

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 10 November 2023	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
<b>Report title:</b>		Proposal for a community partner grant programme to support delivery of the Sustainable Food Strategy	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		Whole borough	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing approve the offer of a community partner grants programme from 2023-24 to 2025-26 to support delivery of the Sustainable Food Strategy of up to a total of £325,000.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing note that the proposed grants will help implement the Sustainable Food Strategy objectives including: a good food partnership, strong and connected communities, food security and the Right to Food, healthy people, healthy planet and a good food economy and affordable food offer.
3. That the Cabinet Member of Health and Wellbeing note that a proportion of the grants (£40,000 per year) will be allocated to fund food-related support for older adults, a key target group of the Sustainable Food Strategy.
4. That the Cabinet Member of Health and Wellbeing note that £25,000 will be allocated in the first year only, to award grants for the provision of fridge-freezer appliances for the relevant food providers.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. In collaboration with Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA), the council developed its Sustainable Food Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The strategy outlines a vision of working towards a sustainable food system in the borough that improves the health and wellbeing of the population, reduces inequalities and protects the planet.

6. The strategy describes five priorities, with the collective ambition of reducing inequalities and close the gap in life chances in Southwark:
- 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 enable 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.

### **Small Grants Programme**

7. A small grants programme will provide funding to new or existing projects that help to deliver the five priorities of the Sustainable Food Strategy. It is expected that grant recipients will be community-based, grassroots organisations. Key areas in the strategy where this grant funding may be beneficial to community partners include (but not limited to):
- Community kitchens (*A ‘Strong and Connected Communities’ priority*): in addition to enabling access to residents who typically lack access to cooking facilities, for example refugees and asylum seekers, providers can host workshops to educate residents on the importance of seasonal, planet-healthy diets and provide them with the relevant skills to prepare and cook healthy, planet-friendly meals
  - Community meals (*A ‘Food Security and Right to Food’ priority*): providers can meet the needs of food-insecure residents by providing welcoming and safe spaces for residents to gather together to have a hot meal or celebrate foods from different cultures
  - Community Food Growing and Community Composting (*A ‘Healthy People, Healthy Planet’ priority*) – providers with growing spaces can utilise their plots to involve the community in growing food and learning how to cook meals with the produce
  - Community-led enterprises (*A ‘good food economy and affordable food offer’*) – communities can be supported to access affordable food

Whilst the exact nature of the proposals coming forward cannot be predicted, paragraph 13 provides some insight to the food security small grant projects that were successful and awarded grant funding last year.

### **Older Adults Support**

8. A recent food security needs assessment for older adults in Southwark highlighted a gap in provision for this population group, including residents who struggle to physically access food without additional support (and are ineligible for social care support). A proportion of the grants will enable the relevant providers to develop food support projects that facilitate social interaction. Typical projects may include:
  - Community meals: providers can develop an offer that includes provision of meals e.g. Lunch Clubs and the opportunity for older people to build social connections and tackle social isolation which has an impact on dietary intake in this population group
  - A community transport initiative: providers can offer a service that supports older residents with shopping within a social environment for example, groups shopping trips and luncheons.

### **Fridge Freezer Appliances**

9. Providers who receive a grant to invest in fridge-freezer appliances will increase their capacity to accept chilled and frozen food surplus, and therefore widen their food offer. Providers will be able to collect and offer healthier food, including fruit and frozen vegetables that can be adopted in planet-friendly diets, while they can also accept pre-prepared meals that benefit residents who are unable to prepare and cook meals for themselves. In addition to offering food with a more dignified approach, it is also possible that having more fridge-freezer capacity will allow providers to collect and distribute more culturally appropriate food to residents in their respective communities.

### **Summary of the business case/justification for the grants programme**

10. In July 2023, a business case was approved for a one-year allocation of £227,000 from the Public Health Grant for food strategy implementation in 2023-24. This includes £100,000 for a community partner grants programme that also comprises of food-related support for older adults (See Appendix 1: Business Case – Food Strategy Implementation and Appendix 2: Logic Model: Small Grants Programme).

11. This IDM further develops the community partner grant proposal to:

- a. Incorporate £40,000 of the agreed funding for older people food support to create a £100,000 budget and run a joint process for the community partners grants programme, thereby also engaging organisations via the voluntary sector Older People’s Network to become community delivery partners for the strategy.
- b. Extend the programme to run over three years, mirroring the life of the strategy and also responding to the feedback from community partners about establishing longer term cycles of collaboration.
- c. Allocate an additional £25,000 for the fridge-freezer project for 2023-24 only.

**Table 1: Funding schedule**

Period	Amount
Year 1	£125,000 (inc. £25,000 for fridge-freezer project)
Year 2	£100,000
Year 3	£100,000

12. The proposal of a small grants approach follows the delivery of the Food Security small grants programme that was concluded in April 2023. The council previously made available fourteen grants of £5000 for VCS organisations working through SFAA to support progress against key priorities in the borough’s food security action plan. Grants were approved for eight organisations, with the majority commencing their 12-month projects in April 2022 (see table below). In addition to organisations reporting successful outcomes against their project’s objectives and useful insights into food security work, learning from this programme highlighted the role of grants in allowing community organisations to test new ideas and be responsive to local need. Providers who delivered front-line services e.g. advisory services, cooking classes and community fridges were very impactful, ensuring residents were continually offered food support together with wraparound support, while they were also able to sustain their projects beyond the 12-month grant period (*refer to Appendix 3: Small Grants Programme Summary*).

13. Older adults are at high risk of food insecurity and are one of Southwark’s priority groups for Right to Food. The council recently commissioned the University of Hertfordshire to conduct an older adults’ food security needs assessment for Southwark which highlighted the importance of embedding social contact into food services for older adults. While the assessment highlighted examples of some good practice in the borough, gaps in provision around food and older people were highlighted including the lack of access to hot and nutritious meals for those unable to easily leave their homes or unable to heat and serve food.

Southwark's Right to Food plan, approved by Cabinet in June 2023, commits to developing a plan to implement the recommendations from this needs assessment.

14. Food organisations that lack the means to chill and freeze foods can only rely on ambient food collections. This limits their food offer as they have less opportunity to collect and distribute foods with higher nutritional value including frozen vegetables and dairy products.

The supply of ambient foods often fluctuates and partners have previously been encouraged by charitable food distributors including Fareshare to increase their fridge/freezer capacity, which will mitigate the impact of a less ambient food offer.

15. To deliver this strategy, the council will develop a joint action plan together with SFAA which sets out the actions to be taken as a partnership to achieve these ambitions.

### **Market considerations**

16. The roll-out of a grants programme will generate interest of potential providers including VCS organisations within the SFAA membership and relevant stakeholders including older adult organisations and organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

17. The criteria for the prospective programme will be discussed and finalised at the SFAA Sustainable Food Action Plan Workshop before writing the final briefing for potential applicants. Similar to the Food Security Small Grant programme, opportunities will then be advertised to potential applicants via SFAA, Community Southwark and the Faith Network. As the majority of organisations are likely to be VCS, a sufficient timeframe of three weeks will be set, enabling them to make enquiries and submit subsequent proposals for grants.

18. Smaller grants for fridge-freezers will be run as a separate process and be awarded according to need. A survey will be circulated via SFAA to establish the providers that will benefit most and extend their food offer.

19. The council will ensure a fair process and encourage smaller organisations who require more support and black-led organisations to submit proposals. To make the process transparent and accessible, key learnings from other council departments (Communities Team) and partners including United Saint Saviour's Charity, who have run successful programmes using co-produced methodology, have been noted.

20. The role of the council officer will be tailored to provide further support throughout the prospective programme. Upon advertising the grant programme and inviting applicants, it will also be proposed that learning throughout the programme be shared with the wider network.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

### Grant Applications

21. After receiving a briefing of the programme, potential applicants will be instructed to submit their proposals, outlining how they will utilise a grant to develop a project in line with the Sustainable Food Strategy
22. A panel comprising of public health officers, members of SFAA and VCS partners, will be assembled to shortlist and score applications, before selecting the successful applicants.

### Application Timeline

Activity	Complete by:
Advert/briefing of programme and invitation to apply	08/11/2023
Deadline for proposals	06/12/2023
Completion of short-listing of applicants	13/12/2023
Panel Evaluation	20/12/2023

23. In addition to meetings to monitor overall progress, grant recipients will be asked to collect and report on new data, insights and trends including recommendations and learning that could be shared with the wider network. Providers will be expected to capture the work they have proposed to do in the form of, for example, a presentation, case study, report or interview.

### Policy Framework Implications

24. The community partner programme grants are aligned to Southwark's Sustainable Food Strategy. This programme is an essential operational aspect enabling the council to effectively deliver the strategy in collaboration with community partners, and ensuring that groups and their respective proposed projects are on board with Southwark's vision of a sustainable food system in the borough to improve health and wellbeing for its population, to reduce inequalities and to protect the planet.

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

#### Community impact statement

25. 'Strong and connected communities' is the one of five priorities in the Sustainable Food Strategy, emphasising the role of food in strengthening community connections and sense of belonging.
26. The grants programme intends to provide support for community-based organisations and relevant providers that run services for older adults to develop new or existing projects in line with the Sustainable Food Strategy.

27. Recipients of a small grant will serve their respective communities, many of which are vulnerable or harder to reach groups. Organisations across the SFAA network have the expertise and experience of delivering a wide range of services including food aid/support, community food growing projects, community cooking programmes and social meals. Grants will help these organisations develop these services, making healthier food more accessible to the borough's communities whilst considering affordability and cultural needs for Southwark's diverse communities.

### **Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

28. The aforementioned priorities in the Sustainable Food Strategy have been set with the collective ambition of reducing inequalities and closing the gap in life chances in Southwark.

29. Inequalities, in particular those related to food insecurity, are prevalent in the borough, affecting residents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, those on low incomes, people with disabilities and those who are socially isolated. As the cost of living crisis continues to increase hardship for marginalised groups, it is expected that the interventions delivered as part of small grant projects will benefit groups disproportionately affected by food insecurity.

30. This grants programme builds on the Sustainable Food Strategy for which an equalities and health analysis was undertaken in May 2023.

### **Health impact statement**

31. The grants programme will comprise of various projects that address the health and wellbeing needs of the communities in the borough who are most vulnerable to food insecurity, which can lead to malnourishment, impede growth in development in children and increase the risk of mental health issues. Projects will also be devised for housebound and older people whose health can be particularly affected by malnutrition, in addition to social isolation and loneliness.

32. As proposed projects delivered will be in line with the Sustainable Food Strategy, providers will support their respective communities to access affordable, nutritious food, while helping them understand more about healthy and sustainable food options that can support both physical health and financial wellbeing.

### **Climate change implications**

33. A grants programme will support the engagement of community groups involved with food that specifically address the climate agenda within the Sustainable Food Strategy: 'Healthy people, healthy planet'. Developing a sustainable food system should have a neutral or positive impact on the natural environment.

34. As food is the second largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, the council will continue to promote sustainability food work via the strategy and engage with community groups who are focused on reducing food waste and encouraging consumption of seasonal, planet-healthy diets.

### **Resource implications**

35. Programme to be resourced within staff structure and managed by Public Health Policy Officers.

### **Financial implications**

36. The costs of this grants programme can be met by the Sustainable Food Budget. The estimated total value excluding VAT is £325k.

37. The contract value excluding VAT is:

	Cost excluding VAT	Cost inclusive of VAT
Original total cost	£325,000	
Total value of any previous variations	N/A	
Value of proposed variation	N/A	
Revised total cost	£325,000	

### **Legal implications**

38. Please see concurrent (paragraphs 40-45) from the Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance).

### **Consultation**

39. No formal consultation is deemed necessary at this time.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)**

40. This report seeks approval of a community partner grants programme from 2023 to 2026 to support delivery of the Sustainable Food Strategy.

41. The report notes that the details of the programme are currently being planned and developed and paragraphs 21 to 23 explain the process by which funding applications will be invited and evaluated and set out the timetable for the process.

42. The intention of the programme is to engage community-based and grass roots organisations by offering the opportunity to apply for funding and to provide benefits to groups who are vulnerable to and disadvantaged by food



insecurity. This is consistent with the requirements of the council's statutory duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty) as prescribed by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The report notes that the University of Hertfordshire was commissioned to conduct an older adults' food security needs assessment for Southwark, the findings and recommendations of which will inform the programme.

43. The report further notes that the programme aligns with other statutory duties and powers and is consistent with corporate policy in this area, notably the council's Sustainable Food Strategy and Right to Food plan.

44. Following the allocation of the funding to successful applicants appropriate legal terms and conditions will regulate the various grant awards.

45. The decision to approve the Recommendations is one which is expressly reserved to the Cabinet Member under the council Constitution.

**Strategic Director of Finance REF: [18-PHHZ2023-24]**

46. The Strategic Director of Finance notes the estimated value of this programme as per the recommendations set out in this report, totalling £325,000.

47. There is sufficient budget within the allocated available resources to fund the overall programme.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background Documents	Held At	Contact
Sustainable Food Strategy (and Right to Food Action Plan	Healthy Place Public Health Directorate Children and Adult Services, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	George Christou 020 7525 3945
<a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/reports-and-strategies?chapter=4">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/reports-and-strategies?chapter=4</a>		
Sustainable Food Strategy 2023-26: Equality and Health Analysis	Healthy Place Public Health Directorate Children and Adult Services, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	George Christou 020 7525 3945
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s114662/Appendix%203%20Joint%20Equality%20and%20Health%20Analysis-%20Sustainable%20Food%20Strategy.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s114662/Appendix%203%20Joint%20Equality%20and%20Health%20Analysis-%20Sustainable%20Food%20Strategy.pdf</a>		

## APPENDICES

	Title
Appendix 1	Business Case – Food Strategy Implementation
Appendix 2	Logic Model: Small Grants Programme Slide
Appendix 3	Small Grants Programme Summary Slide

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director, Children and Adult Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	George Christou – Food Security & Food Sustainability Policy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	8 November 2023	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		10 November 2023