

Diversity Impact Assessment

Medway Food Strategy

4 December 2024

David Whiting

1. Summary description of the proposed change

The Medway Food Strategy is a long-term strategy led by an alliance between the council and stakeholders of the Medway Food Partnership. At the heart of this strategy is our vision to create an environment that supports sustainable access of healthy food, skills, and education for all, building healthier communities and better futures for everyone in Medway.

We believe food creates opportunities to bring people together to celebrate our cultures, enjoy time with friends and family and make new connections with people. Food is not just fuel – it is at the centre of everything, helping us to thrive and improve our lives. By working together, we can create more opportunities for the people of Medway to learn about food, eat healthily and reduce food poverty in a way that supports a sustainable food environment.

The strategy has been developed following discussions with a range of local voluntary and public sector partners, researching national examples of best practice, and reviewing the evidence base of effective food system interventions.

2. Summary of evidence used to support this assessment.

Local authorities have, since 1 April 2013, been responsible for improving the health of their local population and for the provision of public health services. In addition to this statutory responsibility, Medway Council's 2024 priorities include 'Improving health and wellbeing for all' and tackling obesity specifically links to Medway Council's ambition to be a 'place where residents enjoy great opportunities for employment and quality of life and lead healthy independent lives, readily accessing support when they need it most'.

Medway has a high level of obesity rates across both adults and children. Medway Council has a responsibility to implement programmes to reduce obesity along with the development of a Whole Systems approach to Obesity (WSO). Part of the WSO is to inject health into all policies (HiAP) by reviewing and recommending changes across all council policies to support the reduction in our Medway obesity levels. Given its complex nature and many different, but often interlinked causes, no single measure is likely to be effective on its own in tackling obesity.

As a result, the steps suggested by the Public Health England (PHE) (now Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - OHID) in their 2019 'Whole systems approach to obesity' publication were followed to establish Medway's whole system approach to tackling obesity in March 2020, building upon the work of the pre-existing Medway Healthy Weight Network. Multiple subgroups feed into the Medway Healthy Weight Network, one of which is the Medway Food Partnership (MFP).

Medway's Food Partnership was established on the 29th of July 2020 with the aim to engage and bring together a cross-sector of partners to work towards common goals in building a healthier food system in Medway for all residents. The Partnership is open to all private, voluntary and Small Medium Enterprises (SME), the charitable sector, as well as all public sector partners who have a part to play in the food system and health in Medway.

Following the successful launch, the Partnership has adopted a collaborative approach using evidence-based methods and best practice to create more opportunities for the people of Medway to learn about food, eat healthily and reduce food poverty in a way that supports a sustainable food environment.

The Medway Food Strategy aligns its objectives with the 6 key priority areas of the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework in achieving fundamental food system changes in Medway:

- a) Food Governance and Strategy: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action.
- b) Good Food Movement: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement.
- c) Healthy Food for All: Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food.
- d) Sustainable Food Economy: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy.
- e) Catering and Procurement: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains.
- f) Food for the planet: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food farming and an end to food waste.

A number of other councils have now also implemented their food strategy including Brighton, Bradford, Sheffield, Glasgow, London, Oxfordshire and many others.

3. What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

We anticipate that the potential impact on residents is to promote greater health equalities across all Medway residents.

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	No	Yes	Yes
Disability	No	Yes	NA
Gender reassignment	No	No	NA
Marriage/civil partnership	No	No	NA
Pregnancy/maternity	No	Yes	Yes
Race	No	Yes	Yes
Religion/belief	No	Yes	Yes
Sex	No	Yes	NA
Sexual orientation	No	No	NA
Other (eg low income groups)	No	Yes	Yes

4. Summary of the likely impacts

It is hoped that there will be a long-term potential positive impact on the health of Medway's population by implementing the actions from the Medway Food Strategy. The strategy addresses, but will not eradicate, the patterns of food inequality, which is closely aligned to wider income deprivation factors.

Overall, the strategy aims to support the Medway vision 2035 by reducing 'inequalities in health, education, economic and social opportunities'.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

We will seek to work closely with the MFP stakeholders and other food partnerships to monitor trends and implement best practices in Medway. We will also continue to engage with the Sustainable Food Places network to create lasting positive change for Medway.

6. Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Continue the engagement across community groups and third sector.	MFP Steering Group	Q4 2024/2025

7. Recommendation

It is recommended for the health and wellbeing of all Medway residents to proceed to approve the Medway Food Strategy.

8. Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Date of authorisation