

DECISION-MAKER:	Health & Wellbeing Board
SUBJECT:	Partnership approach to healthy, sustainable food
DATE OF DECISION:	4 September 2024
REPORT OF:	Councillor Marie Finn, Cabinet Member for Adults & Health

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
N/a
BRIEF SUMMARY
<p>This paper explains the impact of food systems on a wide range of outcomes and recommends that the Health and Wellbeing Board support a city-wide partnership approach to improving Southampton’s food system.</p> <p>The term ‘food system’ refers to the inter-connections between how we produce, process, transport, buy, consume, and dispose of the food we eat and the way this affects us as individuals and communities¹.</p> <p>Food systems impact individual and population level health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. Therefore, local food systems should strive to make healthy and sustainable diets available, affordable and convenient for all. It is also likely that food systems will need to become more resilient to changes and shocks resulting from climate change and other risks. Studies exploring options for reducing environmental impacts suggest that an integrated² and coordinated systems approach is needed³ and the UK’s National Food Strategy suggests new legislation should put a duty on local authorities to ‘develop local food strategies, with reference to national targets and in partnership with the communities they serve’.</p> <p>Over 100 cities and places across the UK have recognised the risks and are using Sustainable Food Place resources⁴ to guide their journey to improve their local food system. In Southampton partners have begun to work together with the aspiration of forming a city-wide food partnership and on becoming a Sustainable Food Place.</p>

¹ [Food System Mapping.pdf \(sustainablefoodplaces.org\)](#)

² [Measuring sustainable environment-food system interactions \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³ [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#)

⁴ [What are Sustainable Food Places | Sustainable Food Places](#)

Documentation such as Brighton and Hove’s Food Strategy Action Plan⁵ demonstrate the outputs and added value a partnership approach can provide when adopted and sustained at a city-wide level over a number of years.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to endorse and support Southampton’s aspiration to successfully apply to become a Sustainable Food Place member through facilitating partners to co-develop a food vision and strategy for the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	Health and Wellbeing Board members support the development and growth of the city-wide food partnership, including a bid to become a Sustainable Food Place member.
	(ii)	Health and Wellbeing Board members provide system leadership by promoting food partnership efforts in their own respective organisations and encouraging active contribution to the food partnership.
	(iii)	The Health and Wellbeing Board provides a degree of governance and oversight by reviewing the progress of the city-wide food partnership in 12 months’ time.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	Sustainable Food Place resources ⁴ demonstrate the methodology and outcomes that numerous other areas have used to systematically and sustainably improve the health, social, economic and environmental impacts of their food systems; therefore, it is recommended Southampton utilise this tried and tested formula for positive strategic change.
2.	Health and Wellbeing Board members represent a diverse collection of partner organisations and hold positions of influence and responsibility. Therefore, members can use their positions to promote this food partnership approach.
3.	The Health and Wellbeing Board is held in high regard by partners across the city and can therefore provide some governance to the food partnership, such as through reviewing progress periodically.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4.	N/a
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

5.	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>Food environments are important for the economy. Local mapping has revealed that 1 in 3 businesses in Southampton are part of the food system, providing over 6,700 jobs and contributing up to £487.3 million to Southampton’s economy per year⁶.</p> <p>However, the food we buy and eat is not just shaped by personal choice, it depends on the options presented to us and how much they cost. Hence,</p>
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⁵ [Final-FULL-WEB-Food-Strategy-Action-Plan.pdf \(bhfood.org.uk\)](#)

⁶ [ld.php \(soton.ac.uk\)](#)

	<p>food environments influence health, food security and climate change. For example, in Southampton 26% of Year 6 childhood are obese, which is worse than the England average of 23% (2022/23) and other local areas, and is increasing⁷. In addition, 41% of Southampton residents surveyed reported experiencing food insecurity, 22% higher than national average⁸.</p> <p>Therefore, food is important for more than just economic prosperity, and designing and promoting a healthy and sustainable local food system is required to influence wider determinants of personal and planetary health.</p> <p>Improving the local food environment was recommended by the Board in September 2022 and by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel in April 2023. Evidence shows that improving the local food environment requires a systems approach, which can be facilitated through forming a food partnership.</p>
6.	<p><u>Climate change and food supply urgency</u></p> <p>National reports reveal the UK is highly dependent upon food produced overseas and dependence on climate-vulnerable food-producing countries poses a significant risk⁹.</p> <p>Shocks to the global food system, such as those experienced in recent years, can influence food availability and prices as well as the wider cost of living. Our vulnerability to this in Southampton is demonstrated by an increasing demand for food aid, with a survey of Food Aid Forum members revealing over 18,600 meals were served in a 2023 snapshot week, an increase of 7% on the previous year.</p> <p>However, changing food systems, production, distribution and consumption patterns does not happen overnight. Therefore, there is an imperative to intentionally and strategically steer our food system in a different direction and the National Food Strategy recommends development of local food strategies³.</p>
7.	<p><u>Appetite for partnership</u></p> <p>Many innovative and exciting things are already being championed and led by individual organisations or actors within Southampton. Numerous groups also already exist within Southampton to support specific aspects of the food system, for example the Food Aid Forum, Green Network, Climate Action Network etc. However, there is recognition that the no single organisation or group, whether public, private or third sector, holds the powers, remit, or insight to change the local food system alone.</p>

⁷ data.southampton.gov.uk/health/health-behaviours/healthy-weight/

⁸ [Cost of living survey \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://southampton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-survey/)

⁹ [HECC 2023 report. Chapter 9. Climate change and food supply \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144444/hecc-2023-report-chapter-9-climate-change-and-food-supply.pdf)

Increasing pressures in the food system, and an increasing recognition of the value in collaborating to reduce duplication, overlap and waste, has seen an increase in groups connecting. There is also a growing understanding of the importance of taking a whole systems approach to influence the causes of the causes of our greatest societal challenges, such as in childhood obesity.

Southampton convened its first 'food partnership' meeting on 20 June 2024, which was attended by a diverse range of 27 stakeholders. The group discussed the collective desire to co-design a vision, identify priorities and develop an action plan that has a city-wide impact, through the cumulative effects of efforts such as:

- Linking food banks with allotments and growers to help mitigate reduction in food donations.
- Linking academics to community groups to do research and evaluate grass roots and community-led projects.
- Submit collective funding applications to generate resource for efforts to influence food system outcomes.
- Develop procurement partnerships to capitalise on economies of scale.

Next steps

Southampton's formative food partnership is progressing in line with the Sustainable Food Place methodology (4) and has collated a list of local stakeholders and numerous case studies of the inspirational projects already going on across the city. It has also held a session to collaboratively develop a vision and map the actions and milestones that would enable this to be realised.

However, the food partnership as currently formed faces several challenges. Progress is being driven by existing actors working as a community of interest and is being temporarily coordinated through a Public Health Specialty Registrar funded by the NHS. The intention is that a sustainable partnership governance structure will be co-designed and that collaborative bids for funding will support the progress of this work, but a sustainable model is yet to be finalised.

Some food partnerships have become 'Incorporated organisations' such as community interest companies (like [Bristol Food Network](#)) or not-for-profit organisations (such as [Brighton and Hove Food Partnership](#)) whilst others have remained as membership organisations with no separate legal identity. The Southampton Food Partnership is exploring these various options to see what could work in our city. Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to support this coordinated city-wide effort, through their role as systems leaders and through promotion within their own organisations and at other forums. The Board is also asked to provide some degree of governance and oversight to the food partnership by reviewing progress in 12 months' time.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
	None – progress in this area is currently being driven by existing actors working as a community of interest. Although please note that the partnership is currently being coordinated by the local authority through a Public Health Specialty Registrar funded by the NHS until August 2025. The sustainability of the partnership without the registrar resource is a concern. It has been made clear that the Council will not be able to provide the resource beyond this point. However, it is the intention that a sustainable partnership governance structure will be co-designed and that collaborative bids for funding will support the progress of this work.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
	None
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
	The local authority has broad legal obligations to mitigate climate change and address inequalities which this partnership approach would positively deliver on.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
	None
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
	None
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
	None

KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
See footnotes on each page.	
Appendices	
1	Health and Wellbeing Board Food Partnership Presentation FINAL
Documents In Members' Rooms	
1.	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)	
1.	N/a	