

Title of report: Countywide approach to become a Sustainable Food Place

Meeting: Health and wellbeing board

Meeting date: Monday 6 December 2021

Report by:

Health Improvement Practitioner

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform and gain support from Health and Wellbeing Board on a county-wide approach to becoming a Sustainable Food Place, and on the Food Vision for Herefordshire developed by Herefordshire Food Alliance.

Under this umbrella, partners across Herefordshire work together to influence, change and support the food system and food environment such that they promote health, wellbeing and sustainability and reduce inequalities by -

- Improving health & wellbeing by increasing healthy life expectancy and reducing health inequalities
- Supporting a thriving local food economy and sustainable food procurement
- Creating environmental sustainability

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Health and Wellbeing Board supports the work on Sustainable Food Places in Herefordshire, including the local vision, aims and actions set out in the plan**
- b) Health and Wellbeing board member organisations actively promote and engage in activity across the sustainable food places framework; Including the food charter**

Alternative options

1. Health and Wellbeing board does not support the vision or implementation of programme of work based on the Sustainable Food Places framework. This is not recommended as it would reduce the effectiveness in tackling many of the root causes of poor health and inequalities, limiting opportunity to tackle obesity within the County and support key Council priorities around the environment, communities and economy.

Key considerations

2. In Herefordshire, we recognise that food has a key role in economic, environmental and social challenges. This includes obesity, diet related ill health, food poverty, waste and climate change. Food is a key driver of health inequalities. COVID-19 has further shown the vulnerabilities of the food system. The food system has changed both locally and nationally, with increased availability of cheaper processed foods which are often high in fat, sugar and salt and consumption of food cooked outside the home. A healthy diet can be expensive, meaning less affluent people are less able to access or afford healthier foods. Locally the number of people in food poverty is increasing and obesity rates continue to rise as consequences of poor diet.
3. Many factors affect the food we consume. Our consumption is driven by food systems (e.g. how food is grown, made and distributed); the community we live in; our individual behaviours and drivers of these behaviours; and economic factors. The quality of an individual's diet can therefore be affected by poverty and the causes of poverty; low or lack of income, competing expenditures (such as heating), access to food (including geography) and the food environment, education, family life and food skills of individuals, families and communities.
4. Improving the food system and diets often has synergistic and broader impacts on wellbeing through wider determinants of health. For example, changes in diet to include greater consumption of healthier foods, and lower consumption of unhealthy foods, would generally improve environmental sustainability, whilst community initiatives to increase skill sharing or local growing schemes can positively impact communities for example through reducing loneliness and improving connectedness.
5. Sustainable Food Places provides a well developed and tested model on which to build our work to ensure a healthier and more sustainable food environment for all in Herefordshire. The SFP framework for strategy and action plan is structured around six key issues:
 - a. Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
 - b. Building Public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
 - c. Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
 - d. Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy
 - e. Transforming catering and food procurement and revitalizing local and sustainable food supply chains
 - f. Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste

6. The Herefordshire Food Alliance brings together key partners focused on food is leading the local implementation of the SFP framework. The alliance has been supported through a funded co-ordinator role. It has developed a Food Vision for Herefordshire. This vision is:

‘Herefordshire has a thriving, healthy and environmentally benign local food economy, where those on low incomes and in rural areas have access to affordable, healthy food; where food production, processing and distribution systems contribute to landscape and wildlife diversity, minimise waste and consider the impacts of climate change; and where local communities are actively engaged in healthy living and have an increased understanding of the links between food and personal and planetary well-being.’

7. Herefordshire’s rural setting provides opportunities as well as challenges. There is a strong agriculture industry (agriculture accounts for 24% of businesses¹); however, the food system operates above county level with the majority of food travelling out of the county for processing. Community engagement in the county is strong, shown for example through high volunteering rates, and there are a large number of small enterprises, social enterprises and voluntary organisations.
8. The COVID pandemic increased communities support for local produce and retailers. It has shown us how resilient food systems can work and more important than ever that we have our own local food systems in place, with the ability to buy locally and support the local economy.
9. The SFP approach has been successfully adopted in other local authorities including Bristol, Cardiff and Brighton and Hove, and provides a network with whom to share ideas and generate change.
10. Nationally, the recent publication of the National Food Strategy has further highlighted the need for a focus on food environments and recommendations include the establishment of active local food partnerships and food strategies.
11. Locally, the strategic setting for this work has been building over a number of years:
 - a. In 2011, the Herefordshire Food Strategy, From Field to Table, was published. This strategy, developed by a wide group of stakeholders, identified that a systematic approach addressing food sustainability was required within the county, but unfortunately lack of resource prevented full implementation. Nonetheless this work has laid a solid foundation and good partnerships which can now drive forward change.
 - b. A Food Poverty Alliance was established by Brightspace Foundation in January 2019, which led on the food poverty risk mapping for the county.² Following this, it was agreed that the Food Poverty Alliance would become the Herefordshire Food Alliance (HFA) to incorporate a broader sustainable food agenda. HFA will oversee the delivery of the food vision within the SFP model.

The organisations/networks represented on the Food Alliance include - Brightspace Foundation, Food Banks, Hereford Diocese, Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy, Herefordshire Green Network, Voluntary sector, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Data Orchard, Herefordshire Council, Connexus, HOPE, Ignite CiC and local NFU.

During 2020 and COVID emergency response, Public Health played a key role in the co-ordination and support of the Hereford Food Alliance (HFA).

¹ <https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/economy-place/topics-relating-to-the-economy/industry-and-business/>

- c. In January 2021, the HFA was successful with a grant application to fund a Sustainable Food Places development co-ordinator for 6 months (Jan – July 2021). Public Health match-funded the grant and a local co-ordinator employed by New Leaf Sustainable Development CIC supported HFA to develop its network, working towards becoming a member of Sustainable Food Places.
- d. In June 2021 Herefordshire Food Alliance achieved the set criteria and were accepted as Sustainable Food Places members. Additionally in July 2021, HFA was successful with a further 2 year co-ordinator grant, again match funded by Public Health.
- e. HFA participated in a national research study to review local responses to food vulnerability pre and during covid.³ It has also led on the 'food' aspect of the county carbon plan and proposed activity within it.

12. The impact of food on health is multifactorial. In England, diet is the one of the biggest factors affecting health. For example, consuming too much salt is the biggest cause of high blood pressure and obesity (which at its most basic is the result of an imbalance between energy consumption (food and drink) and energy expenditure) is the second biggest cause of cancer and being overweight or obese is the main modifiable risk factor for type 2 diabetes and the driver behind the increase in type 2 diabetes prevalence.⁴ Key outcomes related to food for Herefordshire include:

- a. Overweight and obesity: being overweight continues to be the 'norm' in society for adults and a significant issue for children. Whilst generally prevalence estimates in Herefordshire are similar to England averages, they are of concern in the county and show no signs of decreasing. In 2019/20, 10% of reception year children in Herefordshire were obese, while the combined proportion of obese and overweight children was 26%⁵. For year 6 children, the prevalence of obesity was 19%, while the combined figure for obese and overweight children was 33%. In 2019/20, 61% of adults in Herefordshire were estimated to be overweight or obese.
- b. The standard of children's oral health in Herefordshire is poor, and is poorer than both the regional and national picture: just under a third of 5 year olds locally experienced preventable tooth decay in 2016/2017. Significantly this figure has remained broadly unchanged in the last 10 years.
- c. Food poverty and subsequent malnutrition impact upon outcomes such as obesity and diabetes; use of primary and secondary health care services; mental health; and pupil learning outcomes. There is a link between food insecurity and lower quality of diet and food insecurity has been associated with higher rates of being overweight.³ Whilst there is no easy way to count the number of people living in food poverty, in Herefordshire, as in other areas, we have seen increasing numbers of people in crisis situations: in 2020, 10,889 food parcels were distributed across five food banks.⁵ The use of food banks is only the tip of the iceberg with many more individuals and families being at risk of food poverty.

² Herefordshire Food Poverty map <https://www.dataorchard.org.uk/case-studies/food-poverty-mapping-project>

³ Local responses to food during covid, [Food vulnerability during COVID-19 | SPERI \(shef.ac.uk\)](https://www.sperl.ac.uk/food-vulnerability-during-covid-19)

⁴ Public Health England. Adult obesity and type 2 diabetes.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338934/Adult_obesity_and_type_2_diabetes_.pdf

⁵ Yang TC, Sahota P, Pickett KE, Bryant M., Association of food security status with overweight and dietary intake: exploration of White British and Pakistani-origin families in the Born in Bradford cohort, Accessed through: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29690871>, Accessed 15.1.20

⁴ Personal Communication Peplar.C, Hereford Diocese, Food bank data Herefordshire 2020

13. It is important to recognise that improving the food system and diets often has synergistic and broader impacts on wellbeing through wider determinants of health. These include:
- a. Environmental impacts: overall health and environmental outcomes associated with food align and a healthier diet tends to be a more sustainable one. Foods associated with the largest environmental impacts - unprocessed and processed red meat - are consistently associated with the largest increases in disease risk, whilst foods that are better for our health have a lesser impact on the environment. Therefore, changes in diet to include greater consumption of healthier foods, and lower consumption of unhealthy foods, would generally improve environmental sustainability too.
 - b. Loneliness adversely affects people's health and wellbeing and, whilst seen across age-groups and society, can particularly affect elderly and physically isolated people (e.g. those in rural locations). Food affects everyone and it can have a positive impact across communities e.g. Growing food in a community garden involves people in a collective and eating together helps build relationships and strengthen communities. There are great wellbeing benefits for people of all ages coming together to share skills and knowledge with food as a common link. A common local theme of intergenerational lack of skills and knowledge is also concern which community growing helps to address.
14. The complexity of the situation requires that we work in partnership and consider the whole food system, its various impacts on health and wellbeing, and the multiple interventions that can be applied within that system. Sustainable Food Places provides a framework for a whole-system approach and Herefordshire Food Alliance provides the platform for partnership working towards the common goal articulated through the vision and actioned through the action plan (Appendix 1).
15. The next steps in the action plan are to continue to increase engagement activity and develop a food charter in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Community impact

16. SFP implementation plan has partnership working at its core. HFA has already proven to be an important networking and information sharing forum and has led the development of the Food Vision for Herefordshire. The HFA has developed in partnership with key external stakeholders who are embedded in relevant strategic networks in the county, providing chair or expert support, including:
- Farm Herefordshire: an alliance of 12 organisations working with the land-based sector delivering training and advice. This is a conduit to the farming community.
 - Herefordshire Green Network: a network of 80+ organisations and more than 300 individuals interested in "green" issues. This is a conduit to community groups.
 - Herefordshire Tourism Partnership, which has promoted a county-wide food strategy and works with the tourism sector.
 - Herefordshire's zero carbon plan and nature rich plan⁵, specifically the food section. This is a conduit to influence strategic policies. Members are also linked into the work of Talk Community.

- Food poverty support through the Diocese of Hereford, independent Food Banks, Hfds Council, and existing growing projects.

17. Herefordshire's county Plan⁶ sets Herefordshire Council's ambition for Herefordshire 2020-2024 and outlines the priority areas as;

- Environment: protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live
- Community: strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together
- Economy: support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources

The SFP implementation plan contributes to each of these priority areas, from minimising waste and supporting sustainable living (environment) to ensuring children are healthy, protecting vulnerable people (community) and spending public money in the local economy (economy).

18. SFP aligns with the vision and will impact upon the five priorities and cross-cutting themes set by HWBB, as well as aligning with the Talk Community approach and contributing to the Herefordshire zero carbon and nature rich plan⁵.

19. Herefordshire and Worcestershire Long Term plan for the NHS also includes commitments on tackling obesity. This includes as system focus on healthy weight across the lifecourse; healthy staff, activity levels and healthy communities.

Environmental Impact

20. The decision will contribute to the delivery of the council's environmental policy commitments and align to the following success measures in the County Plan.

- Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions
- Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
- Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
- Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire

21. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

22. The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance. The project includes as specific work strand to 'Tackle the climate and nature emergency through

⁵ Herefordshire's zero carbon plan and nature rich plan, [Home - Herefordshire Zero Carbon and Nature Rich](#)

⁶ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1500/county_plan_2020-24.pdf

sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste' as well as encouraging food growing and buying local, seasonal produce.

Equality duty

23. The equality duty is in section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to employees. The duty requires that when exercising public functions, public service providers must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
24. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The Sustainable Food Places approach will support the council in delivering on the equality duty by providing opportunities for learning, having a positive impact on those with a protected characteristic, bringing communities together and increasing partnership working. As the approach develops we will manage and assess the equality impact, and if required we will complete an impact assessment.

Resource implications

25. Public Health has been and will continue to provide resource for strategic oversight of the project within the Food Alliance. Matched funding allocated to the project is provided by the PHRFG at £10,000 per annum. The Food Alliance will apply for grants and other funding to support specific projects and developments.
26. An evaluation of the programme in 2019 showed that Sustainable Food Places represents a return of £2 for every £1 investment by Esmè Fairbairn Foundation. The multiplier effect is greater when assessed at city level, with a total SFC grant funding of £493,359, over 3 years to 31 city members generating £7 for every £1 invested⁷.

Legal implications

27. This report is informative and therefore there appear to be no legal implications.

⁷University of the West of England, Sustainable Food Cities, Phase 2 Evaluation Report, May 2019.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Community and partner organisations do not work together with Herefordshire Council to tackle these issues.	Partnership working is at the centre of the plan and the action plan has been developed together with key stakeholders and informed by workshop and attendance at key networks.
The issues are engrained and complex and require large-scale change.	An action plan has been developed which will identifies achievable actions which can be undertaken which will start to tackle components of the complex food system. The limit of our influence, and the timescale of its impact, is recognised in our measures for success.
Insufficient funds are available to make headway with ideas and initiatives.	Grant funding will be a key focus of the alliance, across the alliance partners there is a lot of experience in grant applications.

28. Risks will be managed through Public Health risk register and escalated as required.

Consultees

29. Consultation has taken place and has informed the development of the implementation plan. This has included:
- The SFP model has been discussed with a wide range of partner organisations and in a number of networks
 - Stakeholders have been involved from across different aspects of the food system
 - A mapping exercise has taken place alongside partner consultation which has identified gaps and areas of focus
 - In October 2019 a Sustainable Food Places event was delivered which gained input from partners on current activities, identifying gaps and priorities for action.
30. Working with partners and stakeholders will be key throughout the lifetime of the plan, as the work evolves, further actions will be developed and opportunities identified and/or created.

Appendices

31. Appendix 1 – Sustainable Food Places implementation plan

The implementation plan outlines how Herefordshire Council and its partners will work to improve the food system and food environments in Herefordshire with the aim to improve the health of the population and reduce health inequalities, over the next two years. We have set out a shared

vision, aim and objectives and an action plan, based on the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework.

Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	Sarah Buffrey	Date 16/11/2021
Finance	Kim Wratten	Date 17/11/2021
Legal	Sharon Bennett-Matthews	Date 11/11/2021
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 12/11/2021
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 19/11/2021
Procurement	Mark Cage	Date 12/11/2021
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 17/11/2021

Approved by	Rebecca Howell-Jones	Date 25/11/2021
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Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

HWBB – Health and wellbeing board

SFP – Sustainable Food Places: used to describe the framework and approach itself.

HFA – Herefordshire Food Alliance

SFC – Sustainable Food County: used to describe the local implementation of the SFP framework at a county level which is our approach in Herefordshire.