

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 19

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Food for Life Partnership standards
Date of Meeting: 24th September 2008
Report of: The Director of Strategy & Governance
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 This report follows a report '*Food for Life Partnership*' taken to the Sustainability Commission on 30th April 2008 where members resolved:

(1) That the council continues to explore the possibility of city schools signing up to the Food for Life Partnership standards with a view to at least one school working towards 'flagship' status when the window is open for East Sussex schools to enter in 2010.

(2) That a letter on behalf of the Commission be sent to the Cabinet Member responsible for the Children & Young People's Trust (CYPT) recommending that the council work with Food for Life Partnership. (Sent 27th May 2008).

(3) That (1), above, is furthered to the Children's & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Members to note this report and determine whether further action is required by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYPOSC).

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This report briefly describes the Food for Life Partnership scheme then covers:

- developments since the Sustainability Commission meeting (3.7);
- discussion held at the Sustainability Commission meeting (3.12);
- Brighton & Hove context and current activity in schools (3.13); and
- school meals procurement (3.20).

Food for Life Partnership Scheme

Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) is a Lottery funded, five year programme (2007-11) in schools and with school caterers to give food culture a higher priority. It aims to transform school meals, reconnect young people with where food comes from and inspire families to grow and cook food. The intended outcomes are:

- increased uptake of school meals;
- increased food growing on school grounds;
- increased cooking in school settings; and
- increased links with farms.

Further information about the scheme is given in **Appendix 1** and can be found at the FFLP website www.foodforlife.org.uk.

The scheme encourages a holistic approach to issues around of food, health, environment, and sustainable production and consumption. It aims to motivate schools to focus on aspects of food to compliment existing schemes, such as the *Healthy Schools Programme*, *Eco Schools* and *Sustainable Schools*.

Food for Life Partnership is a voluntary scheme which any school can become involved in. There are a specific criteria set which can be achieved through the school, and another set to be met through the school meal caterers. The levels of attainment are *Bronze*, *Silver* and *Gold* standard. The *Flagship* scheme offers a limited number of schools a high level of support from the FFLP Partnership. These schools are supported to achieve *Gold standard*, become *Flagship* schools and promote best practice to other schools in their area. St Andrews CE Primary School in Hove has expressed an interest in becoming a *Flagship* school. At present the opportunity set by FFLP partnership for Brighton & Hove Schools to receive this support is 2010.

Strategically the scheme could support the delivery of targets around reducing childhood obesity and deliver on the regional economic and ecological footprint agendas, supporting the growth of the local food sector and reducing food miles and food waste. More personally, it could inspire children to be more engaged with the environment and their own health.

The scheme addresses the *City Food Strategy* aims to:

- support educational initiatives across all sectors of the community to raise awareness of the production of food and its role in supporting health, the economy and the environment, in a local and global context;
- introduce procurement policies within public institutions such as schools, hospitals, etc. which favour the use of regional and locally produced

healthy food, and which strive to support environmental sustainability, animal welfare and *fairtrade*;

- promote food production systems which conserve and enhance the environment;
- encourage the development of a vibrant local food economy, expand local food production and create opportunities for City residents to access locally produced food;
- reduce, re-use and recycle waste generated by the food system, e.g. reduce packaging, compost organic waste to improve soil fertility;

Developments since the commission meeting

Following the Sustainability Commission meeting and recommendations, the Bronze Standard will be included in the tender specification for the school meals contract from August 2009. This is likely to cost an additional 6p per plate which will be incorporated into the annual increase applied in September each year. It will also need to be built into the base budget for free meals. The contract is being let on a 2 year renewal basis to enable the contract to be re-written in response to any changes to school meals funding expected from government.

Achieving Silver Standard has been costed by the contractor to add approximately 13-14p per plate. As it is currently unclear how this could be met, silver standard has for now, not been included. However this can be revised when the contract is renewed after the 2 year contract elapses if funding enables higher FFLP Standards to be met.

The criteria for FFLP Standards met through the meals provision and contract is just one element of the overall standard, other criteria need to be met by schools with their own resources.

Work has begun to map the latest FFLP standards with those in Brighton & Hove's existing Healthy Eating Gold Status criteria. This will be consulted on with schools.

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership is about to re-advertise for its 'School Food Advisor' since the last advisor retired. The Partnership is exploring the possibility of including a remit to work on Food for Life Partnership agenda into this post. (The Advisor also contributes to Healthy Schools work in schools).

Discussion at the Commission meeting

The recommendations from the Sustainability Commission meeting reflect the overall enthusiasm for the scheme and a desire to continue exploring involvement in FFLP. The discussion can be read in the minutes from the meeting, and covered:

- Good practice already happening in schools through: food education; cookery classes; food technology; growing clubs; and significant work already undertaken through the Healthy Schools Programme (93% of schools in B&H have National Healthy School Status) and the *eco schools* scheme (70% of all schools are

participating and 28 have achieved bronze, silver or green flag status in this voluntary scheme)

- Concern over budget implications for the school meals contract for the silver and gold standards
- Possible effects (negative and positive) in the uptake of free school meals
- Opportunities for local farmers and transport issues around farm visits
- Potential to secure changes to specification of school meals contract when the contract is renewed
- Concern if the FFLP criteria are prescriptive and do not allow schools to consult with pupils and parents to decide their own priorities (e.g. whether or not to serve food on 'flight trays')
- Concern about 'scheme fatigue' in schools who have many targets to achieve across many agendas

Brighton & Hove context and current activity in schools

BHCC has an existing Local Public Service Agreement target for 95% of the city's schools to achieve National Healthy School Status (NHSS) by December 2008. LA schools are supported to achieve criteria and self-assess across the four themes of the Healthy Schools Programme: PSHE, physical activity, healthy eating and emotional health and well-being. Currently all the city's schools are engaged with the programme and 93% have NHSS, making the city among the top 5 programmes in England.

As part of their healthy schools activity, schools are expected to ensure that School Food Trust (SFT) standards are implemented with school meals and with other food and drink provided to pupils across the school day. BHCC has actively worked with Scolarest to ensure that all school meal menus now meet the SFT's nutritional standards. Schools have also been supported by the Food Partnership and by the Healthy Schools Team to provide healthy opportunities throughout the day and that there are opportunities for all children to learn about healthy food and drink. Nearly all the city's schools now summarise their approach in their own food policy.

In the light of existing work, many city schools are already meeting or could easily meet FFLP criteria at bronze level, e.g. those requiring schools to address curricular activity around food, food growing on school grounds, dining room environment, and connections with the community. **Appendix 1** shows how schools might currently fare if marked against the FFLP bronze and silver standards.

The results of the *Brighton and Hove School Food Audit* show good progress is being made in the city's schools on food issues through the Healthy Schools Programme.

Much progress is also being made in food growing and composting through the *Eco Schools* scheme and other activities. 70% of all city schools are registered with *Eco Schools* and 5 have been awarded *Green Flag* status. The Brighton & Hove Schools Biodiversity Officer (employed through Sussex

Wildlife Trust) has undertaken a programme of fruit tree planting in school grounds.

The criteria which relate to procurement issues with the school meals contract and the management of school meals will be more challenging and possibly beyond the control of schools themselves. However, schools have the option to specify their own requirements through the contract.

For the majority of schools, the school meals contract is managed by the city council and is currently awarded to Scolarest. Considerable work has been undertaken over many years to: improve the quality of school meals in relation to the percentage of fresh food; to achieve a reduction in processed food; and to meet the School Food Trust and National Nutritional standards for school meal provision.

School Meals Procurement

Nationally Scolarest have expressed an interest in supporting FFLP.

In the FFLP criteria applying to caterers, achieving higher levels (silver and gold standard) requires procurement of specific percentages of local and organic food. This is likely to have financial implications on the contract. The feasibility to source locally and organically to the FFLP standards would require further exploration.

If there is additional cost, this would need to be borne by the parents, the school or the council unless further funding is available from Government.

It would seem that across the UK those schools already achieving higher levels in the FFLP scheme are those which produce their own school meals outside a large local authority-run contract. This is different to the arrangements in Brighton & Hove. It is hoped that this scheme will encourage good practice elsewhere in relation to larger school meals contracts from which Brighton & Hove can learn.

Schools outside the local authority school meals contract would have to negotiate their own specification with the contractor.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation has been undertaken with:

- B&HCC Head of school admissions with responsibility for free school meals and managing the school meals team, Steve Healey
- B&HCC Healthy Schools Team Manager, Chris Owen
- B&HCC Environmental Education Officer, Kim Jackson
- Director, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, Vic Else
- FFLPP Regional Coordinator, Sara Osman

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 An estimate of the cost per meal under this scheme would show how that translates directly into the cost to the council through the free meals budget and the cost to paying customers. A realistic and objective estimation of the true costs of implementing silver and gold standard criteria would clarify the impact these standards would have on the school meals budget.
- 5.2 The value of the school meals contract is in the region of £2million and is paid for by paying customers and Council funded Free School Meals, subject to a minimum number of meals taken. The Free School Meals cost in the region of £1million per annum and are funded by an allocation within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Prices are currently £1.90 per meal for nursery, primary and special schools and £1.95 per meal for secondary schools. The contract is currently being renegotiated with a new two year contract period commencing September 2009.
- 5.3 In relation to the Free School Meals (and in addition to any price increase due to inflation and renegotiations), the estimated additional cost of achieving the Bronze Standard is £29,000. This is based on an average of 2500 free school meals per day over the 39 week school year at an estimated 6p per plate. This additional cost to the Council would need to be funded by an increased allocation from within the DSG. The estimated additional cost of achieving the Silver Standard is £68,000 (if silver standard increases costs by estimated 14p per plate).
- 5.4 In addition to the corporate school meals contract, several of the Authority's secondary schools have independent contracts for school meals and provide an estimated 1000 free meals per day. The Council has an obligation to fund all schools equitably therefore there would be an additional cost of approximately £12,000 for the Bronze Standard or £ 27,000 for the Silver Standard, resulting in an increased budget allocations to those schools as appropriate, which would need to come from within the DSG.
- 5.5 It is anticipated that for paying customers, the increase in costs would be borne by the parents/guardians. There is a possibility that if costs increased this could result in reduced uptake. Should number of meals taken fall below a given level, the Council would have to subsidise the contract. It is not possible to quantify the potential outcome at this stage.
- 5.6 It is understood that the FFLP Partnership is lobbying government to provide greater funding to make these standards more affordable.

Finance Officer consulted: Michelle Herrington 09/09/08

Legal Implications:

- 5.7 This report is before the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for noting and for a decision upon whether the Committee wish to take further action. The Committee has the following options:- 1) To recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee a Select committee style review of the issue; 2) To agree to undertake an Ad Hoc scrutiny review of the issues raised and report its recommendations to the Cabinet Member meeting when it comes for decision ; 3) To keep a watching brief on this issue and review any need for involvement once a decision is made at the Children and Young People's Cabinet Member Meeting.

Lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert 12/09/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Impacts on free school meals. Through the FFLP scheme, there could be improvements in access for all to healthy nutritious, locally procured food.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Food for Life Partnership standards focus on sustainability around the food system in relation to environment (organic methods of production, reduced food miles, local sourcing, reduced food waste). See paragraphs 3.5-3.6.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None identified. The Food for Life Partnership standards encourage engagement between schools, the local community and the environment.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Key financial risks are outlined in the financial implications.
- 5.7 Opportunities include reducing negative environmental impacts from the food system through reducing food transportation emissions by sourcing locally, and reducing food waste through composting. Also opportunities to increase health through outdoor classroom events at school, increasing understanding of food system and connection with food growing and the environment.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Engagement with the scheme can encourage corporate objectives to protect the environment while growing the economy. (Local food procurement can improve regional economic growth). Strategically the scheme could support the delivery of targets around reducing childhood obesity and deliver on the regional economic and ecological footprint agendas, supporting the growth of the local food sector and reducing food miles.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Food for Life Partnership Partnership: further information, criteria and likelihood of Brighton & Hove Schools meeting the criteria.

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

1. *Food for Life Partnership Partnership Report* Sustainability Commission item 54, appendices and minutes 30th April 2008 <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1107343&view=agenda&date=30%2DAPR%2D2008%2017%3A00&committee=Sustainability%20Commission>
2. *Spade to Spoon: Making the Connections. A Food Strategy and Action Plan for Brighton & Hove* <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1115481>
3. *Brighton and Hove School Food Audit* <http://education.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1148166>