
 Brent  North West London	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 30 October 2023
	Report from the Director of Public Health
	Lead Cabinet Member for Public Health & Adult Social Care Lead Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture
Towards a Food Strategy	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Good Food for London Joined Up Action
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is acting on its commitment from the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to create a new Food Strategy. This document provides an update on the progress, highlights emerging themes, and outlines the next steps.

2.0 Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to:

- 2.1 Note the communities' enthusiasm for a partnership approach to the development of a Food Strategy and to comment on the next steps detailed in section five, including how their organisations can contribute to the development of the Strategy.

- 2.2 Review and comment upon the areas of initial interest as put forward by participants at the Visioning Day.
- 2.3 Endorse continued participation in the production of the Good Food for Londoners annual survey.

3.0 Detail

Brent's Corporate Policy Team conducted desktop research which indicates that food strategies with strong community involvement tend to be the most successful. In line with this, Brent is adopting a community-focused approach. To better understand the food landscape of Brent and what the stakeholders would like to include in the strategy, the following activities have been organised:

- Food Outreach to understand the ongoing food-related projects within the borough, exploring any synergies and identifying potential gaps the new strategy might address.
- A Food Visioning event which has been organised to understand what the stakeholders would like to include in the Strategy.

This section outlines the outcomes of the initial activities that have been organised to understand Brent's food system. It also presents a summary of the London Food Strategy, highlighting elements that may align with Brent's local food strategy, introduces the London Food Board, and the 'Good Food for All Londoners' report.

3.1 The London Food Strategy

The Mayor's London Food Strategy aims to ensure that all Londoners have access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food irrespective of their background or circumstances. This strategy highlights the critical role food plays in enhancing health, wellbeing, community strength and environmental protection. The London Food Strategy is a collaborative effort, with the London Food Board and other partners working closely with the Mayor to develop and ensure the strategy can deliver a fairer food system.

The strategy is structured around six themes:

- Good Food at Home and Reducing Food Insecurity
- Good Food Economy, Shopping and Eating Out
- Good Food in Community Settings and Public Institutions
- Good Food for Pregnancy and Childhood
- Good Food Growing, Community Gardening and Urban Farming
- Good Food for the Environment

A notable action within this strategy is the banning of "junk food" (high fat, high sugar, high salt) advertising across the entire Transport for London (TfL)

network from 25 February 2019, marking a significant step towards tackling child obesity in London.

The initial outcomes of the local engagement activities which have been organised are showing enthusiasm for aligning elements of the broader London strategy within Brent's local food strategy. Specifically, there was a significant focus on themes such as food poverty, food growing, and food and environment.

3.2 The London Food Board

The Board consists of 13 individuals who advise the Mayor of London and the GLA on the food matters that affect Londoners; this includes:

- The delivery of the London Food Strategy
- Food issues across the capital and how to develop a better food system for all Londoners
- The London Food Programme

Brent's Director of Public Health serves as the representative for London Councils on the London Food Board.

3.3 Boroughs' Food Group

Brent actively participates in the Borough's Food Group. The Group acts as a forum through which the GLA and London Food Board are connected with representatives from every borough (ranging from public health and economic fairness teams to environmental health officers and infant feeding leads) as well as national bodies including PHE, VCS organisations such as Sustain and the Food Foundation, frontline campaigners and local food partnerships.

The Group uses meetings and newsletters to share best practice and disseminate as much intelligence about London's food system as possible.

3.4 'Good Food for All Londoners' annual report

The 'Good Food for All Londoners' report, a well-established annual publication with most London boroughs participating, serves as a comprehensive guide that maps out the state of food systems in London, covering various aspects such as sustainability, food poverty, and public health. It acts as a benchmark, offering key performance indicators and best practices that can be invaluable in measuring the success of a food strategy.

3.5 The provenance of the report lies with Sustain, an organisation dedicated to advocating better food and farming policies and practices. Sustain meticulously gathers data through a collaborative effort involving local authorities, community organisations, and various stakeholders within the food system. By providing actionable insights and data-driven recommendations, the report allows local authorities to identify gaps, track progress, and optimise their food-related initiatives for more impactful

outcomes. It is essentially a toolkit for anyone looking to make informed decisions in the realm of food policy. It is worth noting that the Programme Director at Sustain holds a position on the London Food Board, overseeing a broad portfolio of food projects.

3.6 The 'Good Food for All Londoners' report has been used to gain a clearer understanding of Brent's current food landscape.

3.7 Food Outreach

From 18 July to 25 August 2023, a 'Food Outreach' has been conducted to gain insight into the current landscape of food projects within Brent. Through their survey responses, 22 participants highlighted potential synergies and identified gaps which could be addressed in the new Food Strategy.

3.8 The Outreach has provided valuable insights into a diverse range of food-related projects underway in Brent, such as:

- Roe Green Village gardening club: focused on growing local food and providing advocacy. It is self-funded and has a community-centric approach, with meetings held at residents' homes and gardens. The project is ongoing, making it a staple for local residents.
- Cookery classes: A number of organisations and groups in the borough provide cookery classes which aim to teach individuals how to prepare delicious, nutritious meals. These classes often focus on specific cooking techniques, specialised cuisines, or dietary preferences. They promote healthy eating habits, encourage creativity in the kitchen, and provide individuals with the skills to enjoy cooking at home.
- Healthy eating classes: Similarly there are groups providing healthy eating classes which educate participants about balanced nutrition, portion control, and making informed food choices. These classes aim to improve overall health and well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles and helping individuals make better eating decisions.
- Sustainability workshops: Sustainability workshops are held by different organisations across Brent to educate individuals about sustainable practices and lifestyles. These workshops focus on areas such as waste reduction, energy conservation, water management, and eco-friendly habits. The purpose is to empower individuals to make environmentally conscious choices and contribute to a more sustainable future.
- Walk Talk Fork: an eight-week programme aimed at anyone interested in adopting a healthier lifestyle, the project combines physical activities like yoga and walking with nutritional education and hands-on cooking sessions.

These projects illustrate the enthusiasm and range of community based and delivered action on food already in place across Brent

3.9 The survey also posed the question: 'Is there anything specific you think the Food Strategy should include?'. From the analysis of the responses, five key themes emerged:

- Food Growing
- Food and Environment
- Food and Health
- Food Poverty
- Food and Employment

3.10 Food Visioning Workshop

Prior to the workshop, facilitators gave organisations and individuals working on food-related projects in Brent an opportunity to showcase their products. In total, seven project leads requested a stall at the Food Marketplace. The workshop commenced with a welcoming activity aimed at initiating personal discussions. Participants then engaged in a sticker activity to reflect on Brent's food scene. This was followed by a 'Card Call' where attendees wrote down ideas on 'post-it' notes, categorising them into predefined themes or an 'Other' category. Participants used stickers to indicate their priority focus areas. After a break, attendees discussed these topics in detail, covering what could be done, potential barriers, and realistic recommendations.

3.11 Attendance

44 people, including individuals and representatives from various organisations, signed up for the event. However, actual attendance was higher; Brent Council engaged with at least 55 people in total. To highlight the spirit of collaboration, the event was opened by Councillor Donnelly-Jackson and closed by the CEO of CVS Brent, Kristine Wellington. Brent Council hosted not only representatives from major organisations working on food-related projects in Brent – such as Sufra, the Felix Project, and Citizen Advice Brent – but also council officers from multiple departments and residents passionate about food.

3.12 Workshop Outcomes

The workshop saw a high level of engagement, with 'Food Poverty' and 'Food Growing' emerging as the most popular predefined themes, followed by 'Food and Environment'. A newly created category, 'How do we take things forward?', attracted the most participation.

During the Workshop attendees were asked to:

- Envision improvements for each category under 'We Could'
- Identify potential barriers under 'But'

- And finally, come up with at least one concrete recommendation.

The key outcomes of this activity are outlined in the table below:

Theme	Suggestions	Barriers	Recommendations
Food and Environment	Focus on education, sustainability, and community engagement, with suggestions like waste reduction and promoting vegan diets.	Barriers involve funding, collaboration, and cultural preferences.	Align food strategy with national policies and create educational programs.
Food Poverty	Address affordability, promote food growing, and provide educational resources.	Main barriers are funding, awareness, and digital exclusion	Provide free school meals and improve partnerships between providers and the council.
Food Growing	Utilising long term unused green spaces which could be managed by local communities and introducing educational programmes for growing food at home.	Barriers involve funding and potential difficulties with finding appropriate spaces.	The main recommendation involves conversations with appropriate stakeholders.
How Do We Take Things Forward?	Include community feedback, integrate climate strategies, and measure progress.	Barriers include diverse community needs and limited resources.	Ensure access to quality food and develop educational programmes for schools.
Food and Education	Focus on teaching food origins and integrating food growing into school programmes.	Barriers include time pressures and lack of funding.	No clear recommendations were provided.

4.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

The new Food Strategy could align with the Borough Plan in multiple ways across its various strategic priorities and desired outcomes. The points below outline potential synergies which might be included in the strategy.

4.1 Strategic Priority 1: Prosperity and Stability in Brent

- **Easing the Cost of Living Crisis**
The recent workshop has shown that many stakeholders are keen to include tackling food poverty element in the strategy. The strategy could aim to ease food poverty by providing affordable, nutritious options.
- **Safe Secure and Decent Housing**
'Food Growing' was also a very popular theme at the workshop and the Food Outreach. Initiatives to incorporate food-growing spaces in new housing projects could be considered.
- **Brent for Business**
The strategy could encourage local food businesses to adopt sustainable practices and hiring local residents which would also contribute to the local economy.

4.2 Strategic Priority 2: A Cleaner, Greener Future

- **A Cleaner Borough**
The strategy could address waste management in the food industry, promoting recycling and composting.
- **A Climate-friendly, Sustainable Borough**
The strategy could encourage to adopt sustainable practices like local sourcing, organic farming and focus on healthy food options.

4.3 Strategic Priority 3: Thriving Communities

- **Enabling our Communities**
Using food as a tool for community engagement. For example, community gardens or cooking classes some of which are already up and running in Brent.
- **A Safer Borough**
The strategy could address ensuring that food services and outreach programs are accessible and safe, particularly in the context of public health and hygiene.

4.4 Strategic Priority 4: The Best Start In Life

- **Raised Aspirations, Achievement and Attainment**
Food Education was one of the most popular themes at the recent workshop. The strategy could aim to integrate nutrition and food education in schools, aiming to foster a new generation that is conscious about their food choices. The strategy could also encourage residents to use Healthy Start vouchers.

4.5 Strategic Priority 5: A Healthier Brent

- **Tackling Health Inequalities**
The strategy could address unequal access to nutritious food by certain communities, such as asylum seekers, and aim to achieve equality.
- **Localised Services for Local Needs**
The strategy could include localised food programs that cater to the specific dietary and cultural needs of various communities in Brent.

5.0 Next steps

While the workshop was open to all, a significant number of the attendees came from the voluntary sector and those working with food banks, on the cost of living or food aid, which likely influenced 'Food Poverty' emerging as a popular theme. To ensure a more diverse range of perspectives, several activities have been planned, all of which are outlined below.

- 5.1 In order to identify emerging themes related to food, there are plans to explore the key data sets which informed the recent Borough Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Specifically, the Resident Attitudes Survey, completed by over 1,000 individuals will be analysed, as well as the latest insights from Borough Plan Engagement activities and Health and Wellbeing Strategy consultation data.
- 5.2 To ensure feedback from the elected members is captured, there are plans to host a Virtual Visioning Workshop specifically designed for them. It is proposed for the workshop to take place in November.
- 5.3 To capture feedback from food-related businesses in the borough, there will be a discussion with the Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise to determine the most effective engagement approach.
- 5.4 Officers from CYP will be consulted to determine the most effective way to engage with schools and young people.
- 5.5 Upon completion of the data analysis, a task group will be convened. The group's membership will be determined based on the content and objectives outlined in the scope.

6.0 Financial Considerations

- 6.1 None at this stage.

7.0 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 There are no direct legal considerations arising from the contents of the report.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 8.3 There are no obvious negative equality implications as this paper proposes a community focussed approach for the Food Strategy, running events and reaching out to a number of different community groups and stakeholders to ensure that a variety of voices and perspectives across the Borough are taken into consideration.
- 8.4 From an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective, it is likely to have a positive impact as Brent is taking such a wide-reaching approach to the creation of the Food Strategy. This not only complies with the statutory duty but also highlights the Council's commitment to the tenets of the PSED through advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relationships.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 The council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and pledged to do all in our gift to achieve a carbon neutral borough in Brent by 2030. The first theme of the council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (2021-2030) is Consumption, Resources and Waste, which was the number one theme of the Brent Climate Assembly. The objective of this theme states: *“By 2030, our communities will be living more sustainably: consuming less of the products and materials that accelerate climate change, whilst also wasting less of the world's natural resources. This behaviour shift will have helped to cut Brent's consumption emissions by two-thirds and drive a substantive reduction of household waste produced within the borough.”* Emissions from food form an element of Brent's consumption emissions footprint, and therefore the emerging theme of ‘Food and the Environment’ within a new Food Strategy should be well placed to align with this goal.
- 9.2 To date, the council's climate emergency team have run or supported a number of initiatives regarding food and its impact on the environment. Ranging from an educational webinar we organised called ‘Food and its impact!'; supporting local community initiatives relating to food via funding from the Together Towards Zero small grants scheme; forging good

relationships with existing community growing schemes in the borough; and considering new opportunities for community gardens as part of the Green Neighbourhood action plans.

- 9.3 The council is also linked into the seven key pan-London climate change initiatives, of which one programme focuses on 'One World Living' led by the London Borough of Harrow. One of the workstreams of this work focus on reducing emissions in London that can be caused by food habits and impacts on waste streams.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

None at this stage.

11.0 Communication Considerations

None at this stage.

Report sign-off:

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