenware, organic products and IUU Catch Certificates undertaken in 2025/26 and is likely to be subject to further development and resource planning in 2026/27 as statutory requirements, systems and processes are further developed/updated, and businesses adjust to the new arrangements. The duration of tasks and degree of officer time varies according to commodity types and is under regular review with partners including FSA and DAERA as part of the annual resource allocation arrangements that are currently in place.

### 4.3 Staff Development Plan

The development needs of the Food Safety and Port Health Unit are identified as part of the Council's business planning process, competency assessment and through personal development planning. Relevant local training is identified by the Northern Ireland Food Managers Group and subgroups, the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Public Health Agency. Training needs are also reviewed during the year to take into account staff changes and other issues identified. In-house briefing sessions are delivered regularly as part of monthly Unit meetings.

Competency requirements required by the Food Law Code of Practice are reassessed for all Officers annually and all deficiencies addressed in year.

#### **Food Safety Training Plan 2026-2027**

The priority training areas agreed between NIFMG and FSA and shall be provided as low-cost training. The key areas have been identified as follows:

- FHRS National Consistency Exercise
- Food Standards Delivery Model Consistency Exercise
- Food Safety Conference
- North/South Food Safety Conference
- Shelf Life and Microbiology
- Enforcement /Notices/RAN's
- Basic HACCP for new officers
- General Microbiology
- Cold Press Juices
- Sushi
- Root Cause Analysis
- Food Crime Intelligence

There is also access to online courses provided by the FSA, Safefood, as well as refresher training via ABC Food Law. Port Health staff also avail of training on imported food controls via the Better Training for Safer Food programme.

## **5.0 Quality Assessment**

The following arrangements are in place to ensure the quality of services provided by the Food Safety and Port Health Unit:

### **5.1 Internal Monitoring Arrangements**

The Food Safety and Port Health Units have documented monitoring procedures. These procedures are implemented by experienced officers for quality control and assurance. Current procedures include:

- Regular individual meetings with lead officers
- Use of procedure notes
- Use of standardised inspection report forms, letters and phrases
- Review of post-inspection paperwork
- Monitoring of inspections, visits and actions by documentation checks and accompanied visits
- Post complaint investigation monitoring
- Approved premises file review and monitoring
- Internal auditing of adherence to procedures
- Monthly meetings of the Food Safety Teams
- Seminars / exercises and training as required

### **5.2 External monitoring and verification**

The Border Inspection Post is audited annually by DAERA, and the food service is periodically subject to both FSA and EU audits.

The inland food safety team are subject to audit internally and externally.

## 6.0 Review

### 6.1 Review against the Service Plan

Performance against the unit's business plan is reviewed monthly and quarterly by the Unit Management Team. Summary performance information on the previous years' service plan will be reported with each Food Service Delivery Plan. The report shall also identify any variance together with areas of improvement.

Performance report on Food Service Delivery Plan for 2025-2026

#### 1. Departmental Plan Targets

| Performance Indicator               | Target 2025-2026 | Achieved 2025-2026   |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| % Premises deemed broadly compliant | 95%              | 86%<br>Continuing higher levels of poor hygiene standards with impact of economic downturn & higher costs affecting broad compliance |

#### 2. Other relevant performance information update for 25/26

| Performance Indicator  | Target 2025/26 | Achieved % 2025/26 | Explanation of variance and improvements for 2025/26  |
|--|----------------|--------------------|---|
| % Of the food hygiene programme complete                               | 100%           | 89%                | Priority inspections due in 2025/26 were completed, and significant progress made in addressing backlog from the Covid pandemic.  |
| Backlog of previous hygiene interventions                              | 100%           | 96%                | Fewer inspections overdue at end of 2526.   |
| % of the food standards programme complete                             | 100%           | 66%                | Continuing to prioritise higher risk standards inspections and focus on reducing hygiene backlog.   |
| % Of food complaints resolved within 8 weeks                           | 75%            | 96%                | Target exceeded   |
| Micro Samples Taken  | 1000           | 98% (980 samples)  | Year on Year increase since Covid Pandemic; using available resources   |
| Chemical Samples Taken   | 300            | 82% (246 samples)  | Year on Year increase since Covid Pandemic; using available resources with reduced samples taken in first quarter due to resources dedicated to implementation of Food Standards Delivery Model |
| % Of urgent food complaints responded to within target (1 working day) | 100%           | 94%                | slight decrease due to additional pressures on service  |

|   |   |      |                 |
|---|---|------|-----------------|
| To investigate notifications of gastrointestinal illness within 24 hours and report to PHA within 24 hours. | 90% returned within target  | 100% | Exceeded Target |
|   | 90% contacted within target   | 100% | Exceeded Target |
| % Of manifests examined for imported food stuffs  | 100%  | 100% | Target Met      |
| Number of imported food consignments examined   | This target was reported in the Food Service Delivery Plan in previous years, however volumes since 2021/22 have fluctuated significantly with patterns in trade volumes continuously changing We continue to work with FSA and partners to identify suitable targets as systems and processes, and trade volumes become established. |      |                 |