

Pennaeth Adran Amgylchedd
(Cynllunio, Gwarchod y Cyhoedd, Eiddo, Trafnidiaeth a Chefn Gwlad)
Head of Environment Department
(Planning, Public Protection, Property, Transport and Countryside)
Dafydd Wyn Williams

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: **Dafydd Wyn Williams**
(01286) 679371
DafyddWynWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Ein Cyf / Our Ref: **DWW/amj**
Eich Cyf / Your Ref:

20 June 2018

Mr Richard Bowen
(Acting) Director of the FSA Wales
Food Standards Agency
11th Floor, Southgate House
Wood Street
Cardiff
CF10 1EW

Dear Mr Bowen

RE: Gwynedd Council's performance in terms of delivering its food law enforcement service

Thank you for your letter dated 5 June 2018 following our meeting on 21 May 2018 regarding the above. The opportunity for you to discuss our concerns with us and to obtain your advice on the way forward was very beneficial and we appreciate your support to this end.

I emphasise that we as a Council take these matters seriously and hope that you can see this following our recent meeting; coupled with the steps we have already put in place to deliver our statutory responsibilities as a Council in relation to food law. I believe that the situation we are in reflects the reduction in the staff resources that has occurred over the years, which as you know, is a similar situation across all of the Council's services. I note that 2017/18 was a year of trying to cope with the change and reduction in staff resource in this service and, possibly this is reflected in the food hygiene and standards inspections held over the past year.

We are very eager to show you that we are putting positive measures in place to address the matter. I know from our conversation that you appreciate that we cannot address your concerns overnight and that we can only do that gradually over the coming eighteen months. I understand from previous correspondence with you that you referred to the food hygiene inspections as the main priority, but we accept that we also need to address the requirements in terms of the frequency of food hygiene inspections. Therefore, we will carry out an assessment of the resources we will require to address the backlog of inspections and to hold due inspections annually in order to meet the requirements relating to food law.

Our intention is to include the assessment of resources as a part of the annual business plan for 2018/19 that we will be presenting to you as part of the standard arrangements in place. Of course, we would appreciate your views on the draft assessment before we seek approval to the business plan through the appropriate channels within the Council. We intend to send you a draft business plan for 2018/19 by the end of June 2018 and this will include the assessment of resources.

Cyfieithiad / Translation

We had an open conversation during our meeting regarding the staff resource that would be required in order to reach a point where we can work towards compliance with food law requirements. I remember that you noted the need for resources to the value of £70,000 to meet the deficit, which would equate to two members of staff, including an Environmental Health Officer and Technical Officer (or equivalent). This reflects the size of the resource that we have been considering as being necessary and to this end, we have now appointed an Environmental Health Officer (temporary) for one year as a starting point. We accept that this is only a temporary measure and I confirm our intention to submit a report to Gwynedd Council's Cabinet by the end of July 2018, requesting support to enable us to direct a permanent budget of £70,000 to employ an Environmental Health Officer and Technical Officer (or equivalent) for the Public Protection Service. I note again that any newly appointed staff would require a period to qualify and familiarise themselves and consequently, meeting the requirements in terms of food law would be a gradual process.

In addition to the above, please see below the other steps that have been actioned by the service:

- i. The officer who was a trainee for the majority of 2017-18 has now qualified to carry out high-risk inspections. The officers' work areas / workloads has been partially changed to reflect this and share the work more equally.
- ii. The process of carrying out joint hygiene and standards inspections is maturing and officers are now comfortable to carry out both processes in parallel wherever practical
- iii. Consideration of the Public Protection needs in terms of the back-office computer system, with the aim of reducing the efforts associated with the administration of recording inspections / interventions so that Officers can focus more on the work out in the field.

We trust that you will appreciate from the above that we are making every effort possible to respond positively to your concerns as a part of our commitment to address all food hygiene and food standards interventions in accordance with the frequency requirements.

I wish to thank you for agreeing to raise the financial matters discussed at our meeting with Welsh Government and for your support and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you. We will make arrangements to give you an update during August regarding our efforts to attempt to secure permanent finance for a staff resource for the Service. I can also confirm that we have approved the LAEMS report for 2017/18 and we apologise for any delay with this.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Dafydd Wyn Williams
Pennaeth Adran Amgylchedd
Head of Environment Department

cc

Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive

Gareth Jones, Senior Manager, Planning and Public Protection Service

Daniel Morelli, Acting Head – Local Government Support and Audit Team

Craig Sewell, Auditor (FSA)