

Report to Cabinet
13 September 2017
Report of Strategy manager
Subject Food poverty scrutiny recommendations and Reducing Inequalities Action Plan

Item

6

Purpose

To consider the work on food poverty within the wider reducing inequalities action plan.

Recommendation

To:

1. review the recommendations from the meeting of scrutiny committee on 6 April 2017, following their scrutiny of food poverty in Norwich, and consider how work on food poverty might be taken forward.
2. note the Reducing Inequalities Action Plan for 2017-18 incorporating proposed food poverty actions.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority a fair city.

Financial implications

None the activity is met from within existing budgets.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Davis – social inclusion

Contact officers

Ruth Newton, senior strategy officer

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Background documents

None

Report

Food poverty scrutiny process

1. Scrutiny committee undertook an in-depth piece of work at its meetings in February and March to consider the causes and possible solutions to food poverty in Norwich. Meetings included presentations from guest speakers representing Feeding Britain, Joy of Food, Norwich Food Bank and the Open University.
2. The committee considered evidence on the structural, organisational and individual drivers of food poverty and concluded that there is a distinction between 'food crises in which people are left without any means of feeding themselves in the short-term, and...longer-term lack of access to nutritious food.' Copies of the reports can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.
3. In response to this evidence the committee made the following recommendations to be reported to cabinet on this theme:
 - a) to access charitable trust funding to resource projects such as social supermarkets
 - b) develop a food poverty strategy to act as an umbrella document for existing actions
 - c) increase awareness and availability of financial advice and early intervention
 - d) develop community led food literacy projects
 - e) increasing awareness of the Go4less cards which entitle residents to reduced allotment fees; and
 - f) linking older and socially isolated people with good food literacy skills with younger generations in need of such skills

What is the council already doing to reduce food poverty?

4. There is a wide range of projects and programmes already in place in Norwich that contribute to tackling the causes of food poverty and supporting people in crisis, many of which are supported or led by the council. The table below sets out these initiatives categorised according to Feeding Britain's food poverty recommendations; a fuller mapping exercise is also taking place to support work going forward.

Recommended Feeding Britain action	Council delivery	Partner projects
1. Building food security		
Community food growing for low income families	Go for Less allotment discount offered to residents on a low income; some allotments let to voluntary and community groups working with local residents (e.g.	Voluntary and Community Sector, (VCS), food growing projects, including Farmshare (using council allotments) and Sustainable Living Initiative

	<p>YMCA, Stepping Stones, Assist Trust; opportunity for part plots available for residents to try out food growing</p> <p>S106/Healthy Norwich funded food growing project in Tuckswold being delivered by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)</p>	
Cooking skills	Council supported food waste reduction project funded by Sainsbury's will include provision of cooking workshops and household information aimed at reducing food waste within pilot communities	Joy of Food cookery courses being delivered via Norfolk Community Learning Service
Infrastructure to support food (landlord regulations, planning permission system)	<p>Environmental health inspections, food safety scores, food merit schemes (including healthy options, Healthy Norwich), food safety courses</p> <p>Planning policies around hot food takeaways and food stores</p>	
Skills, employability and income	<p>Provision of benefits and debt advice services directly through the council's money service and home improvement teams; via commissioning of advice services to maximise income and through social prescribing pilots</p> <p>Support for job seekers via the jobs fair and digital inclusion programmes</p>	Range of advice services, skills programmes and employability support offered across the city

2. Preventing people falling into crisis

Auto registration for free school meals	As the current system requires families to register for free school meals, focus is on increasing uptake of the benefit. Free school meals take up pilot in Lakenham using council data to target those who may be eligible was successful; there are now plans for a city-wide campaign supported by children's services	
Boosting uptake of Healthy Start	Joint working with Norfolk public health to promote Healthy Start	Promoted by public health via children's centres and health

vouchers	vouchers as part of the council's reducing inequalities action plan 2016-17; further related actions are being explored within the 17-18 plan	visitors
Council tax debt collection	The council tax reduction scheme for 2017-18 operates at 100% with no contribution from passported benefit recipients	
Information on support available	<p>Provision of information and support for tenants and residents via frontline services</p> <p>Development of <i>Get Involved</i> sharing website which will provide a one stop shop for information about available services, support, resources and activities for VCS led provision; also Better Off website</p> <p>Piloting of 'social prescribing' advice in GP surgeries and community locations to increase awareness of and take up of available support</p>	Wide range of voluntary and community organisations providing information and support for residents
Holiday food and school breakfast clubs	Council supported setting up of a new 'holiday hunger' project providing free activities session with lunch for pupils over the summer holidays in Lakenham as part of the reducing inequalities programme	FISH programme run by food bank delivering holiday hunger clubs across Norwich

3. Low cost food for vulnerable groups

Social supermarkets, community cafes, low cost home delivery models, mobile shops	<p>The council has explored options for community supermarkets that may also provide a venue for advice, personal development and skills for those requiring support into work or out of a crisis</p> <p>Council supported food waste reducing project funded by Sainsbury's will trial a 'community fridge' for sharing surplus food and is promoting an app which allows people to share surplus food</p>	<p>Provision of meals for elderly, e.g. Wiltshire Farm Food and other community-run enterprises</p> <p>Community-based projects supporting people with access to food and advice, e.g. Sunday Social</p>
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5. Supporting people in crisis

Food Bank Plus support		Food bank network operates 9 collection centres across
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(including other food aid projects), drop in kitchens		<p>Norwich</p> <p>Norwich Food Hub collects and redistributes surplus food to groups across the city who are supporting residents in need (using NCC premises); Fare Share also expanding within area</p> <p>Norwich Food Cycle provides weekly cooked meals at Friends Meeting House for people in poverty or suffering social isolation</p> <p>A number of churches and other community groups in Norwich are offering drop in or pay as you can meals</p>
Emergency cash payments or vouchers	Discretionary housing payments; food distribution to street homeless (homelessness team); accredited distributor of food bank vouchers	Local assistance scheme (Norfolk County Council)
Fuel banks	Emergency heating provision and other energy efficiency improvements (environmental strategy and home improvement teams)	Age UK scheme; grant funds for people in fuel debt

What is the recommended option for taking food poverty work forward?

6. As the table above demonstrates, there are a large number of activities aiming to tackle the underlying causes of food poverty, as well as provide crisis support, which are already being delivered in the city. Given this existing landscape, the council might most usefully play a role in working to support the joining up of projects and services both outside of and inside of the council, and to raise awareness about available support with residents. This is the approach which has been taken with the wider reducing inequalities strategy where we have had successes in facilitating the linking up of existing services, brokering and testing of new approaches and projects and engaging council services, partners and residents around the agenda.
7. There is a close relationship between the council's wider reducing inequalities agenda and the food poverty scrutiny recommendations, both in terms of related issues and a likely shared approach. Therefore it is recommended that food poverty be incorporated as a theme within the wider reducing inequalities action plan for 2017-18, rather than being developed as a stand-alone strategy and strand of activity, which risks duplication or operating in a silo. This would ensure that the food poverty actions are part of a wider approach to addressing deprivation, the plan for

which contains related actions around preventative health approaches, provision of advice and uptake of benefits (including Free School Meals and Healthy Start). The reducing inequalities action plan also has a small amount of existing resource dedicated to supporting it and a network of officers from across the council and partners supporting its delivery, whereas there is no additional resource dedicated to the food poverty agenda.

8. It is recommended that the suggested actions from the scrutiny are included within the reducing inequalities action plan as set out within Appendix 1. They broadly fall within five key areas under the objective 'work with partners to reduce food poverty':
 - a) *Provide facilitative support to food poverty related projects, including by providing networking opportunities and linking them into council services and partners* – this could range from the provision of networking opportunities for food poverty projects and the brokering of new relationships between projects and our own services or partners. An initial networking event is currently being planned for Autumn.
 - b) *Work with the community and partners to trial approaches to promoting food literacy, including via an intergenerational approach* – this action would build on an existing idea developed in the reducing inequalities action plan for 2016-17 whereby partners (e.g. Joy of Food, Age UK and children's centres) could be brought together to develop community-based food literacy projects, such as community cooking sessions or courses, principally using existing resources available within the city. However this has progressed slowly due to limited resources within the council to take forward the idea; further work may require additional resources to support it.
 - c) *Raise awareness about food poverty related projects, including available options for growing food affordably* – council communication channels and councillor networks could be used to increase awareness amongst residents (as well as with staff and partners) around food poverty related initiatives, including Go4less allotment rates and other food growing projects within the city. The Get Involved web platform could also be used to support food poverty related work by sharing best practice, skills and resources.
 - d) *Raise awareness of available financial advice and support* – this action relates to wider objectives within the reducing inequalities action plan which includes specific actions on increasing uptake of the pupil premium (based on a pilot project in Lakenham) as well as promoting wider financial advice and support.
 - e) *Explore possible funding sources for food poverty related projects, for example social supermarkets* – funding sources to support food poverty related projects could be investigated and pursued by the council or promoted to partners.

Reducing Inequalities Action Plan 2017-18

9. Cabinet agreed an approach to reducing inequalities in March 2015 which included a focus on the following areas:
 - a) Coordinating and maximising advice and support for residents hardest hit by welfare changes

- b) Maximising opportunities for residents to access apprenticeships and jobs
 - c) Ensuring the council's services, procurement and assets have maximum impact in reducing inequality
 - d) Trialling locality-based solutions to improving wellbeing amongst disadvantaged groups.
10. Subsequent reducing inequalities action plans for 2015-16 and 2016-17 aimed to join up and build on existing council activity and work with partners across these priorities, including around key areas such as fuel poverty and digital inclusion. They also developed a reducing inequalities locality pilot in the Lakenham ward, which has attracted funding and expanded into a wider partnership-based programme of work.
11. The action plan for 2017-18 aims to consolidate work which has taken place in previous years, drawing on learning from this, and continuing to develop networks within and outside of the council to support reducing inequalities. It also incorporates work on health inequalities which has been developed in conjunction with the Healthy Norwich partnership, including public health and Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group (identified as Healthy Norwich actions in the action plan).
12. Key focusses of the action plan for 2017-18 are:
- a) Embedding reducing inequalities across the council's operation - bringing together ongoing work within the council around transformation, planning and social value in procurement
 - b) Developing preventative approaches to support healthy, resilient communities – incorporating community focussed work on social prescribing, health and community enabling
 - c) Inclusive growth – a new strategic area of focus
 - d) Ongoing work around financial inclusion – including by building on learning from pilot work in Lakenham
 - e) Food poverty

A summary of the action plan is included in Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Scrutiny Committee report – item 6, 23 March 2017

Appendix 2

Scrutiny Committee report – item 6, 6 April 2017

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	13 th September 2017
Director / Head of service	Helen Chamberlin
Report subject:	Food Poverty and Reducing Inequalities
Date assessed:	15/08/17
Description:	

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The food poverty and Reducing Inequalities Action Plan (RIAP) aim to join up and create additional value from existing resource.
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP aims to support local residents to access employment opportunities as well as developing a strategic approach to inclusive growth.
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP incorporates work to promote financial inclusion.
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reducing food poverty should have a positive impact on health. The RIAP also incorporates wider work within the Healthy Norwich partnership, with a focus on reducing health inequalities in the city.

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP incorporates actions which aim to develop resilient communities where all residents can access opportunities.
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP incorporates actions which aim to develop resilient communities where all residents can access opportunities
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP includes a focus on improving the council's approach to social value through procurement, which incorporates sustainable procurement.
Energy and climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The RIAP and related work within Healthy Norwich include actions aiming to reduce fuel poverty, including by raising incomes and improving access to services.

	Impact			
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment

Positive

Aim to maximise the positive impacts resulting from the RIAP including food poverty work, including by working closely with external partners.

Negative

Neutral

Issues