
Report – to provide a response to Feed Leeds following the deputation to full council (10.9.14) to encourage Leeds City Council to initiate the development of a new Food Strategy

Date: 17th December 2014

Summary of main issues

1. This report has been prepared in response to the Feed Leeds deputation which proposed the development of an integrated cross-council strategy, produced in partnership with business, academia and civil society.
2. This report provides background to the strategic context for the food agenda in Leeds, outlines current priorities in public health and gives examples of food work in other Directorates of Leeds City Council.
3. The evidence suggests that the preferred structure for a food strategy is co-production between Leeds City Council and the Third Sector to lead the process of developing a food strategy.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Office of the Director of Public Health lead the initiation of a food strategy on behalf of Councillor Mulherin the Executive Lead for Health and Wellbeing.
2. The Office of the Director of Public Health, and other council directorates will work in partnership with the Third Sector to agree the process to initiate a food strategy.
3. In line with good practice a baseline audit of current food activity should be commissioned to inform the development of the new food strategy and facilitate cross-council action. A budget of approximately £8k is requested for this work from the Public Health ring fenced budget. Stakeholders can then design a new food strategy in partnership, with each having influence on decision making and responsibility for delivering the actions identified.

2. Purpose of this report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to address the request for Leeds City Council to initiate a new food strategy, presented during a deputation on 10th September 2014, by the chair of Feed Leeds.

2.2 The deputation proposed the development of an integrated cross-council strategy, produced in partnership with business, academia and civil society. The deputation recommended that the benefits of this approach for Leeds will positively impact on public health, health inequalities, environment and waste management, and education through the School Food Plan.

3. Background information

3.1 Food is a complex issue with many interlinked factors at policy, community and individual level. The last major policy document around food namely Food Matters - Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century in 2008¹ recognised that most of the social, economic and environmental issues we face as a society are manifest in the food system, often with separate national policies segmenting the components of food work. For example the Food Standards Agency lead on food safety policy, Department of Health lead on food related health policy, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) lead on food related environment and rural affairs. At a local level this fragmentation has been mirrored leading to limited joint working and a lack of governance structures.

3.2 From 2006 to 2010, Leeds had a food strategy in place. The purpose of the strategy was to promote a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to increase people's ability to eat healthy food in Leeds. The strategy sought to raise the profile of the link between food and health, and the link between food growing/production and environmental issues which impact on health. The development of the strategy was led by the Environmental Health Team in Leeds City Council in partnership with the Sustainability Officer from the former Leeds Primary Care Trust.

The strategy had three key themes:

- Improving choice and access to healthy food
- Ensuring the safety of all food produced and sold in Leeds
- Encouraging people to choose a healthy diet which promotes sustainability and supports the environment and local economy.

3.3. During the life of the food strategy some good progress was made under Theme 1 which was led by Public Health. Theme 2 was successful with actions embedded into the work plan of the Environmental Health Team and delivery of projects in partnership with Public Health. Theme 3 was more difficult to achieve with some progress made around local food procurement by partners such as Leeds

¹ HM Government (2008) Food Matters – Towards a strategy for the 21st Century; available at: <http://www.ifr.ac.uk/waste/Reports/food%20matters,%20Towards%20a%20Strategy%20for%20the%2021st%20Century.pdf>

Teaching Hospital Trust and the inception of the climate change strategy for Leeds, which outlined food waste actions. Delivery against the food strategy was challenged by the lack of a resource for food and sustainability in the city. Consequently opportunities were missed to include food sustainability actions in other local strategic documents.

3.4 Since the strategy expired, the wider landscape in which food exists has moved on. Obesity has risen in profile as a major threat to public health, food security is a growing concern, and climate change and sustainability are ever-increasing priorities.

4. Strategic Priorities in Leeds

4.1 Food is a cross cutting priority for Leeds City Council. The Leeds City Council ambition set out in the Best Council Plan 2013 – 2017 aims for Leeds to be fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is both prosperous and sustainable so all our communities are successful. Food has a strong role to play in supporting the achievement of this ambition.

4.2 The initiation of a new food strategy could contribute to the achievement of a number of council objectives:

- Supporting communities and tackling poverty
- Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Building a child-friendly city
- Delivering the Better Lives Programme
- Dealing effectively with the city's waste
- Becoming a more effective and enterprising council

4.3 Food is also a key consideration in the Joint Health and Well-Being Strategy 2013 - 2015, particularly in terms of the following outcomes:

- To support people to choose healthy lifestyles
- Ensure everyone has the best start in life
- Improve people's mental health and well-being
- Increase the number of people supported to live safe in their own homes

4.4 Food is relevant to a number of other public health strategies including:

- Childhood Obesity Strategy
- Time of our lives (Ageing Well Strategy)
- Breastfeeding Strategy

- Development of a Healthy Weight Framework

In terms of a Food Strategy the key priorities for Public Health would be

- To reduce food related health inequalities.
- To increase opportunities for people to access healthy food choices.

4.5 Currently food work is being delivered by a number of other Leeds City Council directorates examples include:

- Environments and Neighbourhoods lead on the Love Food, Hate Waste Campaign as part of the Best Council plan objective to deal with the city's waste effectively.
- Citizens and Communities initiated the Food Aid Network as part of the objective to support communities to tackle food poverty.
- The Healthy Schools Team are responsible for the School Food Plan including identification of appropriate wraparound support for parents.

4.6 Feed Leeds identified that a new food strategy can build on current partnership work. The examples below identify key stakeholders who could contribute invaluable expertise to the process of developing a multi-sectorial food strategy based on local needs. This includes:

- The award winning Older People Food Matters group tackling malnutrition;
- The Choice and Access group providing a network and direction for local food projects around healthy eating; and
- The work of Feed Leeds supporting the local food agenda.

4.7 There are more limited examples of joint working across council directorates and work with other wider partners such as local businesses and academia as recommended by the deputation so this would need particular attention.

4.8 Learning from good practice other cities have commissioned a baseline audit prior to the development of their food strategy. The purpose of this is to capture current work, conduct a stakeholder analysis to explore capacity and involvement, and begin the development of a shared vision, aims, objectives and outcomes. A diverse range of stakeholders should be engaged representing the range of food systems shown in appendix 1. It is estimated that this work would require funding of approximately £8k.

5. Corporate Considerations

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

5.2 Public Health is currently undertaking some insight work with the public to determine food needs which will offer some useful insight into their support needs to enable them to eat a healthy balanced diet.

5.3 Feed Leeds conducted a consultation to explore local interest around re-development of a food strategy. This consultation included a range of stakeholders who support the principle of a food strategy. A draft vision, aims and action have been proposed as part of a supplementary report to the deputation which summarises over 70 stakeholder views from a range of sectors.

6. Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

6.1 The Food Strategy would undergo equality and diversity screening from its inception to implementation.

7. Resources and value for money

7.1 Taking a cross-council approach, in partnership, to initiate a food strategy that will increase access to healthier food choices will provide significant health benefits. It is estimated that 70,000 lives could be saved per year if diets matched the nutritional guidance. Further evidence suggests that eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day would save 15,000 lives, including 7,000 from heart disease, almost 5,000 from cancer and around 3,000 from stroke. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption makes the most significant contribution of all dietary changes to reducing the risk of heart disease.

7.2 Additional resources of 8K will be required to commission a baseline audit to inform the development of the new food strategy and facilitate cross-council action.

8. Legal implications, Access to Information and Call In

8.1 This document and the response to the deputation are not subject to call in.

9. Risk Management

9.1 The Food Strategy would have a risk log from its inception to implementation. Risks associated with the co-production and lead of a food strategy in partnership with the food sector will be managed by Leeds City Council being accountable for the decision making process.

10. Conclusion

10.1 In conclusion it is suggested that Leeds City Council works in partnership with the third sector, private sector, education bodies, and the public to initiate a new food strategy that is integrated cross council. Evidence suggests that the preferred structure for a food strategy is co-production and leadership between Leeds City Council and the Third Sector to work together to lead the process of developing a food strategy.

10.2 The process of initiating a new food strategy requires the identification of existing cross council opportunities and capacity to shape a new strategy that is representative of the breadth of the food agenda. Council directorates with a key role to play include Public Health, Children's Services, Adult Social Care,

Environments and Neighbourhoods, Citizens and Communities, and City Development. The Office of the Director of Public Health is in a good position to support the initiation and coordination of the new Food Strategy and to ensure the outcomes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy are achieved.

- 10.3** In line with good practice a baseline audit should be commissioned to conduct a stakeholder analysis, capture current work and begin the development of a shared vision, aims, objectives and outcomes. A diverse range of stakeholders should be engaged in this process.
- 10.4** These stakeholders can then design a new food strategy in partnership, with each having influence on decision making and responsibility for delivering the actions identified. The resources required for the initiation and delivery of the strategy would be agreed in partnership.
- 10.5** The new food strategy, with a holistic view of the food system, would contribute to cross cutting priorities in the Best Council Plan 2013 – 2017 and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1** It is recommended that the Office of the Director of Public Health lead the initiation of a food strategy on behalf of Councillor Mulherin the Executive Lead for Health and Wellbeing.
- 11.2** The Office of the Director of Public Health, and other identified council officers will work in partnership with the Third Sector to agree the process to initiate a food strategy.
- 11.3** In line with good practice a baseline audit of current food activity should be commissioned to inform the development of the new food strategy and facilitate cross-council action. A budget of approximately £8k is requested from the Public Health ring fenced budget for this work. Stakeholders can then design a new food strategy in partnership, with each having influence on decision making and responsibility for delivering the actions identified.

Appendix 1

