

## **Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**5 December 2024**

### **Medway Food Strategy**

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#### **Summary**

The vision of the Medway Food Partnership (MFP) is to create an environment that supports sustainable access to affordable healthy food. This is to improve knowledge about nutrition along with cooking and growing skills for all, building healthier communities and better futures for everyone in Medway.

The Medway Food Strategy supports the food partnership by providing a structured framework that align with the goals and objectives.

#### **1. Recommendations**

1.1. The Committee is asked to review the Medway Food Strategy and provide any feedback or comments and to recommend the strategy to Cabinet for approval.

#### **2. Budget and policy framework**

2.1. The UK government outlines the need for a comprehensive food strategy to address food system challenges, such as:

- Poor diets and public health issues (e.g., obesity, malnutrition)
- Environmental sustainability in agriculture
- Food insecurity and inequality
- Food supply chain resilience in the face of climate change

2.2. The Medway Public Health team have worked with a range of partners to co-produce a local food strategy. Ensuring access to nutritious and affordable food is essential for improving community health, reducing diet-related diseases, and addressing health inequalities, which aligns with the overall public health objectives.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. In the UK, 7.2 million adults (13.6% of households) experienced food insecurity and of those 2.5 million adults (4.8% of households) reported not eating for an entire day because they could not afford or get access to food. This equates to 18% of children experiencing food insecurity compared with 11.7% of households with children. [Food Foundation 2024](#)
- 3.2. Single adult households with children were (nearly) twice as likely to be food insecure than multi adult households with children and non-ethnic groups are at a higher risk than other white ethnic groups. [Food Foundation 2024](#)
- 3.3. The approach taken to developing Medway's Food partnership was to:
  - establish an appropriate and representative partnership structure
  - to engage with the community and partners
  - create a vision
  - design a structure
  - lead the development and delivery of the food strategy
- 3.4. The steps taken to develop the strategy included:

**Assessment:** Analysing current food systems, surveys, engagement events, log frame approaches, research and identifying gaps.

**Collaboration:** Engagement and inclusion of stakeholders across the whole food system and forming partnerships.

**Planning:** setting goals, objectives, priorities, and actions.

- 3.5. This strategy supports the development of other policies, such as:

The Sustainable Food (Procurement) Policy  
Outdoor Events Policy  
Advertising and Promotion of High Fat, Salt and Sugar (HFSS)  
Climate change action plan  
Waste policy  
Sustainable food places award

### 4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The food strategy supports sustainability by promoting local food production, reducing food waste, encouraging sustainable farming practices, and ensuring equitable access to healthy, environmentally friendly food options, all of which contribute to long-term environmental and community well-being.
- 4.2. To support diversity, this strategy will support the inclusion of culturally diverse foods, promotes equitable access to a wide range of nutritious options, and encourages the participation of diverse voices in the planning

and decision-making processes, ensuring that the food system meets the needs and preferences of all communities.

- 4.3. The implementation of the strategy bolsters Medway's recognition as a Bronze Sustainable Food award recipient, making it one of only ten local authorities in the UK to achieve this award in 2024.
- 4.4. A tailored strategy helps the local partnership to respond to specific challenges, such as rising food insecurity, diet-related health issues, environmental impacts, and economic disparities.

## 5. Risk management

- 5.1. By not having a food strategy, this poses several risks to the community

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Increased health related issues	Increased rates of diet related disease, such as obesity, diabetes due to poor dietary choices, lack of nutrition and education	Implementation of a Food Strategy	All
Lack of engagement from partners	System partners fail to engage and support the Food Strategy, with the outcomes dependent on more than just one council department	Wide promotion of the Medway Food Partnership and the subgroups	BII
Food prices	The cost-of-living crisis and other economic factors mean that food becomes even more unaffordable for residents	Local food growers, food retailers and food charities work collaboratively to create a more sustainable local food system that minimises waste	BII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

## 6. Consultation

6.1. To ensure that a comprehensive approach was taken, consultation was held with the following:

- community members via the health and wellbeing survey
- surveys and a community engagement event held in collaboration with the University of Greenwich
- local businesses via a survey
- consultation with Medway Foundation Trust
- a healthy weight residents feedback survey

6.2. Further work will be carried out with growers and educational institutions to ensure that a comprehensive approach to the food strategy has been carried out.

## 7. Climate change implications

7.1. [The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019](#) - item 1038D refers and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.

7.2. The Strategy supports the climate change emergency by addressing the environmental impacts of food production, distribution and consumption.

7.3. By reducing food waste, food miles and promoting sustainable agricultural practices, the strategy aims to reduce the carbon emissions.

7.4. Enhance the resilience of local food systems to climate-related disruptions, ensuring food security while increasing awareness about the role of food choices supports the mitigating impact it has on climate change.

7.5. An integrated approach helps to create a more sustainable and climate-friendly food environment for the community.

## 8. Financial implications

8.1. There are no direct financial implications as result of the recommendations in this report. The activity within the food strategy that is delivered by Medway Council is funded through existing revenue budgets and are not currently projected to represent a budget pressure in 2024/25 or 2025/26.

## 9. Legal implications

9.1. There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

## Lead officer contact

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## Appendix

Appendix 1 - Draft Medway Food Strategy

Background papers

None