

Item No. 17.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 September 2010	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Southwark Council Food Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Transport, Environment and Recycling	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE, TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING

1. The Southwark Food Strategy report produced by Scrutiny Sub-Committee B in March this year has amongst its many attributes the identification of cross-cutting working. It provides ideas for implementation not just in the area of environment but also health and schools as well. It identifies actions not just for Southwark Council but also for the local health authority as well as individual schools too. Everybody working together to make the best use of a fundamentally vital resource, food.
2. My response to this report demonstrates that Cabinet wants to welcome challenging scrutiny reports, incorporating them into the mainstream workplans even in times of unprecedented peace-time Central Government funding cuts.
3. I am particularly proud to highlight how our Administration's commitment of healthy free school meals for all primary school children contributes to making this an important working document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That the need for a Southwark food strategy be agreed.
5. That the proposed process and timeline for the food strategy be agreed, as set out in this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. In 2007 the Council prepared 'All Things Edible', a statement of Southwark's food related activity in response to the 2006 London Mayor's Food strategy. In April 2009 Council Assembly passed a motion to develop a borough wide food strategy (Appendix A). It proposed seven aims, five of which reflect the key aims of the 2006 London Mayor's food strategy:
 1. improving the health and reduce the health inequalities of people living and working in Southwark
 2. reducing poverty and deprivation
 3. reducing the negative environmental impacts of Southwark's food system
 4. supporting a vibrant food economy
 5. celebrating and promoting Southwark's food culture

6. enhancing Southwark's food security
7. encouraging health eating in schools

7. Scrutiny Sub-Committee B was tasked with guiding the food strategy and made 19 recommendations in their March 2010 report, considered by the Cabinet on 20 July 2010 (Appendix 1). An initial response to the recommendations is attached as Appendix 2.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Importance of a food strategy for Southwark

8. Food strategy features in a range of important national, regional and local priorities and strategies including *Southwark 2016*, and relates to several national indicators. Food policy is evolving rapidly, and food is referenced in health, sustainability and economic policy and strategy as policy makers recognise the important role food plays in some of the biggest challenges currently faced by government.
9. Food plays a role in addressing two major challenges facing Southwark: the health of the community, and the health of our environment. There are links between deprivation, poor diet, and diet related diseases. Southwark has the highest rate of child obesity in England¹. Overweight children are more at risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and arthritic problems in later life.
10. Increasing access to healthy, affordable food across the Borough can contribute to tackling both deprivation and obesity.
11. In a borough with no commercial primary production, dense often multi-storey housing, and areas of deprivation, food growing in the community enables access to cheap healthy food for residents, and can provide an opportunity for residents to learn new skills, meet new people, and be more active. By producing some of our own food we can also reduce reliance on food that needs to be transported in to the borough, thereby reducing the environmental impact of the food we eat.
12. A focus on disposal of food waste is also important to reduce Southwark's carbon emissions and to benefit residents living in highly dense urban environments where lack of space creates challenges for both food production and waste disposal.
13. Food is also an important feature of Southwark rich ethnic diversity with food products from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America commonly seen in shops and local food markets. This diversity makes Southwark a destination for food tourists from other parts of London and the UK.
14. A food strategy would play a role in addressing the challenges posed around health, sustainability and deprivation in Southwark. It is proposed that the draft strategy consider six areas of work:
 - Area 1: Growing healthy food
 - Area 2: Food and education/learning about food
 - Area 3: Food purchased by Southwark Council

¹ 14.2% of children are obese by reception year, increasing to 26.6% of children by Year 6 (aged 10 and 11).

Area 4: Business, retail and enterprise support

Area 5: Food at home

Area 6: Food culture and diversity

15. This multi-themed approach is seen as good practice and has been used in other boroughs. It adopts a holistic approach to food, mirroring the broad scope of this subject and the impacts outlined in the Council Assembly motion of April 2009 in concrete actions. The Council is currently looking into reintroducing free primary school meals as part of its commitment to the aim of encouraging healthy eating including in schools, and is introducing a six month food waste recycling pilot for 10,000 Southwark households.

Initial response to Scrutiny Sub-Committee B proposals

16. The initial response to Scrutiny Sub-Committee B 19 proposals in their March 2010 report are as follows:

Southwark's approach	
1. Southwark should seek to create a partnership steering group of interested parties to help develop, monitor and implement the food strategy.	Agreed – Links have been made with Southwark PCT as well as links and initial consultation with the following LBS teams: Food Team, Air Quality, Children's Services, Community Engagement, Economic Development, Facilities Management, Housing Management, Leisure and Sports, Markets and Street Trading, Parks and Open Spaces, Planning, Sustainable Services, Waste Management, Transport Policy
2. Southwark should seek to identify a food champion to promote and drive forward the strategy.	Agreed – Cllr Hargrove and Gill Davies
3. The strategy should be accompanied by a clear, realistic and costed action plan that should be regularly reviewed.	Agreed
Improving the health and reducing the health inequalities of people living and working in Southwark	
4. It is essential that any food strategy should be jointly prepared by the PCT and Southwark Council as a factor in reducing health inequalities in the borough.	Agreed – Working approach to be developed with relevant partners
5. In order to give the required level of strategic leadership, the joint Council/PCT board should consider this report and agree a timetable for developing a strategy, we suggest within the next six months.	Agreed - Timetable proposed
Reducing poverty and deprivation	

Southwark's approach	
6. Southwark should consider a programme of promotional materials and cookery demonstrations that can help address the lack of knowledge about cooking and nutrition. This could seek to make links with supermarkets, high street shopping centres and street markets across the borough.	These options will be considered as part of a wider strategy and subject to budget availability
Reducing the negative environmental impacts of Southwark's food system	
7. Southwark should seek to work with 'Veolia' (The Council's waste sub contractors) to introduce food waste collection as early as possible and before the current target date of 2015.	Agreed - A six month pilot is starting in October 2010 to trial food waste collection in 10,000 Southwark households.
8. There should be more promotion of home composting to increase the numbers of bins distributed and used.	Agreed - Home composting is promoted as part of Southwark's Waste Minimisation strategy.
9. Southwark should continue to make strides to widen the types of food packaging collected making particular efforts to provide facilities for tetrapaks/liquid board packaging.	Agreed - Sustainable services is exploring ways to do this with Veolia.
10. Southwark should consider how it can positively encourage the collection of food waste from commercial premises.	Agreed – This will be considered as part of the wider strategy
Supporting a vibrant food economy	
11. Southwark should promote and encourage street markets, seeking to expand the hours of operation of existing markets and introduce new food markets where possible.	This is considered in the Southwark Market strategy on this agenda.
12. Southwark should continue to use its planning policies to promote and enhance local shopping parades.	Agreed - This will be considered as part of a wider strategy, including a focus on fast food premises and schools. The emerging Core Strategy continues the commitment to protect and promote shopping parades through the Southwark Plan. Detailed policy will be developed on managing the mix and location of restaurants, bars and fast food takeaways.
Celebrating and promoting Southwark's food culture	
13. The Council should undertake a campaign of sustainable food awareness.	This will be considered as part of the communications strategy subject to available budget.
14. The council should seek to use its own purchasing power, particularly in the new Tooley street contract to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of Fair trade food • The use of sustainable food supplies, minimisation of packaging and recycling • The use of local providers and supply chain • The provision of healthy food choices • The provision and promotion of vegetarian and vegan options • That food supplies reflect the diversity of Southwark 	Agreed – Southwark is a Fairtrade Borough. The Camden Society (Tooley St café contract) provides a daily vegetarian meal option and regular initiatives to promote healthy eating. All ingredients are ethically sourced.

Southwark's approach	
Enhancing Southwark's food security	
15. Members felt very strongly that the council must continue to use its planning policies to ensure adequate provision of outdoor space is provided in both private and public areas.	Policy SP15 of the Southwark Plan states that all developments should, where appropriate create, preserve and enhance open spaces, green corridors, traffic free routes and biodiversity. This policy will be taken forward through the Core Strategy. Detailed development standards and policies will be developed, and supported by an up to date Open Spaces Strategy.
16. Developments should seek to design outdoor space to be used flexibly, maximising the ability of the community and individuals to use outdoor space for growing food.	The emerging Core Strategy promotes open spaces and green corridors, and Strategic Policy 11 proposes to clarify our approach to local food production. Forthcoming detailed development standards and policies on outdoor space will include food growing. Voluntary and community sector groups will continue to be encouraged to submit bids to CGS for food growing initiatives, supported by grant funding where possible.
17. Council owned land, housing and parks land in particular present ample opportunity for more creative use of open space to provide allotments and orchards. A comprehensive programme to identify and encouraging the conversion of such land for active food use should be developed.	The Southwark Plan and emerging core strategy support opportunities for using open spaces for food production where appropriate. Planning, public realm and housing management will work to identify and support opportunities for food growing. The Parks business unit will identify opportunities for food growing within parks where appropriate.
Encouraging healthy eating in schools	
18. The use of the curriculum to understand food and encouraging gardening and growing food particularly in primary school	Agreed - Teaching resource, funding and garden supply/ support information is already on the Southwark website, complimented by the Eco-schools programme.
19. Southwark would need to get a better picture of precisely what is going on in its schools with a view to adopting an aspiration of achieving the provision of universal free school meals.	Provision of free primary school meals is being considered by the Cabinet

Proposed approach for development of food strategy

17. It is proposed that the strategy:
- outline what is already being done in the borough
 - capture strategic actions, and
 - contain a detailed action plan with mechanisms to implement/monitor progress eg steering group or 'Food board'.
18. It is proposed that there be a consultation (including with Southwark PCT) with a select group of external stakeholders eg allotment interests. It is proposed that the cabinet member for Environment, transport and recycling and the SSEP partnership take responsibility for guiding, implementing and monitoring the strategy.

Proposed schedule for food strategy

19. The proposed schedule for the development of the food strategy is as follows:

	Due date	
Set up steering/working group - Chair: Gill Davies/Cllr Hargrove - PCT - Food Team, Children's Services, Economic Development, Housing Management, Leisure and Sports, Markets and Street Trading, Parks and Open Spaces, Planning, Sustainable Services - Third sector parties	September	Lead: E&H Director's office
Draft food strategy - Free schools meals section	September/ October	Lead: E&H Director's office
		Lead: Children's services
Select public consultation - Interested parties based on recommendation by steering group and in consultation with community engagement team	October/November	Lead: E&H Director's office and Community consultation team
Final draft for Cabinet	November/December	Lead: E&H Director's office

Policy implications

20. The proposed food strategy will support key themes of health and/or sustainability contained in the core strategy, the Southwark Plan and other relevant planning policy where it may impact on open spaces, and other policies relating to waste, healthy weight, children and young people and sustainability.

Community impact statement

21. The proposed food strategy will set out a framework and priorities for Southwark Council's food related activity.

22. The objectives of the strategy have the potential to address inequalities around health, poverty and deprivation, increase the standards of Southwark's food industries and enhance the overall experience of food consumers. Individual decisions in this report will need separate and more detailed analysis of the equalities impacts.

Resource implications

23. Adoption of this strategy proposal does have resource implications for specific items which would need to be contained within existing budgets or have specific funding allocated. At this stage detailed proposals would be impractical as this report is only asking for initial decisions.

Finance implications

24. As this report is purely recommending a process for agreeing the food strategy there are no financial implications. However once the strategy is formulated full costings will need to be provided and resources identified and approved.

Legal implications

25. The London Food Board was established in 2004 with the aim of improving Londoners' access to healthy, locally produced and affordable food. The Mayor's Food Strategy, launched in May 2006 with the aim of delivering these improvements by 2016, identified six areas for action, namely ensuring commercial vibrancy, securing consumer engagement, leveraging the power of procurement, developing regional links, delivering healthy schools and reducing food-related waste and litter.
26. The coalition's *Programme for Government* published in May 2010 includes commitments to ensuring that food procured by government departments and the public sector meets British standards of production in a cost effective way and encouraging Councils to work towards a 'zero waste economy' by reducing littering and paying people to recycle.
27. Southwark Council's proposed Food Strategy is a joint initiative with the PCT which is intended to incorporate and implement these principles. In so doing it will impact on a wide range of Council functions and departments. Certain of the proposals will or may have legal implications depending on the precise nature of their proposed implementation. Food outlets and street markets are subject to licensing regimes and inspections. Planning considerations and environmental legislation, in particular any restrictions on the use of 'brown field sites' for food production, will inform decisions as to the suitability of proposed sites for allotments, as will appropriate measures to control vermin on such sites, in particular rats, mice, foxes and pigeons.

Consultation

28. Consultation with the PCT and relevant internal teams including:
- Food Team, Children's Services, Economic Development, Housing Management, Leisure and Sports, Markets and Street Trading, Parks and Open Spaces, Planning, Sustainable Services

29. Select public consultation with interested parties based on recommendations by the food strategy steering group and in consultation with the community engagement team.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
1	Council Motion - A Borough-Wide Food Strategy
2	Scrutiny Sub-Committee B Food Strategy Review Recommendations to Southwark's Executive

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Transport, Environment and Recycling	
Lead Officer	Gill Davies, Strategic Director of Environment and Housing	
Report Author	Kayte Fairfax, Research & Projects Manager, E&H	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 September 2010	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Environment and Housing	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team	9 September 2010	