

# Creating a Healthy Food City Strategy

## Birmingham

**2020-2030**

*Early working draft for discussion v0.2*

### **Our Shared Ambition**

We want Birmingham to be a city where every citizen can eat an affordable, healthy diet, and enjoys their food. Working with partners focused on inequality in relation to poverty we want to ensure that access to good quality food choices is as equitable as possible. We also want the food they eat to be ethically and safely produced, and environmentally sustainable (including attempting to reduce single use plastics and micro-plastics where possible).

We want Birmingham to be a city where the food economy is vibrant; reflects the diversity of our communities; and is financially successful and sustainable contributing to a circular economy for food which reduces waste, increases valuable employment opportunities for local people, minimises environmental harm and maximises the local assets of the city and West Midlands region.

### **Key Objectives**

- Improve the access to safe, environmentally sustainable, and ethically produced, and healthy food within their budgetary constraints, across Birmingham in every community for every citizen;
- Develop a financially and environmentally sustainable food system in the city;
- Reduce the systemic structural inequalities in food access and nutritional intake across the city;
- Work in partnership with citizens, businesses, and organisations across the city to achieve our shared ambition to create a healthy food city in Birmingham.
- Improve the skills and knowledge regarding healthy, environmentally, and ethically sustainable food across the city.
- Influence the supply chain of food within the city and minimise the journey from farm gate to supermarket shelf to enable improved consumer knowledge of food sources and minimise carbon emissions in the supply chain logistics.

### **Context**

Birmingham is a diverse, global, vibrant city with over a million citizens, however too many of our citizens face challenges accessing affordable, healthy, sustainable food.

Eating healthily underpins so much of our physical and mental health, we celebrate and commiserate with food and the food system contributes millions to the city economy.

The food system spans growing food, transforming food, transporting it and selling it in raw, transformed and cooked forms as well as recycling and waste. This system exists in all of our lives, from growing tomatoes in window boxes to the restaurants and take-aways in our high streets.

## **Policy Context**

### **National**

England is undergoing the first independent review in 75 years, of its entire food system.<sup>1</sup> The evidence-based analysis of the current system is expected in early 2020, paving the way for a new national food strategy in Summer 2020. The National Food Strategy will set out the transformation from the food system we have now, to a system better suited to the many needs and challenges faced now and in the future.

*Placeholder: Food Foundation Policy audit*

*Placeholder: International policy summary*

### **Context of Food in Birmingham**

There is limited data currently available on the food system in Birmingham and this is one of the key work streams for action through this strategy.

The food economy in Birmingham is estimated to be worth circa £XX and approximately XXX people in the city are employed in a trade connected to the food system, whether in hospitality, food retail or food production or logistics.

In December 2019<sup>2</sup> there were 98 businesses registered with the Food Standards Agency involved in food production or transformation, including processing plants for meat, fish and dairy products.

There are 114 allotment sites, with over 7000 plot holders, in the city enabling citizens to grow fruit and vegetables in the heart of the city if they don't have their own garden.

In January 2020<sup>3</sup> there were over 8,500 food businesses registered with the Council and on the FSA national database for food hygiene rating in Birmingham. There is significant turnover in the food system and Birmingham City Council Environmental Health inspect about XXX new businesses every year.

### *Food consumption*

When surveyed, 54.1% of Birmingham's 15 year olds reported that they eat five portions or more of fruit and veg a day, compared to the England average of 52.4% (2014/15).

Five a day habits by adults are not measured at a local level, but we know from the Health Survey for England that nationally only 29% of adults eat the recommended five a day.

The majority of adults in England in 2017 were overweight or obese (64%) (Health Survey for England). Prevalence for Birmingham citizens is unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [Food Standards Agency](#). Approved Food Establishments as at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

<sup>3</sup> [Food Standards Agency](#). West Midlands Food Hygiene Ratings

In 2017/18 the percentage of obese Birmingham children at reception and year six is above the England average and among the highest in the West Midlands. In reception 11.3% are classified as obese (9.5% England); in year six 25.6% are classified as obese (20.1% England).

In 2016/17 26.1 % of the city's 5 year olds had decayed, missing or filled teeth. Although higher than the England figure of 23.3% it was not significantly higher. This is a reduced over time for Birmingham children, with the figure being 32.5% in 2011/12.

Intelligence on salt and sugar consumption is unknown at a local level, but a YouGov sample survey tells us that Birmingham residents are concerned about certain food content. When asked if they were concerned about the following food contents: fat, sugar, salt or calories, 41% of respondents in the city said they were concerned with sugar in food.

#### *Food waste*

Analysis of waste taken to city's Tyseley Energy Recovery Facility in April 2019 identified 25.1% as food waste. This approximates to 60,600 tonnes of food waste within the total residual waste from households.

#### *Placeholder: Food Conversation findings*

### **Our Framework for Creating a Healthy Food City**

The Framework for Action is focused on delivery through eight themed work streams, based on the international evidence base and learning from networks such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. The eight themed work streams are:

1. Food Production
2. Food Transformation
3. Food Logistics/Supply Chains
4. Food Retail – Home
5. Food Retail – Out of Home
6. Recycling & Waste
7. Food beliefs & behaviours
8. Data and Evidence

Through the eight work streams there are six 'golden threads' which weave across all of the Forum frameworks for action:

#### *Citizen First*

We will put the citizen at the heart of our approach, working with citizens across the city to help co-produce a healthy, sustainable, economically viable food environment that is accessible to everyone.

#### *Regulation & Enforcement*

We want to support businesses to be financially and environmentally sustainable and make the most of the everyday contact between food regulation and enforcement authorities in the city and the

region to support businesses to work towards our shared ambition of a healthy, safe and affordable food system in Birmingham.

### *Diversity & Inclusion*

We know that there are significantly different relationships with food in different cultures and communities across the city and as we progress this work we want to work with these communities to find solutions and approaches that work in the context of celebrating this diversity.

### *Scale & Pace*

Birmingham is a large city with a diverse community and it is important that we keep a focus on moving at pace and scaling to reach every part of Birmingham with our work, building on success and finding ways to scale across the whole city to ensure every citizen benefits.

### *Learning & Listening*

We know we need to listen and be humble in our approach, learning in true partnership with cities, in the UK and across the world, learning from research and practice-based evidence and from our citizens. We will be open and honest in our conversations about the challenges as well as the opportunities and successes.

### *Risk & Resilience*

The food system is subject to potential significant challenges nationally, due to the as yet unknown long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the upcoming exit from the European Union. We need to ensure that the impact of these risks are understood and that Birmingham is prepared.

## **Work Streams of Action**

The eight work streams of action will create a framework for delivering the vision and ambition of the strategy.

### *1. Food Production*

Both domestic and commercial food production have a role to play in creating a healthier food city, whether growing plants in the garden or hydroponically raising fish in a warehouse. Empowering and enabling people to grow their own through increased focus on potentially under-utilised allotment resources, becoming more self-sufficient in their food needs, while acknowledging this is a micro-level intervention. We would encourage retail at smaller, specialised outlets (including farmers markets) rather than supermarkets to support this at a commercial level.

### *2. Food Transformation*

Just 12 crops and five animal species provide 75 per cent of the world's energy intake<sup>4</sup>. To increase resilience in the local food system by promoting new plant based, nutrient-rich alternatives to businesses, which will reduce reliance on traditional food growing and production.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/towards-great-food-transformation>

*Placeholder - Shaleen can provide info on healthier businesses / recipes.*

### 3. Food Logistics/Supply Chains

Movement of food throughout local supply chains, both retail and catering, and working towards being an exemplar to influence regional, national, perhaps even global attitudes towards supply chain management. We need to better understand the issues in this area and the profit implications for retailers and businesses. Consider local employment opportunities within the supply chain and the associated economic benefits.

*Placeholder – partners to consider which businesses they may be able to engage with and influence.*

### 4. Food Retail – Home

Understanding what drives our choices about what we buy to consume at home is important; accessibility, availability, convenience, time, knowledge and mood are some of the things that impact upon these choices. We also need to consider the impact of financial inequality, and how this drives food behaviours and choices.

*Placeholder – partners to consider which businesses they may be able to engage with and influence.*

*Placeholder – BU / LIDL pilots on promoting veg?*

### 5. Food Retail – Out of Home

Birmingham has a wide-ranging food retail offer; our ambition is to have an affordable, safe, healthy sustainable food offering across the city, both in commercial and social settings. We also need to consider the provision of meals in non-retail settings (e.g. – schools). We also need to consider the impact of financial inequality, and how this drives food behaviours and choices.

*Placeholder – Chamber of Commerce insight into policy implications for businesses.*

*Placeholder – flexibility of licences etc. for healthier food businesses. Or restrictions on promotions as part of standard licencing conditions.*

### 6. Recycling & Waste

How we dispose of our waste needs to be considered; minimising packaging and food waste, maximising recycling and reuse will help create a sustainable food system. Ensure that businesses are committed to reducing food waste at source. Need to ensure dignity of those accessing food systems while subject to financial inequality. We need to engage with Birmingham City Council recycling and waste disposal to promote better behaviours within the home towards recycling food and food packaging.

*Placeholder – engage with system modellers for financial return – e.g. circular economy.*

### 7. Food beliefs & behaviours

Understanding citizens food beliefs and behaviours is integral to changing the food environment in the city. This is reflected in the 'golden threads'. We would also look to improve knowledge and skills around healthy, ethically sourced, environmentally friendly foods, and how food waste can be reduced or recycled as part of this work stream.

The Birmingham Food Conversation, launched in October 2019, provides an avenue for citizens to talk about their food experiences and habits, their needs and thoughts. We would look to expand this work into focusing on shared beliefs across different communities in Birmingham and how we could use these to drive healthier behaviours.

Investigate the cause and effect relationship between food provision and food purchase to better understand the root cause driver(s).

*Placeholder – offers of understanding formation and stability of preferences / behaviours.*

*Placeholder – HealthWatch engagement and data collection.*

## **8.Data and Evidence**

Data on the food system in Birmingham, and also nationally is limited. Work streams such as the Birmingham Basket, through the Childhood Obesity Trailblazer and the Birmingham Food Conversation aim to provide more insight.

*Placeholder – identifying gaps in evidence*

*Place holder - emerging local evidence*

*Place holder - learning from international partnerships*

*Place holder – Food Foundation introduction to PEAT*

## **Measuring Success**

*Place holder - evaluation metrics TBC once work stream finalised*

## **Governance**

The Creating A Healthy Food City Strategy will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board, as a statutory committee of Cabinet.

The Framework will be delivered through the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum, which reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board, under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care.