
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 3 MARCH 2003**

EX.049/03 FOOD SAFETY PERFORMANCE (Non-Key Decision)

Portfolio Health and Wellbeing

Subject Matter

To consider a report from the Head of Environmental Protection (EPS.14/03) detailing the outcome of discussions with the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder on options to improve food safety inspection performance.

He indicated that the number of inspections undertaken was directly proportional to the availability of staff and one vacancy represented a 20% reduction in inspection performance.

There was a national shortage of Environmental Health Officers and many Authorities were paying more than Carlisle. Of particular concern was the fact that three neighbouring Authorities were paying higher salaries. Current salary levels could be considered as a retention issue if future staff losses to neighbouring, higher paying, Authorities occurred.

Regarding the capability of the Food Safety Section to achieve a continuing satisfactory performance even where a single post is vacant either through illness or the loss of a post holder, two options only present themselves as follows:

- (a) Additional suitably qualified staff within the Team would help ensure that higher levels of performance could be achieved. This would apply to both statutory food safety and health and safety enforcement activity. Importantly it would also allow resources to be used in the Council's development, co-ordination and implementation of health and wellbeing strategies within the Community and the public health agenda of the Primary Care Trust.

Suitably qualified staff may be either Environmental Health Officers, (EHO) capable of carrying out the full range of Environmental Health duties, or Technical Officers, who may be less well qualified and therefore only able to inspect low risk food businesses or carry out more routine tasks.

- (b) Nationally there was a diminishing pool of EHO's and falling numbers of students enrolling on Environmental Health degrees. Until recently, Carlisle regularly sponsored a student EHO and had usually been able to offer them a full time post at the end of their four year training. Funding for this had been removed two years ago.

He pointed out that implementation of any of the options would have to be funded by way of supplementary estimate as existing resources of Environmental Protection Services were inadequate to cover an increase in personnel.

The Head of Environmental Protection reported that, at present, the Food Safety Section was fully staffed and, therefore, meeting performance targets.

Summary of options rejected

None

DECISION

1. That the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, Head of Environmental Protection and the Head of Member Support and Employee Services be requested to investigate recruitment and retention issues and submit a report to a future meeting of the Executive.
2. That it is noted that the Food Safety Section is currently fully staffed and meeting performance targets.

Reasons for Decision

To carry out investigations into recruitment and retention issues for staff in the Food Safety Section.