

29 February 2024

Oxfordshire Food Strategy - Update

Purpose / Recommendation

1. **The Health Improvement Board is asked to consider the progress made in relation to the development and implementation of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy**

Background

2. The Health Improvement Board last received an update on the development of the [Oxfordshire Food Strategy](#) in February 2022. At this stage in the development of the strategy, it was still in draft format and the Board were invited to provide feedback on the strategy.
3. The Strategy was developed over 2020-21 through a partnership between Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO), county and district councils. GFO is a representative organisation of over 150 members that includes community larders, academics, food and farming enterprises.
4. The development of the strategy and subsequent action plans has been overseen by the county-wide Good Food Oxfordshire Steering Group which has representatives from the county council (Public Health, Policy and Strategy), district/city councils, GFO, voluntary and community sector organisations, food producers and educational institutions.
5. This paper provides an update on the adoption of the strategy and progress made against the ambitions within the strategy.

Key Issues

6. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been developed in two parts, taking a similar approach to the [National Food Strategy](#) published in 2021. Part 1 of the Strategy set out the need for change, ambitions and showcasing examples of good practice.
7. Since the Board last received an update, the Strategy has been formally adopted and endorsed by the county council and each of the district and city councils. The overarching vision in the food strategy is to build a healthy, fair and sustainable food system for Oxfordshire. The ambitions that underpin the strategy are:
 - a. Food Justice – healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food is affordable and accessible for everyone
 - b. Food for the planet – we waste less food and the food that we do produce, consume and waste has less negative impact on the planet

- c. Sustainable food economy – local food businesses flourish with more production, more outlets, more employment, and better standards for workers
 - d. Good Food Movement – more people can engage with and enjoy healthy, sustainable food through events, education, and campaigns that build connections, knowledge, and skills
 - e. Sustainable supply chains – more locally produced sustainable food is bought and consumed locally, and supply chains are more resilient
 - f. Governance and strategy – fair, healthy and sustainable food is integrated into strategies, policies, and plans of stakeholder organisations. Progress towards ambitions is monitored and evaluated.
8. The past year has been focusing on Part 2 of the strategy: the development of district level action plans. The strategy recognised that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach would not recognise the unique challenges and characteristics across the county. Instead, the plans have been developed by Food Action Working Groups within each district area.
9. Alongside this, the county council has developed an annual action plan covering the work that supports the ambitions set out in the strategy and will be providing seed funding to each district to assist with implementing their plans. The action plan covers actions to reduce food waste, support to Community Action Groups who run growing and eating campaigns and initiatives supported through Public Health which are outlined below.
10. This paper does not go into the detail of the action plans but recognises that individual councils are due agree their action plans via their Cabinet or Executive over the next few months.
11. Additional achievements that may be of interest to the Board are highlighted below and showcase the importance of working in partnership to create a vibrant and healthy food movement in Oxfordshire.

Sustainable Food Places Silver Award:

12. In November 2023, Oxfordshire was awarded a prestigious Sustainable Food Places Silver award. This Sustainable Food Places Award is a national, evidence-based recognition and celebration of places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to sustainable and healthy food. Awardees have demonstrated activity and impact across the food system by the local food partnership, and their stakeholders, to create a local ‘Good Food Movement’. This is a recognition of the excellent work of the food partnership and of stakeholders across the local area.
13. The creation of the food strategy, along with actions arising from it contributed to the silver award. Highlights of note from Oxfordshire’s Silver Award application included:
- Strong work around procurement, dignity and food access, mapping of food production and food waste.

- Integration of the food strategy and the work of the partnership into local priorities and strategies shows vision.
 - Great example of the transition from city to county scale and representation and participation through District Food Action Working Groups.
14. The next step will be to progress towards a Gold award in 2025. This award will require evidence that the partnership and the Sustainable Food Places programme is embedded and will be sustainable over the longer term. This will include:
- Strength/traction of the local food strategy and partnership and the degree to which they include key representatives and are recognised by key institutions and the wider food movement
 - Longevity of the partnership and Sustainable Food Places programme to date
 - That there is a culture of food activism and related food movement has developed across the county

Talking About Sustainable Eating Toolkit:

15. Following the adoption of the strategy, a communications toolkit was developed to help with having positive conversations about sustainable, healthy eating by focusing on health, environment and cost.
16. The toolkit includes case studies to reframe the conversation about sustainable and healthy food, demonstrating why change is important and myth-busting some commonly held views about sustainable eating.
17. Full information can be found here: [Talking About Sustainable Eating: A Communication Guide | Good Food Oxfordshire](#)

Priority Places Food Index:

18. The Consumer Data Research Centre, based at the University of Leeds, has developed a Priority Places Food Index which uses data to identify neighbourhoods that are most vulnerable to increases in the cost of living and which are likely to be food insecure.
19. A six-month project is underway between Public Health, Good Food Oxfordshire and the Priority Places Food Index team to enhance the mapping of food insecurity across Oxfordshire which can be used to inform targeted interventions in the areas most likely to experience food insecurity. It also incorporates health metrics so that the index can include the health impacts of food insecurity. An updated version of the index, featuring this joint working, was released in January 2024: [Priority Places for Food Index - Version 2 Released - Consumer Data Research Centre \(cdrc.ac.uk\)](#)

Budgetary implications

20. There are no direct budgetary implications arising from this report. Grant funding from the county council to the city and district councils has previously been agreed to support the delivery of actions associated with the strategy.

Equalities implications

21. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has specific ambitions to promote a healthy and sustainable food system for everyone in Oxfordshire, including those working within the food sector and celebrating different cultural events through food.

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