

Item No. 17.	Classification: Open	Date: 18 June 2019	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		A Food Security Plan for Southwark	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Community Safety and Public Health	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR EVELYN AKOTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Over 2 million Londoners are living below the poverty line and Southwark, like many boroughs, is seeing that many residents are struggling to afford basic food items, especially people who rely on benefits and people in work who are struggling to make ends meet due to insufficient salaries. Food insecurity can also be an issue for people who have mobility problems, health concerns or lack of confidence to get to local shops and prepare food for themselves.

National estimates suggest that one in five over 16 year olds in England are food insecure to some degree. That is 53,000 of our residents. One in 12 people in England aged over 16 are estimated to be moderately to severely food insecure. This means that over 20,000 of our residents may be skipping meals because they cannot afford to eat and are experiencing real hunger.

As a responsible local authority we do not want to sweep this problem under the carpet. While it is hard to accept that people in 21st century Britain are going hungry, we must use our resources and collective will to tackle the problem head on. As part of the Fairer Futures Commitment, we promised our residents a healthier life where health inequalities are reduced so whatever your background you can live a healthy life. Access to nutritious, affordable food is key to this.

Producing a Food Security Plan shows that we take this commitment seriously. We want our residents to do more than just survive, but to thrive. We want to use policy to tackle the problems that make people food insecure in the first place and create a food-resilient borough with a strong community food network. A network where surplus, unused food gets used wisely, and where we support people to develop their skills in healthy eating, cooking and food growing as well as doing what we can to address barriers to employment, income maximisation and equality.

The Mayor of London recently published the Capital's first food strategy in 12 years, and reducing household food insecurity is one of the six key areas that he is committed to. With Southwark's first ever action plan, we can put creating food security onto our agenda, into our conversations and into our policies, creating a powerful and coordinated approach to ensure a fairer food future for all.

Recommendations for the cabinet

That the cabinet:

1. Approves the approach to supporting food security in Southwark, looking beyond the foodbank to a fairer food future for all.
2. Approves a partnership with the Southwark Food Action Alliance to develop and implement the Southwark food security plan and requests a progress report in 12 months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Food security is defined by the Food Foundation (2016) as “being sure of your ability to secure enough food of sufficient quality and quantity to allow you to stay healthy and participate in society.” The ‘beyond the foodbank’ model empowers people with a strong emphasis on prevention, dignity and resilience building. In March 2018, the Council was awarded GLA funds to support the development of an action plan to address food insecurity partnering with the Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA).
4. Stakeholder workshops have been held with representatives from across the Council and other agencies. SFAA member organisations have also been consulted throughout the process.
5. In addition to addressing the fundamental links with poverty and low income, the Action Plan also supports the implementation of the Southwark Healthy Weight Strategy. There is a well-established association between obesity and deprivation. People on a very low income may rely on cheap, calorie dense foods to fill them up. For example, 67% of the Camberwell Green ward population is in the most deprived quintile nationally. The ward also has the highest prevalence of child obesity in London and the 2nd highest in England for those in Year 6 (2015-16).

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. Across London and the UK, there is growing recognition of how food insecurity affects local communities and the role that local authorities have to play in preventing and mitigating the impact of food insecurity on their residents. To date, 13 London boroughs either have, or are working on, a food insecurity action plan, including Lambeth, Lewisham, Greenwich and Tower Hamlets.
7. Currently, there is no standardised national measures for food insecurity, so various proxies are used in its place, such as demand for food aid. There has been a significant increase in demand over recent years. The main reason cited for foodbank referrals in Southwark during 2017-18 is changes to the benefits system, including the introduction of Universal Credit. However, it is estimated that foodbank users represent only 20% of those experiencing food insecurity. More than 2.3 million Londoners currently live below the poverty line and many people do not have good access to local shops selling affordable, healthy food.
8. In September 2017, the Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA) was established. It is an alliance of 60 local member organisations including

Southwark Council, Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, the Department of Work and Pensions, national charities such as Fareshare, as well as local grassroots, community, faith and voluntary sector organisations.

9. The action plan is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on household food insecurity, which is to be published summer 2019. Some key findings from the JSNA include:
- 53,000 Southwark residents aged over 16 may be affected by food insecurity, 20,000 moderately or severely so – for example, skipping meals due to a lack of money.
 - Only 20% of those who are food insecure will go to a foodbank. In Southwark, 4,674 referrals were made in 2017-18 by professional and statutory services for emergency food aid. These figures are per household, so the number of individuals receiving food aid will be higher.
 - In Southwark, the main reasons given for referrals to foodbanks in 2017-18 included delays with benefit payments (41%), in employment but on a salary that is insufficient to cover food bills (16%) and having no recourse to public funds (16%).
 - Approximately 45% of those fed by Southwark foodbanks were children. There are noticeable spikes in users during summer holiday months.
 - Nationally, 50% of households using foodbanks have a disabled member and 75% have a member with poor health. 33% of families with a disabled child had relied on a loan to purchase food.
10. The Southwark action plan approach adopts three tiers of intervention to tackle food insecurity.



- A. Wider determinants:** This tier is preventive and includes structural and policy interventions to improve equality, economic wellbeing, food access and food security.

Some of these areas are highlighted in the annual London Food Poverty Profile published by the GLA and Sustain which looks at 10 areas where local authority policy can improve food security. The areas it focuses on include the London Living Wage, affordable child care, free school meals, the Healthy Start voucher scheme, free school holiday meal provision, physical access to good food through planning and regeneration and local economy levers.

Southwark scored 60 out of a possible 100 points in the 2017/18 profile. Some of the areas that the borough excels in include its offer of universal free healthy school meals to primary children and being a London Living Wage Borough.

B. Resilience building: This tier is also preventive. It takes an asset-based approach and works at individual, community and systems levels.

- **Building individual resilience:** there are various programmes to educate and upskill individuals with food skills and to help them improve their incomes and wellbeing. For example, the Local Support Team helped residents access £6.2m in unclaimed benefits during 2017-18. Various organisations teach basic cooking and growing skills to food insecure people. The Council has contracted some of them to do this work. The Council's Local Support Team refers clients to Bags of Taste, and the Public Health team uses Be Enriched to deliver cooking classes to Council Estate residents who have recently had their kitchen refurbished. Guys and St Thomas' Early Years Dietician Team runs 'Cook and Eat Well' classes at Children's Centres. Garden Organic has run growing projects on 24 estates.
- **Building community resilience:** the Southwark Food Action Alliance aims to support a more networked approach to food in Southwark with the eventual hope of making Southwark into a Sustainable Food City. Here, tackling food insecurity will form part of a much broader food vision for the borough, which also encompasses health, sustainability, food systems and food culture.
- **Building systems resilience:** at least 23 tonnes of surplus food are redistributed monthly in Southwark to organisations who work with the food insecure.

C. Crisis provision: this tier is reactive. It provides a safety net for those at the extreme end of need requiring emergency food aid.

The Southwark Emergency Support Scheme offers food parcels from ASDA to those who are struggling with food (1,295 households received a package during 2017-18). The borough's two largest foodbank providers (The Trussell Trust and Central Southwark Community Hub) operate from ten sites in the borough. Organisations, such as faith groups, may offer their own smaller, independent food aid schemes.

When the location of known foodbanks and free meal providers was mapped against areas of high potential need, it became apparent that there are some gaps in provision, for example in Kingswood Estate in Dulwich, Camberwell Green, Faraday and South Bermondsey wards also appear underserved, given their relatively high levels of deprivation.

11. Key priorities for development in Southwark include:

- Adopting a 'beyond the foodbank' model which empowers people and focuses on prevention, dignity and resilience building.
- Developing a more systematic approach to a local food security offer and coordinated service pathway.

- Strengthening the place-based approach through social regeneration to tackle poverty, low paid employment and to ensure good access to affordable healthy food.
12. Consultation with key stakeholders including political cabinet have flagged some specific opportunities for the Council to explore including:
- Explore with education colleagues the development of a more sustainable approach to holiday programme and meal provision in the borough to support families relying heavily on free school meals during term time. This can support retention of learning/ educational attainment over holiday periods. A network of providers is now linked through to the Education team to explore potential for a consortium approach to funding and sharing resources, as well as understanding some of the wider issues faced e.g. appropriate referrals, volunteer recruitment and ensuring good nutritional standards.
 - Explore ways to support people and families with NRPF to access free and affordable food. There are several actions in the plan to take this forward through engaging NRPF leads in ongoing work to explore needs, to map the food aid offer that is accessible to people with NRPF and to ensure key services are aware of how to signpost people.
 - Embedding work on food security into the Great Estates programme. This will provide a natural progression for the action proposed to work with housing providers including the Council as a social housing landlord.
 - Linking the Food Security plan to the Council's sustainability agenda waste reduction / zero carbon initiatives which can be explored through support for water fountains and food redistribution services, including initiatives such as the community fridge model and Peckham Pantry.
 - Working with our local economy team and food standards team to support initiatives with the business community – this will be taken forward through actions to increase access to affordable healthy food via supermarkets, convenience stores and markets in the borough. Supporting the uptake and wider roll out of voucher schemes, which provide free healthy food to low-income pregnant women and children under 4, such as the Healthy Start and Alexander Rose schemes.
 - Ensuring that Council programmes supporting access to employment are well aligned with food security initiatives. The plan advocates development of 'wraparound' support services in food aid projects, and clear signposting to a range of opportunities and services to help with income maximisation.

Policy implications

13. These proposals are in line with the principles and objectives set out in the Southwark Social Regeneration framework, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Healthy Weight Strategy and reflect issues highlighted in the Southwark Conversation. The proposals also reflect and further develop local approaches to the London Health Inequalities Strategy and the London Food Strategy.

Community impact statement

14. The action plan seeks to address the food insecurity of those experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability in the borough. It will identify approaches to better meet their food insecurity needs.

Legal implications

15. Please see the director of law and democracy's supplementary advice below.

Financial implications

16. There is no specific resource implication attached to this report. As the action plan is implemented there may be consequential impacts on how resources are planned and these will be presented to cabinet as required.

Consultation

17. The development of this plan has been informed by a wide range of stakeholders inputting at different stages of the work through surveys, interviews, partnership meetings and workshops. These have engaged people with lived experience of food insecurity, key professionals in services across the food, health, social and business sectors, the SFAA including the many VCS organisations it represents, several key council departments as well as key representatives of the CCG (including a GP commissioner) and hospital trusts' nutrition and dietetics team.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

18. Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 places a duty on the council to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. The steps that may be taken under subsection include:
 - (a) providing information and advice;
 - (b) providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (whether by helping individuals to address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way);
 - (f) providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement;
 - (g) making available the services of any person or any facilities.
19. The plan set out here assists the council in carrying out this duty. Any specific proposals in the plan can be made in accordance with this duty and arising from the powers of general competence in section 1 of Localism Act 2011.
20. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making this decision, the Cabinet must comply with its public equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who

do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

21. The equalities analysis appended to the report indicates any likely negative impacts on those with protected characteristics arising from food and the proposed actions to mitigate these impacts. These are all relevant matters that the Cabinet should give due regard to, in considering this report.
22. The establishment of this plan is an executive function which can be determined by the Cabinet in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and Part 3B of the council's Constitution.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

23. This report requests cabinet approval of the approach to supporting food security in Southwark and also requests approval of a partnership with the Southwark Food Action Alliance, to develop and implement the Southwark food security plan.
24. The strategic director of finance and governance notes there are no specific finance resource impacts at this stage, however this may change as the plan proceeds and notes this will be considered by cabinet as the new approach is implemented.
25. Staffing and any other costs connected with these recommendations are to be contained within existing departmental revenue budget

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Food Security Action Plan 'Fairer Food Southwark' (circulated separately)
Appendix 2	EIA for Food Security Action Plan (circulated separately)
Appendix 3	Stakeholder Engagement List for Food Security Plan (circulated separately)

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Community Safety and Public Health	
Lead Officer	Professor Kevin Fenton, Strategic Director of Place and Wellbeing	
Report Author	Rosie Dalton-Lucas, Head of programmes (healthy place)	
Version	Final	
Dated	5 June 2019	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Assistant Director Public Health	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		7 June 2019