

DECISION-MAKER:	Health and Wellbeing Board
SUBJECT:	Improving the local food environment
DATE OF DECISION:	21 September 2022
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH, ADULTS AND LEISURE

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
Executive Director	Title	Director of Commissioning, Integrated Health and Care	
	Name:	Terry Clark	Tel:
	E-mail	Terry.Clark@nhs.net	
Author:	Title	Senior Public Health Practitioner	
	Name:	Ravita Taheem	Tel: 07825 609377
	E-mail	Ravita.Taheem@southampton.gov.uk	

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None

BRIEF SUMMARY

Local authorities are well placed to shape the local food environment for residents. In Southampton, priorities in recent years have focussed on food poverty and holiday hunger, however the Scrutiny Inquiry into childhood obesity in 2020 highlighted the broader issue of the local food environment and approaches being pioneered by other UK cities to enable residents to make healthy food choices easier. The food environment also came into national focus recently with the publication of the Government Food Strategy which prioritised health, sustainability, and a secure food supply. This briefing provides a short summary of the national context and local work, a detailed paper will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in the Autumn.

The aims of this summary paper are:

- To raise awareness of the projects currently being undertaken to influence the local food environment
- To initiate discussions and inform local priorities and highlight where cross-department working could strengthen programmes to support a healthier food environment

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	To consider the range of projects currently being undertaken to improve the local food environment and identify opportunities for joint working across the Council to support a healthier food environment
	(ii)	To consider participation in a whole systems approach workshop for leaders to identify strategic opportunities for intervention on obesity prevention
	(iii)	Consider how cross council buy-in could be achieved for a policy to limit advertising of HFSS

	(iv)	To consider the benefit of a Local Food partnership (via the Sustainable Food Places award) to underpin local work to improve the food environment
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS		
1.		To raise awareness of work to improve the local food environment and initiate discussions to inform future priorities, in support of achieving the recommendations of the Scrutiny Inquiry into tackling childhood obesity.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED		
2.		N/A
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)		
3.		<p>National context</p> <p>Government Food Strategy</p> <p>Attention to the food environment came to the fore recently with the publication of the Government Food Strategy in June 2022. The strategy covered a range of factors including food supply, sustainability, as well as health. Most notably, the strategy included plans to consult on an ambition for 50% of public sector spend to go on locally produced food or food certified to higher standards; a requirement for school leaders and governors to publish a “school food vision”; and plans to gather insights from areas that have a Local Food Partnership (a number of UK cities have these as part of the Sustainable Food Places award). Many of the recommendations were deferred to consultation or to the forthcoming Health Disparities White Paper.</p> <p>The Food (Promotion and Placement) Regulations 2021</p> <p>New legislation the Food (Promotion and Placement) Regulations 2021 are due to come into force on 1st October 2022 in England and Wales. This regulation will impact retailers, including franchises, with more than 50 employees and relevant floor space of more than 185.8m² (although the delayed promotion element of the regulations is not reliant on premises size) and aim to restrict the promotion and placement of food and drink identified as high in fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS). This is part of national policy to promote healthy weight and improve population health, and it will enable supermarkets and other retailers to alter retail environments so that healthy choices are the easy choices for consumers. As highlighted in a previous briefing (taken to both Cllr Fielker’s and Cllr Renyard’s CMB), at present due to financial pressures on the Council, proactive local enforcement of this legislation will not be possible. The Council will be responding reactively to complaints/concerns reported and will take steps to advise and enforce where required. Preliminary checks when visiting premises for other purposes are also being considered.</p>
4.		<p>Local programmes</p> <p>Sign-up to the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight</p> <p>The Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight sets out a series of ambitions for the Council to create a healthy weight environment. The Council signed up to this declaration with cross-party support in March 2022.</p>

Whole systems approach

The local application of the recommended whole systems approach to obesity and childhood obesity is underway. Ten workshops have been undertaken with a range of officers, external teams and members of the community. An initial analysis revealed that societal changes such as an increase in working families is restricting time to prepare healthy meals and the concurrent rise in convenience food has resulted in the replacement of nutritious consumption with that of a processed, less nutritious, diet. At the same time healthy food is less affordable and requires skill and equipment to prepare, whereas less healthy food tends to last longer and is easier to prepare.

Additional themes included the knowledge, skills, and motivation to cook and consume healthy food; access and prevalence of fresh vs convenience food retail outlets; and communication and promotion of healthy food choices particularly directly to younger audiences. However, it was recognised that, albeit well-intentioned, interventions solely targeting individuals to increase knowledge and skills would not have the necessary system-wide influence required to alter trends in childhood obesity.

Data revealed that a focus should be placed upon actions that will influence the entire city and initiate commitments or ownership across sectors to drive forward a change in the food environment. For example, a city-level approach to a food strategy or committing to nationally recognised programme such as the Sustainable Food Places Award could define high-level goals for council leaders, corporate partners, social enterprises, and community networks to strive towards.

Furthermore, a strategy which can identify gaps in the data such as the distance from an individuals' residence to a fresh food retail environment could be valuable for how local authority environmental planning can support areas and positively influence the behaviours of local residents.

Plans for a WSA workshop with Council leaders are supported by Cllr Fielker, in order to explore the strategic opportunities for intervention.

Local programmes and interventions

In addition to the nationally funded HAF (Holiday Activities Fund) programme for pupils eligible for free school meals, funding has been provided to:

- Increase the number local cook and eat programmes for young families.
- Engage more settings with the local Healthy Early Years Award and Healthy High-5 programme for schools.
- Run a local network (leadership provided by City Catering and Abri) to develop skills and capacity among local providers of cook and eat programmes.
- Roll out the Early LifeLab programme to all primary schools in the city. This programme makes the science behind the need for healthy diet, physical activity and sleep accessible to children, helping them to

discover why this matters for themselves, and supports children and their families in making healthy choices.

Strengthening guidance on advertising of HFSS

The Communications team at the Council will be building on the Council's existing advertising policy to strengthen guidance to reduce the advertising of HFSS food and drink. An initial discussion has taken place with Sustain, an organisation working to improve the food system and who have supported several councils to implement these policies. Sustain indicated that where policy implementation has been successful, securing cross-council agreement was crucial at the start to avoid unnecessary delays.

Local mapping

A rapid mapping exercise was undertaken by the Council's Intelligence team using existing data to inform priorities for the local food agenda. This looked at hot food takeaways in the city within a 400m of schools. Across the whole city 72.4% of schools are within 400 metres of a fast-food outlet. Schools around the city centre and more deprived wards are generally in closer proximity to fast-food outlets. However, most fast-food outlets in close proximity to secondary schools are closed around 3/4pm, except for around St. Anne's (Bevois/centre) and coffee shops/outlets within larger retailers across the whole city. The mapping also looked at accessibility to supermarkets across the city and showed that there are longer travel distances to the largest supermarkets (2800m²) in East of the city. This may be problematic as larger supermarkets are likely to have a greater selection of affordable, healthy food.

Healthy Start Scheme

The University of Southampton were recently awarded funding by the National Institute of Health and Care Research to evaluate the Healthy Start (HS) scheme. Healthy Start is a national scheme for pregnant women and families who are in receipt of certain benefits, it provides free maternal and child vitamins and vouchers for money off fruit, vegetables, milk, and infant formula. The Public Health team is collaborating with the University on this project. The research aims to understand:

- why some families who can claim for HS vouchers use them and others don't, and how this decision affects the foods they buy and eat
- what impact changes to the HS system have had on families (like raising the voucher amount from £3.10/week to £4.25 and registering online)
- what impact vouchers can have on children's development
- how health and social care professionals, community workers, charities, and food stores support families to use HS vouchers and eat healthily
- what people think can be done to make the voucher system better

5.

Future direction

The Sustainable Food Places award provides a helpful structure which has been used by many UK cities to create a local food network and a local food strategy. The award has the following six domains and may be an option for

	<p>the Council to take a holistic approach to improving the local food environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance 2. Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement 3. Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food 4. Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy 5. Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing sustainable food supply chains 6. Tackling the climate emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste
6.	<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the range of projects currently being undertaken to improve the local food environment and identify opportunities for joint working across the Council to support a healthier food environment • To consider participation in a whole systems approach workshop for leaders to identify strategic opportunities for intervention on childhood obesity • Consider how cross council buy-in could be achieved for a Council policy to limit advertising of HFSS • To consider the benefit of a Local Food partnership/network (via the Sustainable Food Places award) to underpin local work to improve the food environment
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
7.	No additional funding is being requested.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
8.	N/A
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
9.	S111 Local Government Act 1972 and S1 Localism Act 2011
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
10.	N/A
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
11.	N/A
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
12.	The proposals contained within this report support the delivery of the Southampton City Council corporate plan 2021-2025 to improving health and learning for our children and adults across the city and reducing childhood obesity.

KEY DECISION?	No
----------------------	-----------

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
	None
Documents In Members' Rooms	
	None
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	No
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No
Other Background Documents	
Other Background documents available for inspection at:	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
	None