

Appendix 2 – Creating a Healthy Food City Forum Highlight Report

1.1 Context

The main purpose of the Forum is to work together to apply a whole system approach to understanding the food landscape of the city and improving the food behaviours at a population level across Birmingham by ensuring that a joint action plan is developed and delivered.

The forum last met 10 March 2021 for the first time since June 2020. Due to timing of the Forum and Board governance this report focuses on activity that does not include the discussion of the most recent Forum.

1.2 Current Circumstance

1.2.1 Food Strategy

During late 2019 and early 2020 there were multiple rounds of consultation with partners on the Birmingham Food Strategy, with the intention of public consultation shortly thereafter. The COVID-19 response placed these conversations and the strategy itself on hold.

The most notable update to the strategy since the previous draft is the inclusion of a resilience workstream. This has become more important than ever considering the upcoming COVID-19 recovery phase, and the potential implications of the exit from the European Union.

As part of the Forum held 14 January 2021 there was a call for volunteers to support the development of the Food Strategy into a robust, shared document that all partners can subscribe to. Several organisations present are willing to contribute, and a task and finish group will be established to develop the draft into a document that can be taken to consultation in summer 2021.

1.2.2 Emergency Food Plan

There have been some preliminary discussions on creating an Emergency Food Plan as an interim measure during the ongoing COVID-19 response to ensure that parts of the Birmingham Food Strategy that have been placed on hold, but would be of assistance to the response, can be strategically shaped and implemented.

A workshop was convened for 19 February 2021 with invitations extended to members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum, the Food Justice Network, and the Food Poverty Core Group.

The information collated will be incorporated into the plan and shared. The Emergency Food Plan will be a live document that allows for the co-ordination of food systems activity in relation to the COVID response and recovery phases.

1.2.3 Birmingham Food Conversation

The Birmingham Food Conversation consisted of two substantial pieces of primary data collection.

Firstly, the **Birmingham Food Survey**; although this was cut short to prevent the bias inherent on continuing the survey during the COVID-19 response there were 394 responses received and results highlights were provided to the previous Health and Wellbeing Board. We are currently developing internally how the findings of this report can better inform the food systems approach to multiple strands of work.

Secondly, thirty-one different organisations were commissioned to deliver **‘Seldom Heard Food Voices’ research**. The groups were facilitated by community research consultants, employees of organisations serving the needs of specific target groups, and occasionally a combination of organisations matching research expertise with organisational reach. All organisations reported details of scripts and resources used as well as the structure focus group. All groups covered the questions highlighted in the tender specification. The facilitators delivered these questions in a range of ways, adapting them where appropriate for the groups they were working with. We have completed draft version of the final report, and are in the governance process around the consensus opinions on what is required to create a healthy city (as well as some unexpected and unsolicited comments on how to engage better as part of future consultation processes) and how these can be best taken forward.

1.2.4 Food Poverty

In November 2020 Birmingham City Council re-established the Food Poverty Core Group to better understand the systems level responses we can put in place across the local systems in Birmingham to ensure a robust and coordinated response to the various issues around food poverty. The three themes we need to focus on;

- 1) prevention of people going into food poverty.
- 2) crisis management – how do we get them out of it.
- 3) recovery – moving forward, long term impact.

A rapid evidence review will be completed on each theme for action / discussion by the group.

The January 2021 meeting focused on prevention of food poverty and the results of the conversation have been used as part of the conversation in relation to the Emergency Food Plan. The next meeting will focus on crisis management, and the date / time will be arranged by committee to maximise attendance.

1.2.5 International Partnerships

The **Food Foundation Partnership** contract was finalised to assist with implementation of national and international food policies and guidelines, and specialist advice, support and management of Birmingham’s international

relationships launched on 01 July 2020 and will be effective for two years.

The partners have been in ongoing conversations to discuss key project deliverables by quarter over the life of the contract, and a draft delivery plan has been drafted.

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact have shown interest in the Birmingham City Council Emergency Food Plan and we were invited to discuss our approach with other cities on 23 February 2021.

There has been agreement in principle that the Delice network will refocus from gastronomy to policy levers and as a result of this that lead organisation status for Birmingham will pass to Birmingham City Council. The DPH decision notice to formalise this has been drafted for Assistant Director approval.

Commonwealth Cities 2022 launch took place on 27 January 2021 and the initial conversation focused on the announcement of the plans to convene a meeting of the cities in Birmingham to coincide with the Commonwealth Games in the city.

1.2.6 Sustainable Food Places Application

The Sustainable Food Places Award is designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to food and that have achieved significant positive change across six key food issues. We have held discussions with the awarding body to finalise the application and be accredited as a food partnership that is making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of Birmingham.

The deadline for final submission has now been extended to 15 April 2021. There are ongoing conversations regarding which the food system partners in Birmingham who can assist with finalising the application which will be led by Birmingham City Council.

1.2.7 Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Project

The Childhood Obesity Trailblazer is a national project to encourage Local Authorities to focus their efforts on becoming healthy food places. In Birmingham we have three workstreams to enable this ambition.

Workstream 1 - **Creating a health food planning and economic climate through creation and implementation of a developer toolkit.** The content of the toolkit is for the most part created, and we will shortly enter the design phase. The delivery been led by the Place Service Lead within the Wider Determinants Team of Public Health to enable better resource capacity to deliver, and to ensure that benefits of the toolkit are maximised by considering as many Public Health place based development outcomes as possible and also be complementary to a healthy food city environment. The developer toolkit has been well received and the conversations are now focused on how best to operationally deliver and embed the toolkit.

Workstream 2 - Creating a better **understanding of food in the city through**

the Birmingham Basket. Through initial market scoping we have identified at least one supplier capable of delivering the required data, information and insight to understand how the people of Birmingham purchase food. However, we have decided a full competitive tender process should be utilised to ensure we commission the most innovative, and value for money solution. The draft invitation to tender documents were submitted to Procurement colleagues in February 2021.

Workstream 3 - Creating a healthy apprenticeship workforce that understands health, healthy eating and can support a healthier food economy. We are using our leverage through the corporate management team and health and wellbeing board to ensure that commissioning specifications for employment, skills and apprenticeships services for Birmingham City Council employees carry a health and wellbeing spiral curriculum. A spiral curriculum is an approach to education that involves regularly re-visiting the same educational topics over the course of a student's education. Each time the content is re-visited, the student gains deeper knowledge of the topic. Base line data collection commenced 12 October 2020 having agreed the evaluation process and methodology. As part of a workshop with employment, skills and apprenticeship providers on 15 October 2020 we gauged interest of providers and on the whole engagement was positive amongst the 15 organisations who attended. Issues were identified as part of the workshop that meant the initial approach was deemed unworkable in practice, however the project delivery has been reframed. A new draft of the operational implementation has been drafted for review by the key partners.

1.3 Next Steps and Delivery

- Establish task and finish group to develop the **Food Strategy** and provide regular updates on progress.
- Continue to shape, refine and deliver the content of the **Emergency Food Plan**.
- Ensure named leads against each action within the **Emergency Food Plan**.
- Finalise governance on both **Food Conversation** and **Seldom Heard Voices** reports and begin to implement findings.
- Rapid evidence review on next area of focus for the **Food Poverty Core Group**.