



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET 13 JULY 2022</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM No 12</b>
Subject	<b>OXFORDSHIRE FOOD STRATEGY</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Joy Aitman - Cabinet Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: <a href="mailto:joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk">joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager Email: <a href="mailto:heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk">heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	An Oxfordshire wide food strategy has been developed by a range of partners. This report provides an overview of the strategy, its principles and the overarching framework to be adopted, so that Cabinet can review and offer comments on the Oxfordshire Food Strategy Part 1 and note the development of detailed action plans in Part 2.
Annexes	Annex A - Oxfordshire Food Strategy: Part 1
Recommendation/s	<i>Cabinet is recommended to:</i> <i>a) Review, comment on and endorse the Oxfordshire Food Strategy: Part 1 including the principles and framework for delivery;</i> <i>b) Note that Part 2 will see the development of detailed action plans for partners involved in the strategy and that this will return to Cabinet, later in the autumn;</i> <i>c) Note the grant allocation proposed by the County Council to assist with the development and delivery of the action plan.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Healthy Towns and Villages</li><li>2. Strong Local Communities</li><li>3. A Vibrant District Economy</li><li>4. Climate Action</li></ol>
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Public and stakeholder engagement in developing the strategy initially took place during August – October 2021. This included consulting with relevant Councillors/officers across Oxfordshire local authorities, farmers markets and producers and members of the public attending food related events.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. This was further supported by the publication of the Levelling Up white paper in February 2022 where the government committed to narrowing the gap in health inequalities between the highest and lowest life expectancy areas.
- 1.3. An Oxfordshire wide food strategy has been developed as a partnership between Good Food Oxfordshire, the County, City and district councils and representatives from Oxfordshire community sector groups. The strategy supports a broad range of this Council's priorities including community wellbeing, a vibrant local economy, climate action and biodiversity, access to healthy food and green spaces, addressing food poverty and tackling inequalities.
- 1.4. This paper sets out the partnership work that has enabled the development of the strategy and outlines the ambitions established in Part 1 that will guide the development of action plans in Part 2.
- 1.5. The strategy was commissioned during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic as it quickly became apparent that food security and access to food became challenging. Local food banks saw a three to fourfold increase, with a conservative estimate suggesting that around 6,000 people a week required support to access food.
- 1.6. Whilst community food networks have risen to this challenge, the ongoing and increasing cost of living crisis means that there is still a need to build resilience into our local food systems to ensure better access to food and reduce carbon emissions.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

### **2.1. Development of the food strategy**

- 2.1.1. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been developed by a multi-stakeholder partnership including county and district councils, community groups, local food producers and other major institutions. It has been developed to tackle the challenges of health and wellbeing; climate change and biodiversity; fair incomes and employment and a vibrant and sustainable food system. Part 1 of the strategy (attached as annex A) seeks to identify priority areas for action, links to existing initiatives and policy and showcase examples of excellence that can be learnt from and built upon.
- 2.1.2. Public and stakeholder engagement in developing the strategy initially took place during August – October 2021. This included consulting with relevant Councillors/officers across Oxfordshire local authorities, farmers markets and producers and members of the public attending food related events.

### **2.2. Partnership ambitions**

- 2.2.1. The strategy presents a vision which seeks to ensure 'Everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day' through the following ambitions:
  - a. Food justice: healthy and sustainable food is affordable and accessible to everyone
  - b. Sustainable food economy: Local food businesses flourish, with more productions, more outlets, more employment and better standards for workers

- c. Good food movement: more people can enjoy and engage with healthy, sustainable food and 'good food for everyone' is part of our culture
- d. 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
- e. Sustainable supply chains: More locally produced, sustainable food is bought and consumed locally, and supply chains are more resilient
- f. Governance and strategy: Continue, evaluate and strengthen existing initiatives. Build foundations for new initiatives. Establish enablers to manage and monitor progress.

## **2.3. Achieving the vision**

**2.3.1.** In helping achieve the strategy's vision each Council is invited to consider a range of commitments:

- a. Adopt a whole systems approach to food, ensuring that food is considered within health, climate, and economy policies and programmes
- b. Embed healthy and sustainable food and healthy weight environments within existing policies, plans, and targets
- c. Develop a specific food policy that encapsulates key themes and recommendations defined in the strategy
- d. Champion the development of district level food action plans in partnership with other stakeholders to agree specific council commitments and measure progress against these
- e. Promote and support community groups and businesses working for a better food system through public procurement and access to resources
- f. Support vibrant, healthy food communities through access to skills and spaces for growing, cooking, and sharing food
- g. Lobby national government using local evidence and action
- h. Appoint food champions at cabinet level as conduits for food issues and action

**2.3.2.** To support the ambitions of the strategy, action plans will be developed in partnership which will be tailored to meet the different needs of each city/district area and working in partnership with established community groups in each local area.

**2.3.3.** The action plan can link into a number of the Council's priorities, including:

- a. Taking affirmative action in relation to climate change - measures that will link to net zero targets such as food waste reduction;
- b. Tackling inequalities and providing opportunities for everyone - measures that will seek to ensure equality of access to food and actions to tackle food poverty;
- c. Protecting, restoring and enhancing the quality of the West Oxfordshire environment – measures that will encourage approaches which match the needs of the area and work in harmony with it;
- d. Supporting local business – working in partnership to implement and deliver the strategy and its broad-ranging benefits;

- e. Planning for thriving communities in a quality environment using embedding principles of healthy place shaping - measures put in place to ensure that spaces for growing food are available.

2.3.4. This strategy spans the breadth of portfolio areas with an underlying priority to contribute to tackling the climate emergency whilst improving the health and wellbeing of our residents. Cabinet is asked to endorse Part I of the Strategy including the challenges faced, the vision and its ambitions.

### 3. NEXT STEPS – DEVELOPING OUR ACTION PLAN

- 3.1. It is estimated that 8 – 10 % of all households in Oxfordshire experience food insecurity (Good Food Oxfordshire, 2021) and the ambitions within the strategy seek to address this by supporting more locally produced and sustainable food and enabling all residents the equal opportunity to access healthy food all year round, through education to minimise food waste or grow their own, and through accessing food banks or community larder schemes. There are longer term ambitions within the strategy to grow Oxfordshire’s local food economy through local enterprises, local jobs and local wealth generation.
- 3.2. As part of the strategy, an action plan needs to be developed with responsibilities and commitments to meet the ambitions. These actions are to be defined but will include communications and marketing, practical support such as identifying opportunities or providing access to green spaces for community gardens and to provide local business support to address food waste and explore locally sourced food options.
- 3.3. Whilst some of the actions will be completed as ‘business as usual’, there is a need to ensure we can collectively deliver on our ambitions to address issues around cost of living and food poverty for all our residents across West Oxfordshire. To facilitate this, the County Council will allocate funding to all districts and city partners and to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to support delivery of our joint commitments.
- 3.4. A total of £250,000 will be made available to the district and city councils be put towards delivery of actions that will directly impact accessibility to food, that can be used internally or put towards community groups within the district area. It is not recommended that this funding is used towards employment or personnel resource, as this would provide a short-term solution to a long-term commitment.
- 3.5. To determine the allocation per locality the intention is to use a previously established Department for Works and Pensions formula, which is based on population and weighted by deprivation, as measured by the index of multiple deprivation index. This will result in allocation of funding as follows:

Local Authority	Percentage	Allocation
Cherwell District Council	26%	£65,000
Oxford City Council	28%	£70,000
South Oxfordshire District Council	17%	£42,500
Vale of White Horse District Council	16%	£40,000
West Oxfordshire District Council	13%	£32,500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£250,000</b>

3.6. Examples of actions the funding can be used towards include:

- Communications, including signposting for residents to access existing schemes, raising awareness on available options and providing advice and guidance
- Supporting infrastructure, guidance and access to funding for community food services including distribution networks, foodbanks, larders and fridges
- Exploration of providing access to vacant and shared spaces and resources to enable communities to come together to grow, cook, eat and share food together

3.7. A timeline for adopting the strategy and its action plan is set out below:

Date	Action
July 2022	Phase 1 proposal to Cabinet for adoption
July to October	Development of action plan
October/November	Action plan to OCC for comment and recommendations
December 2022	Phase 2 proposal to Cabinet for approval

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Whilst there is no explicit cost to the Council, the task of undertaking the actions will have resource implications in terms of staff time. Currently there is no role dedicated to support this work.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

#### 6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1. There are no financial risks in this report. This is a countywide commitment so there is a reputational risk in the Council not committing to the programme where all other councils in Oxfordshire will be signing up. There has been a significant amount of preliminary work done to arrive at the invitation for the Council.

#### 7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. There are no positive or negative effect on different service users, customers or staff arising directly from this report. An equalities impact assessment will be completed when the action plan is developed.

#### 8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1. As identified in the strategy, food systems contribute 40% of greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC, 2022). Small scale community food production can make a valuable contribution to sustainable land management, food security and physical and mental health. Any reduction in food miles and food waste represents positive climate action.

#### 9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1. The Council could choose not to endorse the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

#### 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1. None

(END)