

## **Divisions Affected - All**

**CABINET**  
**24 May 2022**

### **Oxfordshire Food Strategy – Part One**

#### **Report by Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
  - a) **Endorse the Oxfordshire Food Strategy – Part One attached at annexe 1 including the principles and overarching framework**
  - b) **Agree that £250,000 grant funding be awarded to District and City council partners to support the delivery of the strategy as set out in paragraph 22 of the report**
  - c) **Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development to agree the terms of reference for the grant funding in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Equalities**
  - d) **Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development to make minor design and typographical changes to the document pending adoption by District and City partners**

#### **Executive Summary**

2. An Oxfordshire wide food strategy has been developed in partnership with the district and city councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The strategy supports a broad range of Council priorities and strategies in particular healthy weight strategies, addressing food poverty and tackling inequalities and the Council's Climate Action Framework.
3. The strategy has been developed as a partnership between Good Food Oxfordshire, the County Council and District and City Councils. The partnership have adopted a similar approach to the government's National Food Strategy and have split the developed into two sections. Part One, attached at annexe 1, sets out the reasons for developing a strategy, principles and overarching

framework to be adopted. Part Two will see the development of action plans to meet the ambitions of the strategy which will be developed through further engagement over the next six months which will be brought to Cabinet in the autumn.

4. In order to support the development of tangible actions, it is proposed that the sum of £250,000 is allocated District and City councils in order to award grants that support the delivery of the strategy. This funding will come from the Budget Priorities reserve allocation process to support the cost-of-living impact, as this work will support individuals and families to access food and will support activities to provide longer term stability to food accessibility.

### **Developing the strategy:**

5. 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 some examples of excellence that can be learnt from and built upon.
6. Public and stakeholder engagement in developing the strategy initially took place during August – October 2021. This included consulting with relevant Councillors/officers at all Oxfordshire local authorities, farmers markets and producers and members of the public attending food related events.
7. To support the ambitions of the strategy, an action plan will be developed by the partnership which will have individual actions for the County Council and for district and city council partners.
8. This strategy spans the breadth of portfolio areas with an underlying priority to address inequality and improving the health of our residents, and this work has been represented by the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Public Health.

### **Partnership ambitions:**

9. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been created in partnership because we recognise 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.
10. 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.

### **Links to the County Council's Plant Based Food Motion**

- 11. In March 2022, Cabinet resolved to develop an Oxfordshire County Council food policy to support the delivery of sustainable food provision and its disposal within the Council. Whilst there are clear links between this policy it is a distinct piece of work from the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.
- 12. In developing the action plan for Part 2, officers will ensure that both pieces of work are complementary and do not result in overlap or duplication.

### **Grant Funding**

- 13. 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.
- 14. As part of the strategy, an action plan is in development 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.
- 15. Whilst a number of actions will be completed as 'business as usual', we want 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 Oxfordshire. To enable an equitable approach in our collective response, we propose to allocate funding to all of our districts and city partners and to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to support delivery of our joint commitments.

16. We propose to provide £250,000 of funding to the districts and city councils 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 district area. It is proposed that funding is allocated through the Budget Priorities reserve allocation process to support the cost-of-living impact, as this work will support individuals and families to access food and will support activities to provide longer term stability to food accessibility. We recommend that this funding is not used towards employment of personnel resource, as this would provide a short-term solution to a long-term commitment.
17. To determine the allocation per District/City Council, we propose using a previously established Department for Work and Pensions formula, which is based on population weighted by deprivation as measured by the index of multiple deprivation index. This will result in allocation of funding as follows:

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Cherwell District Council	26%	£65,000
Oxford City Council	28%	£70,000
South Oxfordshire District Council	17%	£42,500
Vale of White Horse District Council	16%	£40,000
West Oxfordshire District Council	13%	£32,500
		<b>Total = £250,000</b>

18. Examples of actions the funding can be used towards include:
- Communications including signposting for residents to access existing schemes, raising awareness on available options and providing advice and guidance
  - Supporting infrastructure, guidance and access to funding for Community Food Services including distribution networks, foodbanks, larders and fridges.
  - Exploration of providing access to vacant and shared spaces and resources to enable communities to come together to grow, cook, eat and share food together
19. A Terms of Reference for the grant will be produced to ensure that there is a governance process and audit trail in place for the funding.
20. As the action plan is developed which will be brought for Scrutiny consideration and Cabinet approval in the autumn. By providing confirmation

of available funding ahead of this process, this allows us as a partnership to be more considered and ambitious in the action setting process.

## Next Steps

21. A timeline for the Council's decision is adopting the strategy and its action plan is set out below:

Date	Action
24 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	Part 1 proposal to Cabinet for adoption
June – July	Part 1 proposal to City/Districts for adoption
May – August	Development of action plan
September (date tbc)	Action plan to Scrutiny for comment and recommendations
October 2022 (date tbc)	Part 2 proposal to Cabinet for adoption

22. Due to the local elections, district partners have opted to seek agreement of Part 1 at their meetings in the summer.

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

23. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the work, the development of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy supports several Councils priority areas. In particular:
- (a) Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work – measures that will link to net zero targets such as food waste reduction;
  - (b) Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire – measures that will seek to lead on equality in accessing food and tackling food poverty;
  - (c) Prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents – measures that will focus on addressing access to healthy foods;
  - (d) Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces – measures that will seek to provide or source green spaces for communities for growing food;
  - (e) Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their potential – measures that will support advice and guidance and supporting children and young people to have equal access to food;
  - (f) Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit – working in partnership to implement and deliver the strategy and its broad-ranging benefits.
24. The report itself also sets out closely established links to the whole systems approach to healthy weight by promoting access to healthy food; healthy place shaping; Climate Action Framework; Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Local Plans.

## Financial Implications

25. We propose to provide £250k of funding to the districts and city councils 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 district area.
26. To determine the allocation per District/City Council, we propose using a previously established DWP formula, which is based on population weighted by deprivation as measured by the index of multiple deprivation index. This will result in allocation of funding as follows:

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Cherwell District Council	26%	£65,000
Oxford City Council	28%	£70,000
South Oxfordshire District Council	17%	£42,500
Vale of White Horse District Council	16%	£40,000
West Oxfordshire District Council	13%	£32,500
		<b>Total = £250,000</b>

27. If the proposal to allocate funding to the districts and city councils is agreed, we will be requesting £250,000 from the Budget Priorities reserve allocations process.
28. The action plan will have some actions that will be 'business as usual' and can be incorporated into relevant service delivery, however, any actions that will require new workstreams or prioritisation will need to be considered by each service. This may impact budget and business planning for 2022/23 with proposals to be considered through the organisational process as required or through the Budget Priorities reserve allocation process for immediate, in-year cost needs.

Comments checked by: Filipp Skiffins, Assistant Finance Business Partner

## **Legal Implications**

29. The Council has the ability to make such grant funding available but has an obligation to ensure that the funds are used properly. Before funds are released, funding agreements should be drawn up and approved by Cabinet which (inter alia) specify what funds are to be used for, give the Council the opportunity to monitor delivery and give the Council the ability to claw back payments if appropriate

Comments checked by: Richard Hodby, Solicitor

## **Staff Implications**

30. Resourcing the development of the strategy and associated action plans will be met within existing resources.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

31. An Equalities and Climate Impact assessment has been drafted to support the Food Strategy and associated grant funding. No negative equalities implications have been identified.

## **Sustainability Implications**

32. An Equalities and Climate Impact assessment has been drafted to support the Food Strategy and associated grant funding. No negative sustainability implications have been identified.

## **Risk Management**

33. The creation of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy was intended to address the risks identified around access to food, particularly for vulnerable people and to increase resilience in local food supply chains.
34. By not creating a county-wide Food Strategy, there is a risk that residents and suppliers may be more disproportionately affected by the anticipated cost of living increases.
35. There is a risk that trying to create a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy will mean we do not recognise the different food related challenges across the county. This will be addressed in Part 2 as partners seek to develop district level action plans to address challenges at a local level.

## **Consultations**

36. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy was developed in partnership with stakeholders in particular Good Food Oxfordshire which represents over 150 food related organisations. Public engagement in the strategy was undertaken by Good Food Oxfordshire during August – October 2021 through food related events.
37. Further community consultation will take place as part of developing the action plan over the next six months.

Claire Taylor  
Corporate Director Customer and Organisational Development

Annex: Annex 1: Oxfordshire Food Strategy – Part 1

Background papers: Good Food Oxfordshire consultation summary

Contact Officer: Lauren Rushen, Senior Policy Officer

May 2022