

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 JULY 2019

Present: Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
Councillors Boyle, Derbyshire, Owen Jones, Jackie Parry,
Owen, Wong and Wood

8 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Lancaster.

9 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct:

Councillor Michael Item 4 Runs a business in Council owned parade

10 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 May and 12 June 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

11 : CARDIFF FOOD STRATEGY

Councillor Michael declared an interesting in the following item as he runs a business in a Council-owned parade of shops

The Committee received a report providing an opportunity for Members to consider the development of the Cardiff Food Strategy prior to the Strategy being received by Cabinet on 26 September 2019.

Members were advised that the authority set out its commitment to develop a Food Strategy in its Capital Ambition policy document. The Strategy will encompass a wide range of sustainable food matters and address the following key issues:

- Food Poverty
- Inequalities
- Wellbeing
- Food Supply
- Tourism
- Economic Development

A number of good practice examples in cities and nations that have embraced their food offer potential have been identified. However, there is still work to be undertaken to allow Cardiff to become a 'Gold Sustainable Food City'. Moreover, Cardiff has an abundance of fast food outlets serving unhealthy options and Cardiff has more fast food outlets per head of the population than any other UK City – 30.5 fast food franchises for every 100,000 population.

Members were also advised that obesity figures are higher in more deprived areas and obesity leads to a number of serious and life threatening conditions. Poor diet is the main cause of obesity, along with a lack of exercise. Those living in more deprived areas are less likely to be able to access or afford good food. Additionally, life expectancy is lower in the most deprived areas. Diet, in terms of the food options available and the food consumed, has a part to play in this.

The Council sits on the local food partnership, Food Cardiff which is a member of the Sustainable Food Cities Network. Cardiff has already achieved Bronze Sustainable Food City status. In June 2018 Cardiff hosted the UK Sustainable Food Cities Conference at City Hall where the Leader stated that Cardiff has the ambition to achieve Gold Sustainable Food City status. Those Cities that have achieved Silver Status have done so by a combination of partnership working, strong local and cultural identity and numerous sustainable grassroot projects and networks.

There were already examples of good practice in Cardiff, including the provision of allotment and community garden space; the Youth Foods Initiative; the School Holiday Enrichment Programme, the Council's 'Veg Pledge' commitment and the long term support to the Food Cardiff partnership.

The development of a Food Strategy will also help the authority to fulfil its obligations around the Well-Being of Future Generations Act. The Strategy seeks to identify the main opportunities and interventions for the Council across the City to enable and encourage growth of sustainable food programmes.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Street, Recycling and Environment; Andrew Gregory, Director; Gareth Harcombe, Operational Manager, Energy and Sustainability; and Elizabeth Lambert, Sustainable Development Group Leader, to the meeting.

Councillor Michael was invited to make a brief statement after which officers delivered a presentation. Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions in the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows.

- Officers were asked to explain how 'food swamps' were defined, whether there are any food swamps in Cardiff, and if so, where. Officers stated that food swamps are areas in which there are an abundance of fast food outlets. There are a number of food swamps in the City which are aligned with the southern arc. A mapping exercise will look at the entire city and, once mapped, supplementary planning guidance or a saturation policy may be brought forward.
- Members asked whether the authority was encouraging its own staff to eat healthily and what steps were being taken to promote healthy options in the premises it manages. The Cabinet Member stated that he considered a healthy diet to be about moderation and balance and the authority was relying on staff to find their own balance. The Chair considered that whilst schools were working reasonably well, buildings such as County Hall were not working well. During the cafeteria refurbishment Members were advised that health options would be available every day. Health options are not available and this could

easily be improved.

- Members were advised that the strategy includes sustainable food frameworks for the authority's own catering. The mapping exercise will identify issues and action any interventions necessary. The authority is working with partners in this regard and it can learn from partners, such as the NHS.
- Members considered that fast food outlets were more profitable. There were not as many independent traders such as grocers as in the past as business rates has possibly made running such businesses unprofitable. The Cabinet Member felt that it was not only business rates that had affected independent traders. The power of the big supermarkets in terms of competition has affected this area. However, some wards are not served by supermarkets. The issue was complex and could not be blamed solely on business rates.
- Members asked what resources were available to deliver key actions. The Director stated that this was a crucial point. There needs to be an understanding about what the authority can realistically do and to make the strategy successful resources will need to be identified. There will be an opportunity to leverage funding – for example in schools and public health. Once the mapping exercise has been completed a discussion around resources will be necessary in order to come up with a realistic programme.
- Members asked whether there were any plans to achieve the Soil Association's 'Food for Life' standards, particularly in schools. Officers advised that the focus would be on achieving Sustainable Cities accreditation, which is also a Soil Association initiative.
- A Member considered that independent shops are forced to close down when they are unable to compete with large supermarkets in the grounds of accessibility and cost. This helps to create 'food deserts'. Members asked officers to suggest how the authority may be able to get past that. Officers advised that a pilot scheme would soon be launched in the Dusty Forge in Ely. The food pantry concept is run by charitable organisations in which donations are received and food that has short shelf life is made available. There good examples of such initiatives around the country. Members of such schemes also participate in cookery lessons and swap recipes. There is also tie in with local allotment groups. The Council is able to assist by looking at what spaces there are available for such scheme in communities.
- The Cabinet Member stated that any allotment site is a hive of activity for most of the year. However, from autumn onwards there is very little activity. The Council is discussing options for developing a community based hydroponics project, where growing takes place year round. Such facilities would provide a social space and may be located near community hubs. Allotment holders have expressed an interest. A pilot is underway at the Castle Nurseries site. The Cabinet Member considered that such schemes would offer something radical and different.
- Officers considered that in terms of food waste, compostable waste and packaging, it would be better to not produce waste in the first place. There has

been a shift in public opinion regarding the single use plastics and supermarkets are moving away from using that type of packaging. A Members commented that it was perverse that supermarkets sold packaged fruit and vegetables at higher prices than loose fruit and vegetable.

- Members noted that lots of take-away food outlets offer home deliveries. Members asked how this would be practically managed. The Cabinet Member stated that the Council was not seeking to prescribe what people can eat. There was already a good variety of food on offer in the city. Some places seem to have a concentration of outlets and other places have fewer options. The strategy aims to achieve a balance.
- Officers stated that a voluntary scheme such as a local food standard – or food mark – signifying that food is locally sourced, healthy and sustainable – would help businesses raise standards and enable people to make smarter choices. A Member considered that such scheme may create anomalies because small businesses can struggle to meet the requirements of such rankings, but larger chains do not.
- A Member advised that his daughter’s school dinner menu contained three servings of beef in 1 week. It was generally accepted that beef production comes with a high carbon footprint and contributes to the climate emergency. The Member suggested Council should give thought to when such produce came from and the environmental impact that it has. For example, locally produced beef is reasonable, whilst beef produced in South America would come with a much greater carbon footprint.
- A Member noted that the development of a food park in Aarhus, Denmark has taken 40 years and is the size of a small town. Members asked whether the Council was able to match its ambitions with resources.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member conveying their observations.

12 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING 2019/20

Members discussed potential items for inclusion on the Committee’s Work Programme 2019/20.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The Principal Scrutiny Officer draft a 4 month Work Programme for circulation to Members of the Committee;
- (2) The Principal Scrutiny Officer draft a shortlist of potential items to be kept in reserve.

13 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

14 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 17 September 2019.

The meeting terminated at 6.45 pm

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Chairperson