

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Executive**

**6 June 2022**

## **Oxfordshire Food Strategy**

### **Report of Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing Services**

This report is public

#### **Purpose of report**

To inform Members of the new Oxfordshire Food strategy and outline how Cherwell District Council will join with partners in its adoption and delivery.

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To endorse and commit to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy at Appendix 1.

#### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 An Oxfordshire wide food strategy has been developed by Good Food Oxfordshire in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, City and District councils and representatives from Oxfordshire community sector groups. The strategy supports a broad range of Council priorities and strategies including wellbeing and access to healthy food, Recovery and Renewal, access to green space, addressing food poverty and tackling inequalities.
- 2.2 The strategy was commissioned during the height of the Covid pandemic as it quickly became apparent that food security and access to food became challenging. Local food banks saw a 3-4-fold increase, with a conservative estimate suggesting that around 6,000 people a week required support to access food.
- 2.3 Whilst the district community food networks have risen to this challenge, the ongoing cost of living increase 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.
- 2.4 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.

## **3.0 Report Details**

### **Developing the strategy**

- 3.1 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 1) 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.
- 3.2 Public and stakeholder engagement led by Good Food Oxfordshire in developing the strategy initially took place during August – October 2021. This included consulting with relevant Councillors/officers and across Oxfordshire with County, District and City representation, farmers markets and producers and members of the public attending food related events. A detailed timeline of engagement events will be published on the Good Food Oxfordshire website.
- 3.3 As Cherwell District Council we will be one of the partner authorities looking to commit to the strategy working toward approving the strategy in the same democratic round as the other local authorities in the partnership.
- 3.4 To support the ambitions of the strategy, action plans will be developed in partnership in the summer of 2022 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. Cherwell's action plan and how monies received would be spent will be prepared for approval in autumn 2022.
- 3.5 The action plan will link into a number of Cherwell's priorities, including:
  - Support and encourage active lifestyles and health and wellbeing.
  - Work with partners to address the causes of health inequality and deprivation.
  - Work towards our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.
  - Promote the green economy.
  - Support waste reduction, re-use and recycling.
  - Work with partners to support skills development and innovation.
  - Support our most vulnerable residents.
- 3.6 The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been created in partnership because it is recognised that in order to address the challenges of food poverty, food supply, climate change and public health tipping points we need a whole system approach.
- 3.7 The strategy presents a vision which seeks to ensure that 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.

### **Action Plan Development**

- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 As part of the strategy, an action plan is in development with responsibilities for all local councils 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.
- 3.10 Whilst several actions will be completed as 'business as usual', there is a need to ensure that we can collectively deliver on our ambitions to address issues around cost of living and food poverty for all our residents across Cherwell. To facilitate this, the County Council will be proposing to allocate funding to all districts and city partners and to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to support delivery of our joint commitments and Cherwell's priorities.

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Understand the benefits of an Oxfordshire food strategy, identify strategic priorities and build on what's already being done.
- 4.2 It is proposed that £65k of funding would be allocated from Oxfordshire County Council to 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 Cherwell district.

## 5.0 Consultation

Consultation completed August – October 2021 to develop the draft strategy as detailed in paragraph 3.2

## 6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to endorse and commit to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy and continue only to be a member of the Cherwell Food Network. This however would go against the Cherwell Food Networks ambition to expand its work and impact in the district, becoming more joined up in the bigger picture of food and allowing it to grow alongside a Food Strategy for Oxfordshire. Improving food options for many residents and joining up actions with other partners to strengthen the system through reducing food waste, growing projects, and community action.

## 7.0 Implications

### Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 Resources are imbedded in current plans and programmes, existing staff team will make the best use of County Council resources.

Comments checked by:

Kelly Wheeler - Finance Business Partner

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### Legal Implications

- 7.2 No formal legal agreement will be in place to endorse and commit to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail - Interim Monitoring Officer, [Shahin.Ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Shahin.Ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### Risk Implications

- 7.3 Not successfully delivering the developed action plan and ambition for Cherwell which has £65k funding attached. This could have a reputational risk if the Oxfordshire Food Strategy is not delivered.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling - Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus

01295 221556 [Celia.Prado-Teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.Prado-Teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **Equalities and Inclusion Implications**

- 7.4 The Oxfordshire strategy will be fully accessible and support all residents in Cherwell. An Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment is not required to be completed at this stage.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado–Teeling - Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus

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## **Sustainability Implications**

- 7.5 The Food Strategy will advance the council’s climate and sustainability commitments. The strategy will prioritise an action to embed healthy, sustainable local food principles and targets within institutional catering, link food to net zero targets, and promote accreditation schemes such as Food for Life, Fairtrade and Sustainable Restaurant Association.

Comments checked by:

Sandra Fisher-Martins - Programme Manager, Climate Action

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## **8.0 Decision Information**

### **Key Decision:**

**Financial Threshold Met: No**

**Community Impact Threshold Met: No**

### **Wards Affected**

All

### **Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

As outlined in paragraph 3.5

### **Lead Councillor**

N/A

## **Document Information**

### **Appendix number and title**

- Appendix 1 Draft Oxfordshire Food Strategy

### **Background papers**

None

**Reference documents**

National obesity prevention strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>

**Report Author and contact details**

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