

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance Policy and Resources
DATE	20 September 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Sustainable Food Cities - Tackling Food Poverty.
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/187
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update on report CHI/16/003 Sustainable Food Cities to Finance Policy and Resources Committee on 16th February 2016 and the recommendation to bring back a detailed proposal to this committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee are asked to note the report and agree:

1. That Aberdeen City Council adopts the 'Sustainable Food Cities' approach to develop a cross-sector partnership and implement a food policy in the city as a means of tackling food poverty;
2. To instruct officers to progress membership of the 'Sustainable Food Cities' network and appropriate accreditation;
3. Aberdeen City Council's participation in 'Scotland's Skilled Workforce Leadership Group' with Business in the Community and Children in Scotland to tackle child food poverty;
4. To instruct officers to progress a joint approach with Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian in addressing food poverty and seek to secure joint funding for the actions set out in this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of employing a project facilitator from October 2016 to March 2019 is £52.7k including on-costs. This is expected to be supported by partners and any initial costs will be met from existing service budgets.

The cost of delivering core activity during the project period is estimated to be £100k. Funding contribution is expected from partners, with one third of the above being contributed by Aberdeen City Council. This portion is to be met from existing community service budgets.

Subject to further funds being available, a further £75k of project activity has been identified.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Sustainable Food Cities approach will have a positive sustainability and environmental impact through improving use of local food, reducing food waste, increasing provision of land for community food growing spaces and allotments. This latter development will help deliver the Food Growing Strategy requirement of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

In addition the approach will support the local food economy through increasing local food supply, production and provision. This links with the Regional Economic Strategy objective to increase the workforce in the food and drink sector and Opportunity North East food and drink sector priorities which now include developing the area as a food destination.

The focus on tackling food poverty will be delivered through the emerging locality plans and will impact on a number of measures in the draft Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The approach to tackle food poverty will contribute significantly to the developing Anti-Poverty Strategy (Reporting to this committee, ref: CHI/16/002).

5. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES

Report CHI/16/003 - Sustainable Food Cities to Finance Policy and Resources Committee on 16th February 2016 contained background on the Sustainable Food Cities approach. Beyond an awards programme, the approach centres on developing sustainable food policy and a partnership which focuses on 6 priorities as follows:

- Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public;
- Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food;

- Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects;
- Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy;
- Transforming catering and food procurement;
- Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system.

The report also highlighted a number of activities taking place under each of these priorities. It has since become clear that there are a great many more activities and initiatives taking place, but shared knowledge and information is poor and many are small, local projects which need help in increasing scale and impact. The approach will build on work done over an extensive period with Aberdeen as a Fair Trade city and the recognition earlier this year of the Council's catering team with the Food for Life Silver Catering Mark for primary school meals provision. What is clear, however, is that the Sustainable Food City approach will be built on strong foundations and interest.

In order to gauge interest in the approach, an event was held in Aberdeen on 19th May, entitled: "EAT Aberdeen – Empowering Actions Together". The event was well attended across the public, third and academic sectors, with private sector representation too. The attendance list can be found in Appendix 1. There was a spread of interest across all six of the above priority areas and the feedback received was extremely positive about developing a co-ordinated policy.

Workshops took place for each priority to consider what this would mean for Aberdeen and what actions are required to take this forward. A great deal of information was gathered which will form our Action Plan going forwards. This has been circulated again to participants to check and provide further comment, and as such we have robust information to inform this report.

Aside from specific actions, a number of key points emerged that will inform the development of the approach. These include:

- The need to develop information sharing across all areas of food related activity, including public, community, academic and private sectors;
- Governance arrangements – there needs to be clear governance arrangements for a food policy partnership to link with decision makers through community planning and the Council. Accountability is proposed to sit with Inclusion and Welfare, reporting to the (revamped) Welfare Reform Board in the new Community Planning Aberdeen structure. A partnership group will be established drawing expertise from each of the priority areas (possibly a sub-group of the Board), supported by the Inclusion and Welfare Manager and project facilitator. This

will ensure links and contribution to the developing Anti-Poverty Strategy. However, although there is a focus on tackling food poverty, sustainable food policy impacts across the board on education and attainment, health and wellbeing, the environment, communities and the economy, so monitoring and reporting should be developed to reflect this.

- The development of a joint approach with Aberdeenshire Council – many organisations cover both areas and the balance of food production rests in Aberdeenshire;
- As well as a wide range of existing activities under each priority that need co-ordination, there are existing groups that will lead on key priorities. Examples include: Food Poverty Action Aberdeen - who will lead on the food poverty action priority; and the Aberdeen Food Network - who could lead on community food skills. Discussion is scheduled with Opportunity North East to progress their lead on the food economy priority and support for procurement and environmental priorities.
- In terms of procurement and catering, there is not an existing forum for catering and food procurement managers to consider opportunities to build on standards. However, The Soil Association (who administers the Sustainable Food Cities approach) have offered to facilitate the establishment of this group once we have committed to the approach.

Business in the Community are working with Children in Scotland (Aberdeen City Council are members of both) to tackle child food poverty and the Council has committed to back this work through participation in 'Scotland's Skilled Workforce Leadership Group.' The business community are concerned about the impact of child food poverty on attainment and the subsequent economic impact on the availability of a skilled workforce in the future.

It became clear that food is a cross-cutting issue impacting on the delivery of a wide range of outcomes and is to varying extents part of many people's job. There is, however, a need for dedicated resource to help develop the policy and achieve the expected impacts and outcomes – the majority of people with an interest do not have the time or resource to undertake the development opportunities which exist.

The officer has had considerable development support in enabling the work for this report to be completed, but that has been on a temporary basis leading to consideration of the report and recommendation by this Committee. Early discussions with Aberdeenshire Council have included the possibility of joint funding; tentative discussions with Public Health colleagues have indicated support for the approach, but further detailed discussions are required with a number of teams across NHS Grampian and Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership to clarify local outcomes to be delivered and consideration of possible support.

There are considerable lead-in times for projects which may, for example, involve schools or changes in ways of working in communities to tackle household food insecurity and child food poverty. It is proposed therefore that a commitment over a period to March 2019 is made in the first instance, with annual evaluations of progress and impacts. This will be monitored by the (revamped) Welfare Reform Board.

A full-time post is proposed to March 2019 to enable the developments described in this report to be implemented. Discussions with Aberdeenshire Council and health colleagues in respect of joint funding from April 2017 will take place. The post can be approved by the Director under existing delegated powers and officers are now developing the business case. Any immediate costs to the Council shall be contained within existing budgets.

Subject to the availability of further funds, we will need to communicate the initiative – materials, projects information, web and social media presence, a launch event: but an estimate of £15k would provide a good foundation to take this forward.

In terms of community projects, a key element would be locality level awareness campaigns to connect national level messages with local activities and projects – this would help connect healthy eating messages with local opportunities to buy fresh fruit and veg, learning to cook, community growing etc. A key link to this will be building on work in schools on education about food and the impact of diet on attainment, uptake of school meals and provision of meals during school holidays. The delivery of school meals and activities during holidays has been delivered for £6 per head per day in schools in other food cites. £10,800 would allow 20 places on an activity and meal programme, each day for 6 weeks for children in each of the three localities. An overall budget of £40k for community projects would allow significant developments in this respect to build on other sources of funding that can be brought to bear on these topics.

In terms of the local food economy, there are opportunities to tie in with other economic development work in the food and drink sector, but from a community perspective, work to promote local food independents would be a positive step, along with the development of employer links with schools. Examples of such links previously trialled include local fish suppliers attending schools to demonstrate skills and educate children about: catching, filleting and cooking fish. This helps children understand where their food comes from. Such an idea could develop to become part of a fish (or other food) festival in communities. Links could be developed with national and sector bodies as well as taking advantage of community benefits through food procurement, but an element of budget would help with this. One further area to improve access to fresh fruit and veg would be developing 'greenmarkets' to progress community food outlets and the allotments initiative. A budget

of £20k would help lever considerable additional funding in these areas.

In summary, subject to further funds being available, the opportunities are:

Communication and information sharing	£15k
Locality projects	£40k
Economy (greenmarkets, festival, local independents)	£20k

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience

Aberdeen (and potentially the North East) becoming a Sustainable Food City will deliver benefits for our customers on a range of levels including reduced food insecurity and food poverty, improved access to healthy and sustainable food, an improved local food economy and increased opportunities to grow food. This will contribute to improved health outcomes by tackling obesity and diet related ill-health as well as improving social inclusion through development and provision of meals.

Improving Staff Experience

This development will support staff in the extensive work that is already being done by helping improve co-ordination and co-operation across related activities, supporting work to secure resources for what are often very local, small scale projects. In addition, achieving the available accolades will provide public recognition for the work of staff and teams.

Improving our use of Resources

A Sustainable Food Cities approach will help improve the use of resources by identifying areas of duplication, making best use of existing resources across communities, helping with more effective rollout and scaling up of good practice. Reduction in waste will also improve use of resources as will success in developing the local food economy and supply chain through procurement developments. This will include increased community food growing.

Corporate

This proposal contributes to Aberdeen: The Smarter City through:

Smarter Living (Quality of Life)

- We will encourage and support citizens to participate in the development, design and decision making of services to promote civic pride, active citizenship and resilience

- We will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city

Smarter Environment

- We will manage waste effectively and in line with UK and European legislative requirements by maximizing recycling and reducing waste to landfill, thereby reducing our costs and carbon footprint.

Aberdeen as a Sustainable Food City aligns with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan to be developed for localities across the City and aligns with developing plans for both the Inclusion and Welfare service, and the Housing Management and Communities and Partnerships service.

Public

This report is likely to be of interest to the public on the basis that there is considerable interest in all aspects of food, the wide ranging nature of the proposed project and the environmental and sustainability considerations.

EHRIA – completed and approved by the Equalities Manager, ACC.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is a medium financial risk to the Council to develop and maintain a Sustainable Food Cities approach. The aim will be to manage this within existing resources. In mitigation, given the partnership nature of the proposal, partner and external funding sources may be available and will be fully explored.

Work to alleviate food poverty, with a specific emphasis on tackling child food poverty and the impact on children's futures in helping improve attainment is likely to have a positive impact on the Council's reputation.

There are expected positive impacts on the environment through reductions in food waste and better management of that waste, and more sustainable food economy through improved production and use of local food.

Through coordinating and progressing this approach, Aberdeen has the potential to be the third city in Scotland to become a 'Sustainable Food City' – highlighting the cities forward thinking approach. The future potential achievement of an award and accreditation is expected to enhance the Council's reputation.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CHI/16/003 Sustainable Food Cities

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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EAT Aberdeen: *Empowering Actions Together*
 City Council Chambers 19th May 2016

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