

29 April 2024

SERVICE BRIEFING ON THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD STRATEGY MOTION

Purpose of report: To brief members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on the Original Motion regarding the Whole System Food Strategy submitted to the Council meeting on 11 July 2023.

Introduction

A Surrey Whole System Food Strategy is currently being finalised for publication. The draft strategy was produced based on the themes identified by a successful Food Summit in 2022. The draft strategy has been consulted extensively with a range of stakeholders across Surrey over the last 18 months to refine and co-produce the priorities. The strategy supports the [Surrey Healthy Schools](#) approach and has a focus on three key strands: addressing food insecurity, reducing climate impact of the local food system and supporting the local population to keep a healthy weight by enhancing the accessibility and affordability of nutritious food. The strategy also acknowledges impact evaluation and development of policy-based interventions (such as town planning, advertising policies and licencing) as key drivers for change for a sustainable food system.

The strategy will be supported by a detailed delivery plan which will be agreed, and its implementation will be overseen by the Surrey Food Partnership report to the Prevention and the Wider Determinants of Health Board. The key priorities of the strategy are:

- **Priority 1 Food justice. Outcome:** *Improve access to nutritious and affordable food*
- **Priority 2: Food for wellbeing and preventing obesity. Outcome:** *Enabling communities to make healthier food choices to improve health outcomes (include town planning, school/workplace settings, community gardening/pantries, cookery skills training and knowledge, public communication)*

- **Priority 3: Food for a healthy weight. Outcome:** *Ensure appropriate weight management programmes are in place to support families and individuals to achieve a healthy weight*
- **Priority 4: Food inequalities and insecurity. Outcome:** *Reduce food related inequalities with focus on families with young children, pregnant women, those with limited financial resources and those with a disability*
- **Priority 5: Food for the environment. Outcome:** *Enhance sustainability of the local food system, reduce climate change impact by reducing waste and Green House Gases (GHGs) emission generated from the food system*
- **Priority 7 Food for a stronger economy. Outcome:** *Increase in procurement from local suppliers across public and private sector, improve workforce health upskilling opportunities in the hospitality industry*
- **Priority 7 Food in All policies. Outcome:** *Developing policy-based interventions for granting fast food outlet licenses, junk food advertising, council owned land use to promote plant-based farming.*

Ensure that food provided at all council catered events and meetings is predominantly plant-based, preferably using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations.

1. This is supported by the Surrey Whole System Food strategy (Priority 5 Food for the environment).
2. This is also in line with the [Government Buying Standard for food and catering services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/buying-standards). However note that, distribution of surplus food that is fit for consumption is often used to address food insecurity rather than sent for disposal as waste, for example gifted to charities / food banks.

Ensure that school meals service have a totally plant based menu one day per week, ideally Mondays.

3. Schools and providers adhere to the school food standards ensuring a 'healthy and balanced' range of meals are provided.
4. It may not always be appropriate for young people to eat a plant-based diet due to specific issues for pupils with health concerns. This may apply to some neurodiverse pupils and pupils with autism who may have restrictive eating, food sensitivities and already find mealtimes challenging.

5. The eating environment should be an inclusive and social one. It should be about informed choice. Restricting to plant based only options may make some pupils, families and staff feel excluded.
6. The food strategy supports empowering families and young people to make an informed choice about eating a balanced diet which is good for both their health and the environment.

Continue to outreach to schools and young people to actively influence and inform on climate change and in particular on food choices and their impact on the environment, health and animal welfare.

7. This is supported the Surrey Whole System Food Strategy, and it also links with some of the key existing approaches as vehicles for delivery which focus on key activities by the schools to reduce climate change impacts. These include the Surrey Healthy Schools Approach and Eco schools.
8. The Surrey Healthy Schools approach aims to empower schools to identify strengths and areas for development and identifies 5 key themes:
 - Whole School Approach towards the promotion of positive health and wellbeing.
 - Personal, Health, Social, Economics, Education (PSHE) curriculum (including health and wellbeing, relationships, sex, drug, staying safe and financial capability education)
 - Healthy eating (including cooking and health eating in the curriculum, food provision - school meals, packed lunches, pre and post school club food provision and cooking clubs)
 - Physical activity (including physical education and school sport - PESSPA)
 - Health: Emotional wellbeing and mental health
9. Eco-Schools is a globally recognised award programme which provides a simple seven step framework to help make sustainability an integral part of school life and supports a Surrey Healthy Schools approach. Eco-Schools supports the enrichment of your curriculum and helps unite young people and the wider school community to care more about protecting the environment. The programme provides a wide variety of inspiration, from introducing recycling schemes, bug hotels and herb gardens, to clean air days and beekeeping. It places young people at the heart of the decision-making and action planning, helping raise awareness of key issues, develop ideas for behaviour change, and empower them to take action. In Surrey, over 450

schools are registered, close to 300 schools have achieved an award and almost 40 schools have gained the highest award, the Green Flag, which is recognised by UNESCO.

10. This motion can further support the existing Surrey Healthy Schools approach whole system working and Eco Schools by placing greater emphasis on food choices and their impact on the environment, health and animal welfare.

To further encourage and empower students to make informed decisions about the food available in their school.

11. This is currently included in the Surrey Healthy Surrey standard used for school self-assessment (standard 3.2.1 asks: Are staff, pupils, parents/carers actively consulted and effectively involved in guiding food policy and practice? This may be through questionnaires, focus groups, the school council, school nutrition action group (SNAG), Surrey Healthy Schools Working Group, or other representative bodies.
12. We can further enhance this through the Healthy Schools Approach and implementation of the Whole System Food Strategy and widen student participation, building on some of the successful initiatives such as “peer-led/student champions”.

Inspire, promote and support initiatives surrounding climate change and in particular food growing, preparation and waste avoidance, especially as part of school and community projects.

13. As described above this is already included in the Eco School initiative and Surrey Healthy School Approach.
14. The wider community action is included and supported by the Whole System Food Strategy which will be enabled by robust public involvement and working closely with the partners across the system, including the NHS and Volunteer Community Sector and Faith (VCSF) organisations.

Conclusions:

15. We welcome this motion as a great opportunity to build momentum and political will behind such important agenda and support existing initiatives.
16. This motion is in line with the key ambitions of the Surrey’s Whole System Food Strategy and Surrey County Council Climate Change Strategy to make our local food system more sustainable, empower local people to make healthier food choices and reduce the impact of food system on climate change.

17. Surrey’s whole system approach – Surrey Healthy Schools, and the Eco Schools initiative can be further utilised to raise the importance of food choices on the environment and animal welfare.
18. A roust public involvement will be key in successful implementation of this motion to enable our local communities make informed decisions about the food choices and their impact on health and climate change.

Recommendations:

19. A summary of the recommendation for each resolution in the motion is detailed in the table below:

Resolution	Service recommendation
Ensure that food provided at all council catered events and meetings is predominantly plant-based, preferably using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations	Create guidelines for local authority procurement of food to be sustainable by default based on Government Buying Standard for food and catering services - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and to encourage using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations
Ensure that school meals service have a totally plant based menu one day per week, ideally Mondays.	Empower families and young people to make an informed choice about eating a balanced diet which is good for both health and the environment.
Continue to outreach to schools and young people to actively influence and inform on climate change and in particular on food choices and their impact on the environment, health and animal welfare.	Provide schools with support in order to increase the number of schools engaging with the development of a Surrey Healthy Schools approach, in particular re Theme 3 – Healthy Eating. Increase the emphasis on food choices and their impact on the environment, health and animal welfare in the exiting initiatives such Eco Schools
To further encourage and empower students to make informed decisions about the food available in their school	Support schools to develop school nutrition action group (SNAG) as part of a Surrey Healthy Schools approach and widen student participation in through initiatives such as “peer champions” based in schools to make informed decisions about the food available in their school.
Inspire, promote and support initiatives surrounding climate change and in particular food growing, preparation and	Facilitate a roust public involvement to raise the importance of food choices on the climate change and animal welfare

waste avoidance, especially as part of school and community projects.	and enable the community to make an informed decision about food choices
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Report contact

Negin Sarafraz – Shekary, Public Health Principal

Contact details

SarafrazShekary.Negin@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers

[List of all documents used in compiling the report, for example previous reports/minutes, letters, legislation, etc.]

[Agenda item - ORIGINAL MOTIONS - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)