

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 March 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxfordshire Food Strategy – City Action Plan

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities
Corporate Priority:	Enable an Inclusive Economy; Support Thriving Communities; Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 March 2024 to consider a report concerning the Oxfordshire Food Strategy – City Action Plan. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 March 2024, recommends that Cabinet agrees the City Food Action Plan, delegates authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities to make any amendments to the Action Plan which are necessary following approval by other local authority partners and delegates authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) to negotiate and enter into the necessary grant agreements to deliver the City Food Action Plan.

2. The Committee would like to thank Hagan Lewisman (Active Communities Manager) and Tom Garrod (Zero Carbon Oxford Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager introduced the report. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in June 2022 and there was a commitment to submit a more detailed action plan in due course. This report fulfilled that commitment. The City Food Action Plan had been developed in partnership and formed part of a systemwide response to address food security.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the variety of fruit and veg available at food larders; the provision of hot meals for elderly residents; the Town Hall policy for leftover food from events; sustainability; deliverability of the Action Plan; and priority areas for activity.
5. In particular, Members noted that there was often a lack of variety of the fruit and veg on offer at food larders. The Committee agreed that variety was important and the Council should work with local food larders to ensure more variety. It was noted that a study had recently been undertaken at Oxford City Farm in relation to mothers and the impact of the cost of living crisis, the findings of which the Council could draw upon to inform this work.

Recommendation 1: That the Council engages with local food larders with a view to improving the variety of fruit and veg available, having regard to the outcome of the recent study undertaken at Oxford City Farm in relation to mothers and the impact of the cost of living crisis.

6. Members also highlighted numerous experiences of leftover food from events hosted at the Town Hall being unable to be redistributed to other organisations such as food larders in order to prevent food waste. Instead, leftover food was thrown away. The Committee felt strongly that the Council should be leading by example in relation to reducing food waste and the Town Hall policy should be reviewed and amended so that leftover food did not go to waste going forward.

Recommendation 2: That the Council reviews its policy in relation to the management of leftover food from Town Hall events so that it does not go to waste.

7. During discussion on sustainability, the Committee noted there was often a focus on reducing food miles when considering lessening the environmental impact of the food system. However, the Committee agreed that reducing food waste and making diet changes (e.g. eating more plants) were far more impactful in terms of positive impact on the environment. It was agreed that the Council should be promoting the latter two factors.

Recommendation 3: That the Council promotes reducing food waste and encouraging diet change as the most impactful factors from a climate perspective, as well as reducing food miles.

8. The Committee discussed larger generators of food waste within the City, such as restaurants, and noted that more could be done in relation to working with those organisations to collect and redistribute food which would otherwise go to waste. Members highlighted that there were some active members of the community already seeking to address this and the Council could work with those individuals in order to effect change. The Committee agreed that an action related to this should be added to the Action Plan.

Recommendation 4: That the Council, working with the community, explores options for the collection of food waste from larger generators of food waste within the city and distribution among food larders; and adds this to the City Action Plan.

9. The Action Plan identified several priority areas for activity within the City that were set at the ward level. However, the Committee pointed out that there were various pockets of deprivation across Oxford that were at the sub-ward level and were not captured within the priority areas already identified. The Committee was of the view that the ward level did not accurately reflect the levels of deprivation across the City and agreed that this should be reviewed so that priority areas were set at sub-ward levels.

Recommendation 5: That the Council re-evaluates the priority areas of the city where activity will take place set out in the City Action Plan, which are currently set at the ward level, with a view to setting priority areas at a sub-ward level to more accurately reflect levels and pockets of deprivation across the City.

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