



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 6 MARCH 2024
Subject	FOOD ACTION PLAN FOR WEST OXFORDSHIRE (PART OF THE OXFORDSHIRE FOOD STRATEGY)
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Joy Aitman – Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities. Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager. Email: heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present the action plan produced by the Food Action Working Group (West Oxfordshire), noting especially the actions attributed to the Council. This is one of five district-specific action plans being produced as part of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.
Annexes	Annex A – Food Action Plan (West Oxfordshire) Annex B – Oxfordshire Food Strategy
Recommendations	That the Executive Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Endorse the Food Action Plan (West Oxfordshire) attached at Annex A;2. Approve the actions attributed to the Council as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Previous Executive report dated 13th July 2022</p> <p>Multi stakeholder Food Action working group led by Good Food Oxfordshire has been meeting since January 2023</p> <p>Stakeholder meeting to review actions held on 23rd September 2023</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Oxfordshire Food Strategy, led by Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO), was launched in 2022. This report presents the Food Action Plan for West Oxfordshire, one of 5 delivery plans covering the whole of the county. The plan includes a range of actions, some of which are for the Council to lead on. Funding from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is available to enable the delivery of the actions in the plan. Endorsement of the Council's actions enables officers to start the work set out in the plan, alongside other stakeholders.
- 1.2** West Oxfordshire has an established and well connected Community Food Network made up of 14 Larders, Fridges and Foodbanks serving the West Oxfordshire population.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The government published a National Food Strategy in July 2021 that made recommendations to government to address climate change, biodiversity loss, land use, dietary related illness, health inequalities, food security and trade. For local government, it recommends that local authorities work with communities and partners to develop local food strategies to reduce health inequalities. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy was launched in 2022.
- 2.2** A report setting out the Oxfordshire Food Strategy came forward to Executive on 13th July 2022. The vision captured in the strategy seeks to ensure 'Everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day' through the following ambitions:
 - Food justice: healthy and sustainable food is affordable and accessible to everyone
 - Sustainable food economy: Local food businesses flourish, with more productions, more outlets, more employment and better standards for workers
 - Good food movement: more people can enjoy and engage with healthy, sustainable food and 'good food for everyone' is part of our culture
 - Food for the planet: We waste less food and the food that we do produce, consume and waste has a less negative impact on the planet
 - Sustainable supply chains: More locally produced, sustainable food is bought and consumed locally, and supply chains are more resilient.
 - Governance and strategy: Continue, evaluate and strengthen existing initiatives.
 - Build foundations for new initiatives. Establish enablers to manage and monitor progress.
- 2.3** Food Action Working Groups (FAWGs) were set up in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire/Vale of White Horse, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire, to create delivery plans for each area. These were multi stakeholder groups, promoting collaboration across the food system and resulting in shared actions.
- 2.4** The first meeting of the FAWG for West Oxfordshire took place on the 21st March 2023. Meetings were held monthly and convened by GFO. FAWG members represent a wide range of stakeholders including Witney & West Oxfordshire Food Bank, Oxford Food Hub, Cornerstone, North East Cotswolds Farming Cluster, Abingdon and Witney College, Chippy Larder, West Oxfordshire District Council and Good Food Oxfordshire.

- 2.5 Alongside monthly FAWG meetings, members consulted with a wider group of 29 community stakeholders at the West Oxfordshire Food Summit event held in September 2023.

3. FOOD ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Food Action Plan for West Oxfordshire is included as Annex A. It includes a number of actions under each of the 5 priorities:
- *Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health*
 - *Build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together*
 - *Grow the local good food economy through enterprise, local jobs, local wealth generation*
 - *Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains*
 - *Improve the health and sustainability of institutional catering*
- 3.2 The actions for the Council have been reviewed by officers from Climate, Community Wellbeing, Planning Policy, Economic Development and Tourism to ensure that they can make an effective contribution.
- 3.3 The aim of developing local Food Action Plans for each district is to ensure that the Oxfordshire Food Strategy reflects local priorities and the unique nature of each area.
- 3.4 The Food Action Plan for West Oxfordshire includes local actions deliverable by local providers, however there are additional actions which sit at county-level and are included in a separate Oxfordshire county-level plan.
- 3.5 Actions where it is proposed that the Council takes a lead role are as follows:

<i>Priority: Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health</i>	
Work with community partners to scope a cooking project based on community needs. Build case studies drawing on the successes/ learnings to replicate and expand.	Lead: WODC (Community Wellbeing) Support: West Community Food Network
Work collaboratively with CFNs and frontline health teams to increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers across the district.	Lead: WODC (Community Wellbeing) and OCC Public Health Support: West Community Food Network, GFO
Test 'Good Food Schools' and in partnership with Public Health School Food Officer identify and engage schools working with target communities that have capacity and interest in undertaking food growing activities on site (or in partnership with nearby sites), assess support needs and barriers to establishing growing sites.	Lead: WODC (Community Wellbeing) with OCC Public Health
<i>Priority: Build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together</i>	
Map all potential growing spaces, including available allotment spaces, and unused space which could be utilised for growing. Engage town and parish councils in this through Neighbourhood Plans and Local Design Statements, including	Lead: WODC (Planning Policy, Climate, Community Wellbeing) Support: GFO

identification of Local Green Spaces. Work in collaboration with other groups and emerging mapping projects.	
<i>Priority: Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains</i>	
Influence the Local Plan and other Masterplans to support workforce for sustainable agriculture, focusing on access to affordable accommodation and infrastructure barriers.	Lead: WODC (Planning Policy) Support: GFO, NE Cotswold Farming Cluster, A&W College
<i>Priority: Improve the health and sustainability of institutional catering</i>	
Lead the way as a test and learn 'Good Food School' exemplar embedding sustainable growing, cooking, eating and food education as part of the whole school experience and disseminate learning to support a group of partner schools	Lead: WODC (Community Wellbeing), Burford School, A&W College Support: GFO

- 3.6 There are other actions in the plan where the Council will not lead but provide support. Details of these elements are included in Annex A.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Council could decide to approve less or none of the actions for the Council. This would reduce the workload for staff but would limit the impact of the plan. This option may leave the Council open to criticism given its previous support for the plan. Officers could go back and negotiate the details of the priorities with GFO and agree alternative options and return to Executive at a later date with details. A delay may have an impact on the availability of funds as OCC require monies to be allocated by 30th September 2024.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 OCC is providing funding of £23,500 towards interventions which will help to deliver the outcomes of the strategy. OCC will pay the funding over to the Council who will hold it on behalf of the FAWG members and project leads. A process for distributing the funds will be set out by OCC in a legal agreement with the Council.
- 5.2 The funds are not expected to be able to meet all costs of the interventions proposed. There is no expectation that the Council will provide additional funding.
- 5.3 The funding provided by OCC does not make provision for additional staff costs incurred in the delivery of these actions. Officers have therefore worked to ensure that the actions for the Council are deliverable within existing resources.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A legal agreement between OCC and the Council has been prepared and agreed by the Council.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** If the Council goes ahead and leads the elements of the plan as set out in section 2.3 the key risk is staff resource to be able to lead on interventions. Although officers have assessed the plan and deem it to be deliverable, these officers could move roles and the Council may lose capacity and expertise.
- 7.2** If the Council decides not to lead the interventions as set out in 3.5, and agrees to renegotiate the details, there is a risk that funding may be unavailable in the event of a delay.
- 7.3** There is a risk that the actions in the plan will not make an impact on the outcomes as set out in the strategy. To mitigate this the actions and interventions will be monitored against the strategy evaluation framework and reviewed on a regular basis with delivery group partners.
- 7.4** If the interventions are delayed there is a risk that the funding offer will expire. The delivery partners will review progress to monitor expenditure.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** Activities and interventions proposed in the plan are designed to be inclusive and remove the barriers faced by residents in accessing affordable healthy food.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Activities and interventions in the full Food Action Plan will make a positive contribution to tackling climate change. Actions will result in young people knowing more about how to grow and cook food including where food comes from; more equitable access to healthy food options for those facing barriers; and, greater access and availability of food from local producers. The delivery partners will refine the Action Plan and reflect on how each action can contribute to climate and biodiversity.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None

(END)