

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 132

Subject: Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30

Date of meeting: 23 January 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Human Rights

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report is to seek endorsement from Cabinet for the refreshed Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30, which aligns with core outcomes of the Council Plan 2023-27.
- 1.2 Delivery of the action plan will strengthen our poverty reduction approach contributing to 'A fair and inclusive city'. Cooking, food growing, and food waste prevention activities improve the city's social infrastructure creating 'A city to be proud of' and increasing opportunities for healthier and more sustainable food choices helps us be 'A healthy city where people thrive'.
- 1.3 Local and national research shows that while citizens have deep rooted concerns about the food system, they are inherently solutions-focused in their thinking, supporting a wide range of government proposals for action.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to endorse the city's Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 (Appendix 1) and to be one of the partners involved in delivery and evaluation.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 There is a direct link between food systems and major health issues, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Costs associated with the rising burden of preventable chronic disease include healthcare costs, social care costs, welfare, productivity losses and human costs. Food systems also impact biodiversity, water resources, pollution, soil health, deforestation, climate change and provide critical infrastructure across local areas and regions.
- 3.2 The Marmot Review into health inequalities in England was published in 2010. It proposed an evidence-based strategy to address the social

determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and which can lead to health inequalities. One of the six policy objectives was to ‘Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities’ and includes a specific recommendation on ‘Improving the food environment in local areas across the social gradient’. Over a decade and a half later we continue this long-term commitment to tackle inequalities.

- 3.3 The Food Strategy Action Plan outlines how collectively as a city we can achieve a healthy, sustainable and fair food system for Brighton & Hove, from production and distribution to consumption and waste management.
- 3.4 By endorsing this Food Strategy Action Plan, the Council is showing its own commitment, providing leadership and acknowledging the shared effort by partners from across the statutory, businesses and community sector. This ensures there is a local delivery system to deliver national food strategy and participatory decision making at a local level.
- 3.5 In the five years since the last Food Strategy Action Plan (2018-2023), there have been both positive and negative changes to note. The city was the first to be awarded Gold Sustainable Food Places status and partners have been successful in attracting millions of pounds of funding for food system transformation e.g. DEFRA, Big Lottery, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). At the same time, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis have impacted our food security. The cross-sector relationships that the food strategy approach enabled to develop in the city were a key factor in the city’s ability to form a quick and effective food response during the pandemic.
- 3.6 The refresh of the Food Strategy Action Plan involved setting the actions within the context of the current policy environment and meeting with stakeholders to agree a new action plan. These actions help support the delivery of outcomes in the Council’s Corporate Plan A city to be proud of; A fair and inclusive city; A healthy city where people thrive. The Action Plan delivery aligns with specific goals in the Council Plan as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 delivery aligned with the Council Plan

Outcome 1: A city to be proud of	
Investing in our city	Alignment with Food Strategy Action Plan
Grow a diverse and sustainable city economy The 8 aims in the Food Strategy Action Plan set out how collectively as a city we will achieve a vision of a healthy, sustainable and fair food system for Brighton and Hove.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a sustainable and healthy food environment • Ensuring major developments provide space for food growing • Minimising food waste • Support regenerative farming • Providing an affordable and sustainable local food supply
Outcome 2: A fair and inclusive city	
An inclusive and fairer city	Alignment with Food Strategy Action Plan
Work to reduce inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling food poverty and food security for all

The Food Strategy Action Plan is aligned to the Cost-of-Living Action Plan, Anti-Racism Strategy and the Third Sector Investment Fund activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in advice and financial inclusion via CVS food network Including emergency food needs of Black and Racially Minoritised communities, refugees and asylum seeker communities
Outcome 3: A healthy city where people thrive	
Living and ageing well	Alignment with Food Strategy Action Plan
<p>Enable people to live healthy, happy, and fulfilling lives</p> <p>The Action Plan adopts a whole-city approach to food and wellbeing, prioritising those with the poorest diets or least access to healthy food, with a focus on prevention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing our prevention and family support work Helping people to be physically active and maintain a healthy weight Being an age and dementia friendly city Information, advice and guidance on staying healthy

3.7 In addition to the Council Plan, where ‘Tackling food poverty and food security for all’ is referred to, the Food Strategy Action Plan complements and aligns with several other key council strategies and policy documents.

3.8 Food actions are now embedded into major local policy documents, including the City Plan, the City Downland Estate Plan, the Brighton and Hove Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Brighton and Hove Economic Plan, the Cost-of-Living Action Plan and anti-poverty approach, the Anti-Racism Strategy and the Circular Economy Route Map and Action Plan.

3.9 The Action Plan’s development has been informed by consultations, data and evidence and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared to accompany the Action Plan (Appendix 2). Implementing the Equality Diversity and Inclusion actions will improve the approach to monitoring actions and increase understanding and analysis of local data.

Plan Development

3.10 Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) was started by residents in 2003. BHFP supports communities, helping people learn to cook, eat a healthy diet, grow their own food and waste less food. They focus on policy and support partnership work as a respected and trusted organisation and as recognised leaders in national and international food networks. The council’s relationship with BHFP is strong and there is commitment to work together.

3.11 The process of refreshing the city’s Food Strategy Action Plan is overseen by the Food Strategy Expert Panel – a group of experts represented by business, academia, local government, NHS, and the voluntary and community sector. See Table 2 below for list of those consulted.

Table 2. Consultation with members of the public, experts and organisations

City-Wide Events	<p>Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) & Free University Brighton’s course ‘From Farm to Fork’, Jan-Mar 2024.</p> <p>Climate Change: BH public event ‘How to reduce climate impact’, 29 Feb 2024.</p> <p>Beyond Food Banks, 24 Apr 2024.</p> <p>Secondary school consultation on meals, 19 Jun 2024.</p>
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	FoodSEqual Survey, 29 Jun 2024. Good Food Procurement Group, 17 Jul 2024. BHFP AGM, 1 Oct 2024.
Experts and Organisations	BHCC Public Health team, Healthy Weight Programme Board, Food Policy Coordinator, Senior Planning Officer, NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board. Surplus Food Network, Emergency Food Network, Holiday Activity and Food Programme. Restaurants Brighton, B & H Economic Plan Stakeholder Consultation. Good Food Procurement Group members, Fork & Dig It CSA, The Compost Club. Brighton & Sussex University Food Network (BSUFN), Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation (BHAF), Brighton and Hove Organic Gardening Group (BHOGG), Allotments Manager, Cityclean. Food Matters, Community Works, Trust for Developing Communities, Brighton and Hove Energy Services Cooperative (BHESCo). Brighton Met College Hospitality & Catering Lead, The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere.

- 3.12 The Food Strategy Expert Panel agreed the priority areas, timeline and approach. The plan's actions were reviewed and updated to get a clearer understanding of progress to be able to focus efforts and resources. To date, around 61% of the actions from the 2018-2023 Food Strategy Action Plan have been completed. Some of these actions are ongoing and a few have been achieved but have since slipped back (in part due to the impact of the pandemic).
- 3.13 To ensure the Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 was led by the latest research and evidence, academics from local universities (through the Brighton and Sussex Universities Food Network) were brought together. They presented their research findings and discussed what they would stop, start and continue under the action plan's 8 strategic aims.
- 3.14 The themes that arose included reforming food banks to enhance equitable access and reduce stigma, creating more community growing possibilities, and scaling up impact through procurement and change through anchor institutions e.g. hospitals, schools, universities. Suggestions were made to hold regular research-policy discussions on more specific targets (e.g. food waste, healthy food in schools) on an ongoing basis.
- 3.15 The action plan was also informed by recent research from the Institute of Development Studies (Building Back Better from Below); UKRI's Food Systems Equality national research project; and Horizon EU's Cultivate Programme.
- 3.16 Community input / engagement was via focus groups including insight from people with disabilities and long-term health conditions requiring food support; with people from Black and Minoritised Ethnic communities, from people living in wards with higher levels of deprivation and from surveying of members of the city's Emergency Food Network. (See Appendix 1).

Summary of the main themes emerging from the consultations, data and evidence

- We need a better food environment where healthy food is affordable and available to all.
- People want to maximise food growing in the city but lack access to land and skills. A more radical approach is needed such as ‘a right to grow’.
- Large caterers and food businesses have the power to transform food systems – relatively small changes here can have a bigger impact.
- Tackling food insecurity and reducing inequalities within the food system is a key priority. We need to transform the current crisis-based food bank model and move to a preventative one that includes better access to advice, help to maximise incomes and other support that prevents the need for food banks.
- Food needs to be prioritised in schools to give children a better start – a whole-school food policy or approach is required.
- People want more local, sustainable food but growers and producers need the infrastructure, land and routes to market to enable this.
- As well as reducing food (and packaging waste) we need to think ‘circular’ and invest in the power of composting to grow food and replenish our much-depleted soils

A Vision for a healthy sustainable and fair food system

- 3.17 The themes that emerged from the review and refresh process informed the Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30. Feedback from the expert panel and 14 expert organisations and teams (including within the council) NHS Sussex and the Integrated Care System was then used.
- 3.18 Feedback included the desire to include less and more focused actions with metrics that can be systematically monitored and reported by action leads.
- 3.19 A proposed model for tackling food insecurity in Brighton and Hove was outlined and has informed the Thriving Communities Investment Fund.
- 3.20 The Food Strategy Action Plan will be delivered by a partnership approach led by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, supported by the council and other partners. It is underpinned by partnerships and networks including community and voluntary sector, businesses, academia and health sector.
- 3.21 The action plan identifies deliverable actions over a five-year period. The overall focus is on prevention and on being proactive, rather than reactive.

Table 3 The 8 aims of Brighton & Hove’s Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30

1	Champion healthy and sustainable food
2	Take a preventative upstream approach to food poverty and ensure equal access to healthy food
3	Nourish a vibrant, diverse and skilled community food sector
4	Improve sustainability and security in urban, rural and marine food production
5	Encourage a vibrant and sustainable food economy
6	Transform catering and procurement and revitalise local food chains
7	Become a food use not a food waste city
8	Ensure healthy, sustainable, fair food is embedded in policy and planning, and has a high profile right across the city.

A more innovative approach

3.22 There are a number of areas for innovation that will be explored through the refreshed Food Strategy Action Plan, as well as positive developments that support the focus of the Plan, including:

- Economic mission - building on existing food and circular economy activity at a local neighbourhood level to decrease food poverty and provide opportunities for local people to engage with the city's climate response.
- Circular Economy - the Circular Economy Action Plan specifically progresses those activities with the potential to facilitate the transition to a circular food system, a transition necessary to achieve net zero and biodiversity targets.
- Food and Farming - the forthcoming Greater Brighton Food Plan offers the opportunity for collaboration at scale, replicating successful projects and developing future food system infrastructure and policy alignment.
- Education and skills - strength in the education sector has been demonstrated in the relationships with the University of Brighton, University of Sussex and Plumpton College who are all involved with the development and delivery of the action plan.
- Policy-making - junk food advertising is being tackled locally. There is a desire to see more focus on policy levers and practical action to improve children's wellbeing through a whole school approach to food.
- Multi-level governance – the council can support the BHFP to deliver actions and evaluate their impact through the Expert Panel, coordinating council-led delivery via existing groups.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 No Cabinet endorsement was rejected as food work is integral to cross sector and major local policy documents and essential to delivering council

plan 'A fair and inclusive city' outcome tackling food poverty and food security for all.

- 4.2 The existing 2018-23 Food Strategy Action Plan could have been retained – rejected due to changing policy backdrop, desire for less and more focused actions and increasing levels of local, national and global food insecurity.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 It is important the Food Strategy Action Plan is owned by partners and stakeholders from across the city. Members of the public were consulted through five city-wide events during January to July 2024 and expert teams/organisations (including teams within the council and colleagues in the Integrated Care System) have been consulted alongside gaining feedback from the expert panel. (See Appendix 1).

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Recurrent pressure funding of £0.045m has been requested as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. If approved as part of Budget Council this will support the Emergency and Affordable Food Networks where costs will need to be managed within the approved budget from 2025/26 onwards. Additionally, savings as part of budget setting have been proposed to use other funds releasing core general fund budgets as savings. Should this saving be agreed with alternative funding sources identified and service pressure funding agreed there will be no direct financial implication arising from the recommendation in this report.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 13/12/2024

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted: 09/12/24

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Food Strategy and Action Plan outlines how collectively as a city we can achieve a healthy, sustainable and fair food system for Brighton & Hove, from production and distribution to consumption and waste management. Brighton and Hove are unique in capturing this level of data. The whole action plan has been developed to reduce inequalities and be led by data to enable fair access to healthy, sustainable food for all residents.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and SMART actions are proposed (Appendix 2):
- Monitoring of Equality Diversity and Inclusion to be embedded through Food Strategy Expert Panel

- Improve our understanding and analysis of food insecurity data across the city working with data and intelligence teams in the council and the health sector
- Increase diversity in Expert Panel by inviting people with lived experience to specific meetings

8.3 This is a city strategy, led by the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, with the council as one of the delivery partners supporting delivery and evaluation. Monitoring activity and evaluation must be appropriate and proportionate to the capacity of the council and the various partners.

9. Sustainability implications

9.1 The Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 will contribute towards the City Council's ambitions in response to the climate crisis. The actions have been charted in line with sustainable food and farming objectives in the City Downland Estate Plan and support the ambitions and aspirations of The Living Coast Biosphere. The food work offers the focus for collaboration to transition to net zero through work with e.g. working with the hospitality sector to develop circular food systems, with anchor institutions to increase procurement of local food and with local producers to shorten the supply chain and encourage regenerative practices.

10. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

10.1 There are potentially positive social value and procurement implications through systematic monitoring of the BHCC Good Food Buying Standards.

Public health implications:

10.2 The Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 is aligned with Brighton and Hove's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority action area is 'A whole city approach to food and wellbeing will be adopted, prioritising those with the poorest diets or least access to healthy food'. It is also aligned to public health's whole system healthy weight work. The refreshed actions contribute to council Outcome 3 (a healthy city where people thrive) i.e. help develop prevention and family support work; help people to be physically active and maintain a healthy weight; and helping the city be age and dementia friendly. A Health and Well Being Board report is being prepared.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 and be one of the partners involved in delivery and evaluation. The government requires action to improve food systems to succeed in two of its five missions: economic growth and a fit-for-future NHS. The Food Strategy Action Plan outlines how collectively as a city we can achieve a healthy, sustainable and fair food system for Brighton & Hove. It provides the

mechanisms and ways of working required to deliver action across partnerships and networks and to strengthen the city's food systems.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2025-30
2. Equalities Impact Assessment

2. Background documents

1. [Food Farming and Countryside Commission Food Conversation report 2024.](#)
2. [Fair society, healthy lives : the Marmot Review : strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010.](#)
3. [Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2018-23](#)
4. [Working together to inform a fair food system in Brighton. University of Sussex Broadcast: News Item](#)

