

Item 18 - Creating a Healthy Food City Forum Highlight Report

1.1 Context

Vision:

Our shared vision is to create a bold, healthy, fair, and sustainable food system, and a prosperous local food economy, where food choices are nutritious, affordable and desirable so all citizens thrive and can achieve their potential for a happy, healthy life.

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.

A wide range of work is underway on the food system agenda and the Council has a dedicated Food System Team within the Public Health Division to accelerate this work. The final member of the team joined at the end of September 2021. In our team are Sarah Pullen – Service Lead, Bradley Yakoob – Senior Officer, Rosemary (Rosie) Jenkins – Officer (promoted to Senior Officer in August 2022) and Chloe Browne – Graduate Officer.

The minutes from the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum meetings can be seen in the appendix. This report will provide updates to the Board as requested on the work of the CHFC forum.

1.2 Current Circumstance

1.2.1 Developing the food system strategy and action plan

Food System Strategy

The primary purpose of the Creating a Healthy Food City forum this year has been to develop the Birmingham Food System Strategy, as set out in our terms of reference:

1.1 The Creating a Healthy Food City (CHFC) Forum is a sub-committee of the Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board. The 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 co-produced and delivered.

- 1.2 The Creating a Healthy Food City (CHFC) Forum will finalise and establish the Birmingham Food System Strategy, setting the strategic direction for the city of Birmingham until 2030. The CHFC Forum will be responsible for the strategic delivery of the Birmingham Food System Strategy, including the creation and ongoing management of the Birmingham Food System Strategic Action Plan.

The Birmingham Food System strategy has been developed and is currently out for consultation (closing 11th September). We have discussed the strategy with the

forum in detail and they have given feedback throughout the development stage and also on how to achieve a meaningful consultation. They have been encouraged to take ownership of the strategy consultation and share with their networks.

Together, we have developed the following strategy:

Vision:

To create a bold, fair, sustainable and prosperous food system and economy, where food choices are nutritious, affordable and desirable so all citizens can achieve their potential for a happy, healthy life.

Principles:

- Collaborate – strengthen partnerships and build on existing good practice
- Empower – remove barriers and facilitate solutions
- Equalise – focus action where they are needed most to reduce inequalities

Aims:

- Grow the Birmingham Food Revolution
- Build a sustainable, ethical and nutritious food system and a thriving local economy
- Build stronger resilient communities that support those who most need it, and mitigate food insecurity
- Empower citizens to consumer a sustainable, ethical, healthy and nutritious diet

Workstreams:

- Food production – empower citizens and local producers to grow and preserve food and connect to the city's food system
- Food sourcing – increase sourcing of local, environmentally sustainable, ethical and nutritious foods across the food system
- Food transformation – transform diets to contain more diverse and nutritious ingredients, and less fat, salt, and sugar
- Food waste and recycling – maximise the repurposing and distribution of surplus food and minimise waste and unsustainable packaging
- Food economy and employment – create a thriving local food economy for all and maximise training and employment opportunities
- Food skills and knowledge – empower citizens with knowledge and skills in relation to the food system from farm to fork
- Food behaviour change – ensure the capability, opportunity and motivation for key behaviours that will enable long term change
- Food security & resilience – ensure all citizens in every community at every age have access to sufficient affordable, nutritious and safe food
- Food innovation, partnerships and research – gather insights and facilitate innovation, collaboration, learning and research across the food system.

Big bold city approach:

The Big Bold City approach ensures actions are undertaken across people and communities, across the life course, across the city and across settings such as food businesses, the supply chain, education, the council etc.

The Food Action Decision-Making and Prioritisation Tool

The FADMAP tool is how we ensure we move effectively and efficiently – help prioritise actions through ensuring potential actions are citizen first, celebrate diversity, address poverty and inequalities, healthy and safe, environmentally and economically sustainable, empowering, evidence based, cost effective, scaled and paced, learning and improving and risk aware and resilient.

Action Planning workshops

In January & February 2022, we hosted action planning workshops with food forum members and other people from the food system. We went through the strategy plans and people suggested potential actions, which we use to generate action plans after the strategy is published. This also refined the strategy – for example, an additional workstream and two components of the Big Bold City approach were added after these workshops.

Consultation

The strategy is currently out for consultation. We have engaged with a wide variety of people – we have presented the strategy in a number of different settings including to young people at Aston Manor Academy, to the Clinical Council at Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust and at a webinar with the citizen engagement team. We have also been to 11 community events where conversations with people about the strategy have been possible.

1.2.2 The Birmingham Food Revolution

The launch of the Birmingham Food System Strategy consultation captures the revolution that has been building for years across the city and the regenerative change being led by Birmingham citizens making a real difference. We are seeing a cultural shift in desire for sustainable, local and nutritious food in Birmingham and want to build on that momentum!

Empowering and energising more than 1.1 million citizens to join the Birmingham Food Revolution is key. We are encouraging people to join in as Local Food Legends and enable change. We want to recognise, champion, and showcase the many citizens, organisations, businesses and partners that are making a real difference in Birmingham Food System as our Local Food Legends. They have been leading the way for many years and it's time for Birmingham to "Be Bold, Be Proud" of our quiet food legends. They are an inspiration and we can all learn from them and be empowered to be legends, too.

A handful of our CHFC members are local food legends and we have been scoping and capturing others. We currently have more than 20 local food legends, and the next phase will be capturing their stories and sharing details about them.

1.2.3 Food Poverty and Food Justice Pledge

Birmingham City Council is leading the way by calling for cities to acknowledge the challenges our food systems face, to situate themselves in this changing landscape and be a key driver of a progressive, meaningful and impactful Food Justice movement to address them.

We are asking cities to commit by signing the Food Justice Pledge to create a united global movement that has a local and national impact. Signatory cities commit to put their political weight into the collective voice of cities emphasising the need for policies which create and support an affordable, safe, nutritious, and sustainable food system for all citizens, irrespective of social or economic grouping.

The pledge: “As city leaders, we are committed to addressing food justice by acknowledging that all our citizens irrespective of status are entitled to safe, nutritious and sustainable food at all times. We recognise the benefits of a collaborative partnership to address the global challenge of food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, and disaster displacement.”

This pledge was signed by the Leader (Cllr Ian Ward), the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care (Cllr Mariam Khan) and the Director of Public Health (Dr Justin Varney) on the 28th July 2022. It was also signed by a number of Birmingham individuals and organisations who were present, including The Active Wellbeing Society, Incredible Surplus, FareShare Midlands and The Clean Kilo, demonstrating the backing of organisations in Birmingham who are committed to reducing food insecurity and actively promoting food justice.

The CHFC forum has also been involved in more local food justice work. For more information please see:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50279/food_revolution/2604/right_to_food_and_food_justice

1.2.4 Working Towards a Sustainable Food Places Award

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 key food issues. Birmingham is working to achieve this award by meeting the following criteria:

- Establish a broad, representative and dynamic local food partnership
- Develop, deliver and monitor a food strategy/action plan
- Inspire and engage the public about good food
- Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement
- Tackle food poverty
- Promote healthy eating
- Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development
- Promote healthy, sustainable and independent food businesses to consumers
- Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates
- Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain
- Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

- Reduce, redirect and recycle food, packaging and related waste

A food strategy and action plan need to be in place for 12 months to be eligible to apply for the award, so Birmingham is aiming to apply in April 2023 (with expressions of interest in January 2023).

Applying for this award gives us access to funding streams, and, for example, through a food resilience grant from Sustainable Food Places, The Active Wellbeing Society were commissioned to develop a growing network, to deliver workshops and to explore how unused land could be used for growing (we recently received the final report for the latter work which is due to be published soon).

1.2.5 Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme (COTP)

The Food System team has continued to lead on COTP projects during the last year and we give an update at every Creating a Healthy Food City Forum. Over the last year, the COTP workstreams have been consolidated to ensure that there is a lasting legacy at Birmingham City Council. This has involved:

- Reinforcing the overarching aims of each of the three COTP workstreams, so that the legacy integrates with other BCC work and priorities.
- Taking a whole system approach to achieving these objectives through strengthening partnership and coordinated working.
- Integrating the COTP projects and outputs with other work and initiatives happening within the council and across the city.
- Through integrating the projects and outputs, we have prioritised ensuring the legacy of the COTP beyond the end of the programme.

This shift from seeing the COTP work streams as a collection of single projects, to working towards broader objectives, has been instrumental in enabling a whole system approach and a joint vision across the council. The three work streams are as follows:

Work stream 1 – Integrate Public Health into Built Environment Processes

Objective: Review what shapes the built environment in Birmingham, including planning and land use processes, and identify opportunities and barriers to improving public health.

Work stream 2 – Capture Food System Insights and Data

Objective: Develop tools, metrics and techniques to enable the effective capturing of insights and data across the food system to identify priorities and measure impact of actions.

Work stream 3 – Develop and Integrate Health Literacy Learning and Development Resources into Practice

Objective: Improve health literacy across the city through the integration of learning and development resources into existing projects and processes.

1.2.6 Culturally Relevant Eatwell Guide project

We have also commissioned work developing Culturally Diverse Healthy Eating Guides, which will provide tailored and easy to follow healthy eating guides and EatWell plates that are culturally diverse, demonstrating ingredients and diets from around the world. We will create seven Culturally Diverse Healthy Eating Guides based on geographical diets of European, African, Middle Eastern and North African, South Asian, East Asian, South American, and The Caribbean.

We have commissioned and will continue to collaborate with the Diverse Nutrition Association, to ensure that the diets and evidence we use for each of the seven guides is informed by those in the community and those with lived experience.

In Autumn, the initial evidence and data gathering will be complete and we will work with the Design and Marketing team to create the 7 interactive guides for Winter. The Diverse Nutrition Association will be presenting their findings during our September CHFC forum.

1.2.7 Commonwealth Games legacy

This year we have run the Cook the Commonwealth project. The food system team has led this work but we have provided updates to the CHFC forum at every meeting. This has involved collating a collection of more than 750 recipes for the 72 different Commonwealth countries, available on a free app (Whisk). Over a third of these recipes were tested, tweaked and/or photographed by a cohort of 19 dieticians. We have run a social media campaign before, during, and after the games and have also attended 9 community events. Initial data from Whisk suggest high levels of engagement with this project.

1.2.8 Food Foundation, partnerships and other organisations in Birmingham involved in the food agenda

- The Food Foundation Partnership contract, established in July 2020 and in place for two years, assists with the implementation of national and international food policies and guidelines, and specialist advice, support and management of Birmingham's international relationships. The partners have been in ongoing conversations with the Food System Team to discuss key project deliverables by quarter over the life of the contract. We are in the process of renewing their contract; two of our partners from The Food Foundation sit on the forum.
- The Mandala Consortium, whose focus is on transforming urban food systems for planetary and population health, and their project is centred on the city of Birmingham. Martin White, the lead investigator of the Mandala Consortium, sits on the forum.
- Living Labs from Food Trails funded through the EU Horizon 2020 Programme, and is addressing the call "Food 2030 – Empowering Cities as agent of food system transformation". Two people working on Food Trails are members of the food forum.
- There are also other organisations leading work including NIHR School for Public Health Research of which the University of Birmingham is now a member; Centre of Economics of Obesity at University of Birmingham; and also academics, professors and researchers from universities and colleges across Birmingham.

1.2.9 International Partnerships

Birmingham continues to be involved in international projects in this area. More details of our international work can be found here

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50279/food_revolution/2606/food_sytem_partnerships

1.3 Next Steps and Delivery

- Complete food system strategy consultation
- Rewrite strategy following consultation feedback
- Final strategy approved and published
- Build Birmingham Food Legends and identify food legends and capture best practice
- Facilitate more cities signing the Food Justice Pledge

The following people have been involved in the preparation of this board paper:

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