



WRS Board
Date: 19th February 2026

Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement

Recommendation	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Note the report.(ii) Agree the consequent increase in establishment that flows from the funding uplift agreed by the partners.
Background	<p>The Food Standards Agency is the main competent authority for food controls in England. The food function is devolved in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Agency has been pushing local authorities in recent years to increase their commitments to food law enforcement and to align activities more closely with the letter of the Food Law Code of Practice issued under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. This initially led to an increase in WRS establishment from 1st April 2024 of 5FTE on food work. The Agency continued to monitor the levels of performance and continued to raise concerns in the autumn, with threats to escalate their engagement process. Members were alerted to this at the November Board meeting where the budget was agreed with a caveat that officer may need to look at a further uplift in capacity. After engagement with senior officers and lead members, the partners have agreed to a further uplift in the WRS budget specifically for Food Safety Act enforcement. This paper explains the detail of this and how the additional expenditure will be deployed.</p>
Report	<p>Members were made aware of the on-going engagement with the Food Standards Agency at the November Board meeting. At the time, Officers explained that in their most recent engagement with the Agency, it had become very clear that anything less than wholesale compliance or evidence of attempts to operate to full compliance with the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice would not be welcomed and challenge would continue. To remind members of the process, the Agency has a 4-stage approach to engagement with local authorities who in their view are not performing in-line with the Code. The final stage of this is a referral to the relevant Minister with a request for a Ministerial Direction to require the local authority to comply.</p> <p>At November's Board meeting, officers explained that they would be creating a revised action plan for the Agency which would hopefully address their concerns but as part of this they would be looking at a time and motion document created by the Agency to get a clearer</p>



understanding of what resourcing may be required. Officers also agreed to look at staffing in our neighbouring county areas with those districts, to see if we were on a par with them.

The time and motion document indicated that there was still a shortfall in necessary resourcing to deliver fully on the Code of Practice. It also appeared that the service had fewer officers than the collective Environmental Health services in either Warwickshire or Gloucestershire for delivering these activities

As was previously explained to members, the Agency's view is that authorities with:

- 250 food premises per dedicated FTE are well resourced and likely to achieve Code requirements.
- 350 food premises per dedicated FTE would be stretched in achieving Code requirements
- 450 premises or more per dedicated FTE would flounder and not achieve Code requirements.

The current allocation in WRS with the additional posts puts the service at around 420 premises per FTE (around 13FTE being available for food hygiene work.) At the November Board meeting, the Director provided an example of the approximate costs of adding 3FTE Technical Officers to the establishment for food hygiene work. Adding this to the establishment would reduce the number of premises per FTE to just below the 350 premises figure and bring the service more into line with the collective provision in our two county neighbours.

On that basis, discussions took place with the senior Officer Members of the Board and given the relatively modest uplifts entailed agreed that this be built into the medium-term financial plans for the partners. Senior members were made aware and agreed to this course of action. This leaves the need to members to formally agree to the increase in establishment, which will allow the Community Environmental Health Manager to begin the process of recruitment to the newly created vacancies. These new posts will be integrated into the two geographically arranged CEH Commercial units covering the east and west halves of the county, with their work areas divided along district lines (Malvern Hills, Worcester City, Wyre Forest, and Redditch. Bromsgrove, Wychavon.)

In their latest response to the submission of the revised action plan, The FSA Officer who has been dealing with us has said,

"Thank you for your email and for the additional information provided which gives clear milestones in relation to clearing your backlog of interventions alongside those that become due in the programme for 25/26 and appears to be a realistic and achievable plan with the staff you will have in place. We will monitor your progress against the milestones using the data provided in the 6 monthly enforcement returns; I may also contact you between returns for an update. I would be grateful if you anticipate a deviation from the plan if you could let us know."

Since the Agency appear to now believe that we have a realistic and achievable plan with the additional resources we will have in place, and they will mainly rely on the 6-monthly reporting that all local authorities are required to provide to assess our performance, it is to be hoped that we will be allowed to proceed with the work. Members will no doubt want to be kept abreast of developments, so managers will look to further enhanced the information provided as part of the



quarterly reporting to Board to ensure that members can be confident of progress against the plan and that the additional resource is working as is anticipated. As members will no doubt recall from last time, bringing new staff into these roles is not straight-forward, so there may be a lag in getting permanent people into roles, but the service will be able to retain the services of competent Agency staff to fill the gap for this period.

Officers would therefore ask members to endorse the increase in establishment outlined. The details of the increase in budget is outlined below. Officers felt that this would be sufficient, given members received and approved a full budget paper in November and the overall value involved is modest compared to the full budget.

Contact Point

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Appendix: Cost and impact on Partner Contributions

Council	2026-27 agreed %'s	Total Partner Contribution 26- 27 - including Technical Officers	Budget for Additional Food Employees	Total Partner Budget 2026-27
	%	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	14.35%	962,522	24,602	987,124
Malvern Hills District Council	13.04%	575,692	22,360	598,052
Redditch Borough Council	17.56%	912,114	30,100	942,214
Worcester City Council	16.64%	758,018	28,529	786,547
Wychavon District Council	23.27%	1,026,659	39,893	1,066,552
Wyre Forest District Council	15.14%	668,476	25,946	694,422
Total	100.00%	4,903,481	171,430	5,074,911

The following sums will be added to the base budget to cover the cost of the additional 3 posts. The total includes an allowance for car allowance, IT equipment and training requirements to maintain competence.

