

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 13 June 2023	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Sustainable Food Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Health and Wellbeing	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR EVELYN AKOTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

It is extraordinary that in one of the richest countries in the world, the issue of food insecurity is soaring to unprecedented levels. The combination of food prices, wage stagnation and real-terms cuts to benefits is tipping more people into food poverty. This is not inevitable – it is a political choice by a Tory led government.

In Southwark, we recognise the urgency of healthy, affordable food for the health and wellbeing of our communities. The council has a strong history of tackling food insecurity together with our partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector. We are proud to be one of only four councils in London to be recognised as cross-cutting leaders in our food work as part of the recently published Good Food for All Londoners report.

Work to promote good, affordable food for all remains pressing. At the time of writing, the cost of living is soaring and obesity rates are increasing. Almost one in six residents in Southwark are unable to access healthy food that is affordable, this is the sad reality being borne out in modern Britain. Southwark has committed to becoming a Right to Food borough and this strategy will help us to make this a reality.

The strategy highlights the need to reduce inequity in our food work. People on low-incomes, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities are at higher risk of food insecurity. Unequal access to healthy food is linked to wider inequalities in our society that are avoidable and unfair. Addressing these issues involve tackling the root causes of food insecurity, such as low-incomes and affordability of food. Our Right to Food plan targets priority groups to address inequity in our food system.

The Sustainable Food Strategy is the next step in the evolution of our food work in the borough. The strategy reflects food's role in our communities, the climate emergency and our local economy. This is an ambitious approach focused on what we can do as a council and with our partners to improve the local food environment. All of us in the borough can help contribute towards this strategy's ambition, whether that is paying the London Living Wage as an employer or committing to eating a more sustainable diet as an individual. I look forward to

progressing this work with our partners and local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet approve the Sustainable Food Strategy as set out in Appendix 1.
2. That the Cabinet note the actions highlighted in paragraphs 4 to 17 taken to tackle food insecurity in Southwark.
3. That the Cabinet approve the Right to Food Action Plan as set out in Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. In 2017, Southwark Food Action Alliance was formed. The alliance, comprised of member organisations from the voluntary and community sector, the council and the NHS, came together to respond to concerns about food insecurity in the borough. These organisations started work on a joint action plan to address access to food, launched in 2019 as the Southwark Food Security Action Plan. Key actions to tackle food insecurity are described below and show how the journey is evolving to support a beyond the food bank approach.
5. Establishing a strong partnership through the Southwark Food Action Alliance has been an important part of this work, ensuring that front line community providers and communities are involved in developing the agenda as well as sharing their experiences and learning of what works.
6. During the pandemic the food partnership played a vital role in galvanising community organisations offering food support to be part of the response. They delivered food and wider support to vulnerable people across the borough throughout the pandemic. Awareness of both need and services increased, and demand has remained high for support with the ongoing cost of living crisis.
7. A strong relationship has developed between food redistribution services and local community organisations, saving over 500 tonnes of surplus food from going to waste each year. A trial was launched with the GLA and Albrighton Community Fridge to establish a low emission, cost saving logistics for redistribution, now in its second year and showing excellent results in reducing food waste and CO2 emissions whilst also supporting food charities to reduce their costs.
8. Albrighton Community Fridge was the first of its kind in Southwark but the network has now grown to include another four community fridges whose aim is to support both planet and people, sharing surplus food, reducing food waste and offering wider social support to their community.
9. Alongside emergency food aid, the partnership have also been resolved

to ensure a holistic approach to people's needs and a cash first approach wherever possible. Developments to support this aim have included establishing a network of dignity champions to cascade training to organisations delivering food support, and signposting mental health and wellbeing services as well cash-related support, and advice on money matters and income.

10. The food partnership are committed to taking a 'beyond the food bank' approach, acknowledging the need beyond crisis intervention for a food system that is sustainable and affordable. Creating community run cafes and pantries to support access to affordable food has been an important contribution to this goal. Five pantries have now been set up selling healthy foods at subsidised prices and eight community cafes are offering low-cost meals in social environments. Southwark has also become a designated Fairtrade borough, where the council and local communities have committed to coming together to promote the use and sale of Fairtrade products.
11. There has also been work to engage businesses, specifically food retailers and wholesalers to also make healthy, affordable food more available locally. 35 convenience stores have introduced new lines and are part of a growing network committed to doing this.
12. The partnership learned the importance of local support and neighbourhood collaborations during the pandemic, and as a result there are three key neighbourhood food models being developed (in the north, south and central Southwark) to capitalise on these partnerships and develop a more networked approach locally between community, business and public sector contributions to the local food system. The Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model is the most advanced and is offering support to other areas to learn about what works well.
13. As a Council there has been a long standing commitment to offering support to families through the offer of free, healthy school meals, which is now in place for all nursery and primary pupils to benefit from a hot and nutritious lunch. From September 2022-23 the Council increased the price paid to primary schools for free healthy school meals, to support with rising costs and paying catering staff London Living Wage.
14. More recently a £4.5M programme has also been developed by the Council for a three-year Holiday Food and Fun programme offering nutritious meals and enriching activities to children over Easter, summer and winter. In 2022, over 30 community organisations ran programmes and over 90,000 meals were provided.
15. The Council has also played a lead role in developing the ambition for more opportunities to grow food with the Council's Allotment Expansion Guarantee which has created over 200 new food-growing plots in the borough, improving access to healthy affordable food for social housing residents.

16. Several other targeted programmes have taken place to support older people, people with mental health issues and cultural diverse food offers, and a small grants programme which awarded funding for smaller projects including food growing, planet friendly community café offer and practical advice session.
17. The Sustainable Food Strategy has been developed by officers in the council and members of Southwark Food Action Alliance. The strategy will help evolve Southwark's food response to have a greater focus on sustainability.
18. To accompany this strategy, a Right to Food Action Plan has been developed. The national Right to Food campaign advocates for making access to food a legal right for all. The Southwark Right to Food Action Plan sets out how the council will champion the Right to Food in its own work. The council committed to become a Right to Food Borough in May 2022.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Sustainable Food Strategy

19. The Sustainable Food Strategy is a partnership strategy between Southwark Council and Southwark Food Action Alliance.
20. The vision in the strategy is a sustainable food system in Southwark that improves health and wellbeing for our population, reduces inequalities and protects the planet.
21. There are five priorities in the Sustainable Food Strategy:
 - 1) **A good food partnership** – A good food partnership can help us to join up our efforts to improve the local food system.
 - 2) **Strong and connected communities** – A sustainable food system should bring communities together, helping people to build connections through food.
 - 3) **Food security and the Right to Food** – A sustainable food system should deliver food security and nutrition for all. The principle of Right to Food advocates access to food as a basic human right and a statutory obligation.
 - 4) **Healthy people, healthy planet** – A sustainable food system should support access to good nutrition for health and wellbeing and have a neutral or positive impact on the natural environment.
 - 5) **A good food economy and affordable food offer** – A sustainable food system should benefit the local economy through good jobs, affordable food community-led enterprises and healthy businesses.
22. Underpinning each of these priorities is the ambition to reduce inequalities and close the gap in life chances in Southwark.

23. The strategy has three core key principles:
 - 1) Collaboration as food partners
 - 2) Sustainable, affordable food as a shared goal
 - 3) Social justice and fairness.

24. Southwark Council and Southwark Food Action Alliance members will share delivery of the strategy. Once the strategy is approved, a partnership action plan will be developed.

25. Actions for Southwark Council will include:
 - Deliver food initiatives for vulnerable groups (e.g. community feasts) and increase access to kitchen spaces for community food groups;
 - Increase the number of organisations trained in the 'Dignity' approach;
 - Deliver the Right to Food Plan (see below);
 - Develop targeted campaigns to residents on eating a sustainable diet, reducing plastic consumption and waste;
 - Implement malnutrition screening programmes in the community for older adults;
 - Increase council spend on sustainable meals by through a sustainable food procurement approach and explore how anchor organisations in the borough can use this.

Right to Food Plan

26. The Right to Food Plan sets out how Southwark Council will fulfil its commitment to become a Right to Food borough.

27. The plan sets out actions against five key priorities:
 - 1) Ensuring good nutrition from conception and throughout childhood
 - 2) Ensuring good access to help, support and advice for food insecure adults
 - 3) Reducing inequalities and closing the gap in food security for Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups
 - 4) Improving provision for older adults and those with health conditions and disabilities
 - 5) Awareness raising across the system.

28. Some key actions included are:
 - Delivery of the school meals transformation programme, including piloting an expansion of the offer of free school meals for secondary pupils and exploring the feasibility of a council-led 'opt out' application for benefits related Free School Meals
 - Signing up 20 more convenience stores to be "Good Food Retailers"

- Establishment of an advisory panel of people with lived experience of food insecurity and financial hardship that is representative of our local communities.
29. The Right to Food Plan also requires campaigning for Right to Food issues such as universal school meals, free school meals auto-enrolment, holiday hunger, food standards for asylum seeker accommodation centres.

Policy framework implications

30. The development of a Sustainable Food Strategy will ensure Southwark's work on food has a greater focus on sustainability. Commitments in the strategy mirror commitments in the Council Plan (such as celebrating Southwark's diversity through food, and increasing food growing in the borough).
31. The Climate Change Strategy 2021 recognises the importance of sustainable diets in protecting the planet. Within this strategy, there are goals to improve consumption patterns in diets to be more sustainable and reduce food waste. Commitments included in the Sustainable Food Strategy reflect these goals, including use of procurement, education and campaigns to encourage uptake of more sustainable diets and reduce food waste.
32. The strategy has also been shaped by the Sustainable Food Places framework. Sustainable Food Places is a national framework that recognises local places that are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. Southwark has established a local food partnership (Southwark Food Action Alliance) that will soon begin its application for the Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award.
33. The Right to Food Plan is in line with Southwark's commitment under the Council Delivery Plan, to *"Make Southwark a Right to Food Borough, working with local businesses, community groups and schools to ensure everyone in Southwark has access to healthy, affordable food within a short walk of their home."*
34. Priority groups identified in the Right to Food Plan include children and young people, food insecure adults, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and older and disabled adults. Programmes of work around children and young people are focused on closing the gap in life chances within the borough, addressing issues such as free school meals and holiday hunger.
35. The Council propose to be the lead organisation responsible for delivery of the strategy however recognize the Southwark Food Action Alliance as a crucial partnership involved in co-creating as well as supporting future implementation of the strategy. For governance purposes it is proposed (to be confirmed) that the Health and Wellbeing Board take an oversight role, given the strong relationship to the Joint Health and Wellbeing

Strategy demonstrated in its objective 4.1 'Improve food security and access to healthy and sustainable food'.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

36. The impact on communities is at the core of the Sustainable Food Strategy, which has a priority around 'Strong and connected communities'. This priority focuses on using food as an opportunity to strengthen communities and a sense of belonging.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

37. There are significant inequalities in the distribution of food insecurity between different population groups in the borough. The Sustainable Food Strategy and the Right to Food Plan aim to reduce these inequalities by improving the food system for all and taking a targeted approach for specific groups.
38. Priority groups identified in the Right to Food Plan include children and young people, food insecure adults, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, and older and disabled adults.
39. The priority groups reflect the socio-economic nature of food insecurity and its disproportionate impact on disabled people, people in receipt of low-incomes and those vulnerable due to legal status. It also reflects how food insecurity affects people differently across the age spectrum, with actions during pregnancy and childhood having a strong impact on life chances and actions for older people reflecting an increased risk of malnutrition.
40. In a survey conducted in 2019, more respondents in Southwark from Black ethnic background were food insecure (46%), compared to those from a White ethnic background (9%). Food insecurity is inherently linked to structural inequalities, with a greater proportion of Black residents on lower incomes and in less secure jobs. Actions such as championing the London Living Wage and ensuring good jobs in our food system aim to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Health impact statement

41. Health is influenced by diet and access to food, and the Sustainable Food Strategy identifies ways to promote healthier diets for Southwark residents.
42. The strategy also recognises the link between food insecurity, mental ill-health, financial worries and isolation. The strategy sets out that in Southwark, we will promote a 'no wrong door' approach to those reporting food insecurity, signposting and referring appropriately to food help and other relevant support and advice. These would include financial wellbeing, energy, mental health and access to social services.

43. It is expected that the Sustainable Food Strategy and Right to Food Action Plan should have a positive impact on health, improving health and reducing inequalities for Southwark's residents.

Climate change implications

44. It is expected that the Sustainable Food Strategy and Right to Food Action Plan should have a positive impact on the climate, with 'Healthy People, Healthy Planet' a priority in the strategy.
45. Actions in the strategy are targeted at promoting diets with reduced greenhouse gas emissions and waste, supporting community food composting and using procurement to move towards more climate-friendly meals in contracts and sub-contracts.

Resource implications

46. Implementation of the strategy will require staff time. The Southwark Public Health Team will lead on coordinating the delivery of the strategy as well as a number of key actions (such as the School Meals Transformation Programme). Delivery will require input from the climate change teams, procurement, education and the local economy team.

Legal implications

47. There are no legal implications to adoption of the Sustainable Food Strategy and the Right to Food plan.

Financial implications

48. It is expected that any financial implications for actions in the strategy that are not already funded be met from existing resources.
49. Any financial decisions that relate to the delivery of the strategy and the action plan will be taken separately and through the relevant governance mechanisms.

Consultation

50. This strategy has been developed following a series of workshops with Southwark Food Action Alliance members and wider stakeholders from local communities and organisations, including a Food Summit in early 2022, an engagement series for anchor institutions involved in food procurement, and a Strategy Development workshop with Sustain in summer 2022.
51. As food is such a cross-cutting issue, a wide range of Council teams have been involved in discussions on the strategy including public health,

climate change, markets, events, procurement, waste management, food safety, communities and local economy.

52. The strategy and action plan also proposes the establishment of mechanisms to ensure local people with lived experience of food insecurity continue shape the delivery of this work.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Head of Procurement

53. A formal concurrent is not required for this report, on the basis that it does not request approval of procurement strategy and/or contract award, as detailed in paragraphs one and two, pertaining solely to approval of the council's Sustainable Food Strategy and Right to Food Action Plan (contained as appendices to this report).

Assistant Chief Executive - Governance and Assurance

54. This report seeks the cabinet's approval to a new council Sustainable Food Strategy and Right to Food Action Plan. Whilst there is no specific statutory requirement to produce these, the following provisions are relevant.

43. Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 places a duty on the council to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. The steps that may be taken under subsection include—

(a) providing information and advice;

(b) providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (whether by helping individuals to address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way);.....

(f) providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement;

(g) making available the services of any person or any facilities.

44. The strategy and plan set out in the report assist the council in carrying out this duty. Specific proposals in the strategy and plan can be made in accordance with this duty and arising from the powers of general competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

45. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making this decision, the Cabinet must comply with its public equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good

relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

46. Details of how food insecurity and food systems affect those people with various protected characteristics are set out in the report and the strategy. Comments about the intended impact of the strategy and plan on those with protected characteristics are set out in the community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts section above. These are all relevant matters that the Cabinet should give due regard to, in considering this report.
47. The establishment of this plan is an executive function which can be determined by the Cabinet in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and Part 3B of the council's Constitution.

Strategic Director of Finance REF: [01PHAS2023-24]

48. The Strategic Director of Finance notes the recommendations regarding the Sustainable Food Strategy and the Right to Food Action Plan. It is vital that the service promotes sustainable food and helps to develop community led and local enterprises as stated in the strategy.
49. The Strategic Director of Finance also notes the finance implications of this report which suggests that the strategy is already being funded by the core Public Health grant and any other expenditure incurred relating to delivery and implementation of the strategy and action plan will be driven through a separate governance stream.

Other officers

Head of Economy

50. This report recommending cabinet adopt the draft Sustainable Food Strategy is welcome. Data suggests that up to a quarter of Southwark residents experience low food security, and poor access to affordable fresh food options has implications for residents' physical and mental health. The priority of a good food economy aligns strongly with the principle of a fairer, greener and more resilient local economy as articulated in the emerging Economic Strategy 2023-30.

Head of Climate Change

51. The sustainable food strategy supports a number of key actions around developing and promoting a circular economy in the borough, which is one of the 5 key themes of the climate action plan. We are about to start a review of the Climate Action Plan ahead of July Cabinet, so will review alongside the sustainable food strategy to ensure the documents are aligned.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Household Food Insecurity JSNA	Children and Adults Service Public Health Directorate 1 st Floor, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Rebecca Harkes 020 7525 5000
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/health-and-wellbeing-in-southwark-jsna/wider-determinants-of-health?chapter=4		
Fairer Food Southwark	Children and Adults Service Public Health Directorate 1 st Floor, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Rebecca Harkes 020 7525 5000
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/health-and-wellbeing-in-southwark-jsna/wider-determinants-of-health?chapter=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Sustainable Food Strategy
Appendix 2	Right to Food Action Plan
Appendix 3	Equality and Health Analysis

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Health and Wellbeing	
Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	
Report Author	Rebecca Harkes, Policy Officer for Health Inequalities	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 June 2023	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive - Governance and Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Head of Procurement	Yes	Yes
Head of Economy	Yes	Yes
Head of Climate Change	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		2 June 2023