

Decision Under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting the Decision

Victoria Spanovic – Food Safety Manager

Officer Making the Decision

Alan Twells – Head of Regulatory Services

Recommendation

To approve the provision of the backfill of Environmental Health Officer (L211) (EHO) working hours via Cost Centre F205 D0501. The backfill hours will be 22 hours per week for an Agency EHO from the 15th March to 15th July 2021, reporting to the Food Safety Manager, Regulatory Services.

Reason

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Secretary of State has implemented several regulations made in response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which is posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2) in England. Accordingly, the majority of staff resources have been diverted to Covid-19 business support and enforcement work. In addition, the Food Standards Agency have directed enforcement officers to deal with high risk food interventions only and have permitted deviation from the Food Law Code of Practice regarding inspections.

As a consequence, there is now a significant backlog of food inspections which will be carried over into next year's workload. Also, as lockdown restrictions are eased and the hospitality sector re-opens, the demand on the service will increase significantly. The backfill EHO hours will provide staff resources to assist in the completion of statutory food hygiene interventions, whilst existing EHO staff are undertaking COVID-19 compliance and enforcement work.

Authority for Decision

Under Section 8 of Constitution the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) has delegated authority to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major operational disruption or interruption or services or involving a change from direct to indirect provision or vice versa or other policy implications. This has been further sub-delegated by the Chief Executive to Strategic Directors/Heads of Service in certain circumstances (DD 002 021 refers)). These proposals fall within the limit of the authority of the relevant Head of Service.

Decision

Date

Background Information

As Covid restrictions are eased in line with the Governments 'Covid-19 Response - Spring 21 (Road Map)' and businesses begin to re-open, the service's enforcement role regarding both Covid-19 and food safety is expected to increase significantly.

The Food Safety Team currently has staff resources of 4.5 FTE. The team is responsible for a variety of enforcement roles including the inspection of all food businesses within the borough, responding to service requests, and the investigation of food poisoning outbreaks. During the next financial year 2021-22, there will be a need to backfill food hygiene inspections which, due to Covid-19 priorities, have not been inspected. There are 498 outstanding inspections due from 2021. In order to respond to both Covid-19 enforcement work and statutory food safety inspections, the backfill of 22 working hours per week for a duration of 18 weeks is required. These hours will be resourced via an agency consultant.

The 'Contain Outbreak Management Fund' (CONTAIN Funding) is being used to resource the secondment of EHO staff for Covid-19 compliance and enforcement work. The resulting salary savings within F205 will then be allocated to the backfill hours for the Agency Officer.

Comments from HR

HR Adviser: Anna Cairns (2/3/21)

Normal recruitment process should be followed.

Financial Implications

The cost of providing this post from 15/03/21 to 15/07/21 will be as follows:

£40/hr + VAT + agency fees = £1303 per week

22hrs/week for 18 weeks = £23,454

Charge Code: F205 D0501

Risk Management

List risks in table below or state that 'No specific risks have been identified with this report'.

| Risk Identified | Likelihood | Impact | Risk Management Actions Planned |
|---|------------|--------|---|
| Financial cost to the Council | High | Low | The government will ensure that local authorities are funded for the new requirements as quickly as possible, in line with the New Burdens doctrine. |
| Failure to adhere to FSA Code of practice re: statutory food interventions. Rise in food | High | High | Plan is in place to undertake food hygiene interventions according to statutory requirements via additional EHO working hours. To ensure businesses within the borough have implemented satisfactory standards of |

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|------------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| poisoning outbreaks | | | food hygiene & safety. |
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Key Decision: No

Date included on Forward Plan: N/A

Background Papers: None