

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>DRAFT LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10 APRIL 2024</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the Draft Local Food Strategy and associated Delivery prior to consideration for approval by Cabinet on 15 May 2024.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To scrutinise the Draft Local Food Strategy and Delivery Plan (Appendices One and Two) and consider how it seeks to address its purpose i.e. to set the Council's direction towards *a long-term goal of fairer, greener, healthier food and farming in a flourishing economy that benefits all our residents*'.

## 3. KEY ISSUES

### 3.1 Why a Local Food Strategy?

Firstly, some facts:

- Monmouthshire is known as a food destination and the 'Food capital of Wales'.
- 80% of Monmouthshire's land is laid over to grassland for livestock, which is predominantly beef, lamb and dairy with some growth over the last 10 years in poultry, pigs and goats.
- 16% of Monmouthshire's land is currently being cultivated for crops, which include barley, wheat, maize (for feed and biofuel), stock feed and other cereals.
- The Council owns 24 farm holdings and 40 areas of bare land amounting to 1,122 hectares (2,773 acres) in total, primarily located in the south of the county and in the Severnside area. Most of this land is tenanted or leased to graziers. Many of the holdings are mixed livestock farms, with few remaining dairy units. There are three market gardens. The Council also owns the Monmouthshire Livestock Market at Raglan.
- Demand for allotments and growing space is high, with supply and demand often unbalanced across the county.
- From primary production through manufacturing, retail, and hospitality, the food sector accounts for approximately 5,000 jobs in Monmouthshire – with many more jobs in secondary industries connected to food (vets, machinery, logistics, etc.).
- One of the Council's main interventions in the food economy is in purchasing food for school meals and the county's meals-on-wheels service ('public-sector procurement'). Traditional procurement models have excluded small and local suppliers but there has been recent progress towards a more socially responsible procurement strategy that focuses on local wealth creation, taking a more enabling approach to engage with small suppliers.
- The roll-out of Welsh Government's Universal Free School Meals policy is complete across all Monmouthshire's Infants and Juniors, though uptake is patchy

and often lowest in areas with highest eligibility. School-meal budget and lunchtime food waste are areas of concern.

3.2 In considering the facts above, the Council has been developing an approach to local and community growing, procurement of food and working with local suppliers. Every primary school has a kitchen where freshly cooked, nutrition-rich meals are produced five days a week. Like most other councils in Wales, we also support a countywide Food Partnership. These initiatives are appreciated and do show impact. But the Council can do more to enable a whole-authority approach that is systems-based and focused on sustaining the impacts of our interventions, the long-term sustainability of our land and nature, and the health and well-being of our communities.

3.3 Hence, the draft Local Food Strategy which:

- a) is driven by evidence which enables us to target areas and populations of need;
- b) positions us to maximise resources and inward investments – identifying potential areas of development and pathways to capitalise on development opportunities through attracting more strategic funding and investments;
- c) aligns our work on the local food system with the Council’s Community and Corporate Plan objectives and sector policies – optimising the impact of food- and farming-based interventions through how we procure, manage our assets, support our local economy, encourage learning and skills acquisition and protect our environment;
- d) is focused on long-term change – helping us achieve short-term impacts that set the foundation for achieving long-term goals.

The purpose of the Strategy will be achieved through the delivery of actions that enable, influence and advocate for a local food system that:

- ensures everyone is well nourished,
- supports sustainable food and farming businesses to prosper, and
- allows nature and food production to thrive side by side.

### 3.4 The Approach

Our approach is founded on:

- *collaborative working;*
- *adaptive and opportunistic approaches* – adapting to the changing dynamics in food and farming policy and practice;
- *taking advantage of opportunities arising* (e.g. for new partners or funding);
- while always focusing on *impact and outcomes*.

### 3.5 The Guiding Principles

The Local Food Strategy is based on three interlinked principles fundamental to how we will work and the decisions we will make about where to seek investment and/or focus our own resources. These guiding principles are *tackling inequality, addressing the nature and climate crises, and supporting sustainable and innovative food and farming practices*.

### 3.6 Three Core Themes

Three interlinked core themes have been identified, which have been scoped to ensure alignment with other Council strategies, are based on evidence, and have the likelihood to drive system change. These are:

- *Improving local and ethical supply chains,*
- *Developing food as an economic sector, and*

- *Community food: access, education, participation.*

An Influence Mapping exercise has been carried out to identify areas of greatest impact. These are *the food we buy, the land we own, and the conversations we convene*. Using this framework, activities have been developed under each of the core themes; these have been detailed in the Delivery Plan at the end of the Strategy (Appendix One), and actions will be taken by the Council and in partnership. The Delivery Plan also details timeframes, responsible departments, and an explanation of the how the team will define success and track benefits through the reporting and monitoring framework.

### **3.7 The Consultation Process to date**

In drafting the Strategy, the following consultation activities have taken place:

- A reference Group of experts and partners has been established in the capacity of 'critical friends' who work in our food system and/or have an interest in making the system fairer, more ethical and more locally based.
- Two stakeholder consultations were held in March – one in Abergavenny and one in Chepstow – where discussions regarding the draft Strategy took place.
- An all-Member's Seminar was held on the 15 March.
- A Cross Member's working group has also been established to monitor progress of the Strategy and the associated Delivery Plan.

All these activities have shaped the draft Local Food Strategy appended to this report.

## **4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)**

- 4.1 An integrated impact assessment has been carried out and attached to this report as Appendix Two.

The positive impacts of this draft Strategy are that:

- It enables a whole-authority approach that is systems-based and focused on sustaining the impacts of our interventions, the long-term sustainability of our land and nature, and the health and well-being of our communities.
- It sets our direction of travel, towards our long-term goal of fairer, greener, healthier food and farming in a flourishing economy that benefits all our residents.
- The approach of the Strategy is founded on collaborative working, maximising adaptive and opportunistic approaches, whilst taking advantage of opportunities arising (e.g. for new partners or funding); while always being focused on impact and outcomes.
- The Strategy is based on three interlinked principles fundamental to how we will work and the decisions we will make about where to seek investment and/or focus our own resources. These guiding principles are tackling inequality, addressing the nature and climate crises, and supporting sustainable and innovative food and farming practices.
- There are three interlinked core themes which are likely to drive system change. These are improving local and ethical supply chains, developing food as an economic sector, and community food: access, education, participation.
- The actions associated with these three core themes will enable, influence and advocate for a local food system that ensures everyone is well nourished; supports sustainable food and farming businesses to prosper and allows nature and food production to thrive side by side.

No negative impacts have been identified.

## 5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
Place Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the draft Local Food Strategy.	Member's views to be considered.	If the Strategy is not scrutinised, a strategic consultation opportunity will be lost.	Preferred option to enable full scrutiny of the Strategy prior to consideration for Cabinet approval.

## 6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Once approved the success of the Strategy will be monitored and quarterly progress reported against the Delivery Plan and the associated monitoring and evaluation framework including those set by funders including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and WLGA. Updates will be provided to Place Scrutiny Committee as requested.

## 7. REASONS

- 7.1 Whilst the Council does not have a statutory responsibility to produce a Local Food Strategy, this draft Strategy demonstrates the Council's recognition of Monmouthshire as the 'Food Capital of Wales'. This Strategy will enable a whole-authority approach focussed on the long-term sustainability of the County's land and nature, and the health and well-being of our communities.
- 7.2 The Strategy aligns with the Council's Community and Corporate Plan and its associated enabling strategies including the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy, the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, the Asset Management Strategy, the Climate and Nature Strategy and associated Action Plans, and the Replacement Local Development Plan. It has also been authored to reflect key regional, national and UK Strategies such as 'Dyfodol Y Bannau The Future' (Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Management Plan, 2023–28), Gwent Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment and Plan, Food and Drink Wales Vision and Strategy, 'National Food Strategy' (Dimpleby Report) and the Sustainable Food Places Framework.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council's Sustainable Food Team is currently funded via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the WLGA Food Partnership Development Fund, and the WLGA Direct Food Support Fund.
- 8.2 As many activities will involve our partners, support will also be provided by, among others, Natural Resources Wales, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Gwent Public Health Team, Food Partnerships, Trussel Trust, local Community Fridges, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, Social Farms and Gardens, Farming Connect, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Wye and Usk Foundation, Land Workers Alliance, farming unions, farmers and food businesses, our community groups and voices.

## 9. CONSULTEES

- Council Leader
- Chief Officer for Communities and Place
- Informal Cabinet (9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024)

- Strategic Leadership Team
- All Members
- The Marches Forward Partnership
- Stakeholder Consultation Events (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March) with local food businesses and sector representatives.
- Head of Enterprise and Community Animation
- Communities and Place DMT
- MCC Landlord Services Team
- MCC Economy, Employment and Skills Team
- MCC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Team
- MCC Catering Team

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix One: Draft Local Food Strategy and Delivery Plan

Appendix Two: EQIA

## **11. AUTHOR**

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## **12. CONTACT DETAILS**

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