

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny

DATE: 5th February 2008

SUBJECT: Access to healthy and sustainable food

REPORT OF: The Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of initiatives and proposals to improve access to healthy and sustainable food across the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the report.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

None.

CONTACT OFFICERS

Colin Cox
Assistant Director, Joint Health Unit
Krys Zasada
Head of Markets
Rachel Christie
Head of Environmental Services

Tel: 0161 234 4190
c.cox@manchester.gov.uk
Tel: 0161 234 7351
k.zasada@manchester.gov.uk
Tel: 0161 234 4916
r.christie@manchester.gov.uk

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

WARDS AFFECTED

None.

IMPLICATIONS FOR

<u>Anti Poverty</u>	<u>Equal Opportunities</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>Employment</u>
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

1. Introduction

1.1 The Committee requested a report on the work being undertaken to improve access to healthy sustainable food in those areas of Manchester where there is less access to locally sourced foods/supermarkets. Information on the use of vegetable boxes/allotments was also requested.

1.2 Around 70,000 deaths in the UK can be attributed to poor diet each year and in Manchester this equates to approximately 900. While there is some very good food available in the city, in many places fresh, healthy food is hard to find. Manchester's high levels of deprivation translate into a poor diet for many people. Too much of what is eaten in the city is unhealthy and damaging to the environment; the food supply chain has left many parts of the city devoid of fresh food, and this is often replaced by hot food take-aways. The Manchester Food Futures Strategy and Partnership, which is led and managed from the Joint Health Unit, is the city's response to the need to improve the food eaten in Manchester.

1.3 The Food Futures strategy has the following broad aims:

- To improve the health of the people of Manchester
- To protect the local and global environment
- To strengthen the local economy
- To build stronger and more sustainable communities
- To promote culinary diversity and the enjoyment of good food across the city

1.4 To achieve these aims, the strategy focuses on the following priority areas for action:

Food security and access: improving access to a wide range of high quality fresh food across the whole city, geographically and by social group

Food production: establishing local food growing as a valuable contributor to health, the environment and the local economy

Children and young people: establishing a pattern of healthy eating from conception, breastfeeding, weaning and early years right through to early adulthood thus having a positive impact on social development, health and education

Vulnerable groups: ensuring that all groups who may find it more difficult to access and consume a healthy diet are given the support they need to do so

Education, awareness and campaigns: ensuring that people in Manchester are adequately informed about food, diet and nutrition

Exerting a broader influence: Using a range of mechanisms including lobbying, purchasing / procurement power of local agencies, recognising good practice and wider promotion to achieve the aims and objectives of the strategy.

1.5 To ensure that there is a robust structure for implementing the strategy, the Food Futures Partnership has established a Board, steering group and theme groups based on the priorities of the strategy. Their key functions

include identifying practical and sustainable solutions and to ensuring that themes and priorities are delivered and co-ordinated to make best use of resources. The Food Futures Board includes two Executive Members – Finance & Human Resources (Chair) and Employment & Skills.

2. Current activity and areas for future work

In relation to contributing to the access of healthy sustainable food in Manchester, four work areas are now considered: food security & access, community engagement, growing food, and exerting a wider influence.

2.1 Food Security & Access

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Many factors impact on food security, including poverty, local availability of food, the nutritional value of the food consumed, the structure of the retail market and skill in food preparation.

2.1.1 Food Mapping

There is a clear need to understand the issues of availability of healthy and sustainable food within neighbourhoods and communities across the city, to enable resources to be targeted most effectively. Some food mapping work has already been carried out in parts of North Manchester and it is recognised that this needs to be further expanded. A project group has been established to take this work forward. This will be used to inform future work on tackling food deserts. Further information on Food Mapping can be found in **Appendix A**.

2.1.2 Markets/Retailers

Miles Platting is an area of significant long-term regeneration, under the Housing Market Renewal programme. Food mapping identified that, currently, the local retail offer is poor, especially in relation to access to fresh/healthy food. A project group, consisting of representatives from the Primary Care Trust, Manchester Markets, Food Futures, ZEST Healthy Living Project, MERCi, Ward co-ordination and Housing Market Renewal Team, was set up in 2005 to look at ways of improving food access in the short term. A number of pilot projects have been implemented including a temporary market, providing community transport links to neighbouring retail centres, and supporting the local independent food shops to improve the range, quality and marketing of their fresh food offer.

The aim of these pilot projects is to identify sustainable solutions within the community that do not rely on major capital investment, and that can be used to create a “tool kit” of potential solutions that may be applied elsewhere.

The project to support local independent food retailers is currently underway. The uptake of the market and community transport projects has not been sufficient to make them sustainable and both projects are now closed. However, the lessons learnt from their evaluation are being successfully applied elsewhere. These include Northenden specialist food market and Abbey Hey School playground market. One of the key lessons learnt is that for these projects to work at a local level they need the active support of the community. How best to mobilise that support remains a challenge.

All of these food access pilot projects require support funding to cover start-up costs. In the case of Miles Platting and Northenden markets this was in the order of £15k, and it is only if they are financially sustainable that they can continue as longer term projects.

Another food access pilot currently underway relates to Newton Heath. There has been a privately operated general retail market in this area for several decades. That operation appears to be in decline. Equally, the current retail food provision is limited. Manchester Markets have been asked to produce an options appraisal of alternative market provision for the area, pending the implementation of major regeneration proposals.

2.1.3 Local research study

Food Futures, Manchester Markets and Regeneration have commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to examine the role that Local Authorities can play in improving access to food in neighbourhood centres and also the wider role local food access plays in supporting the local economy and sustainable communities. Specifically they are addressing the following research questions:

- What is already known about the role of community food initiatives, independent food retailers and retail markets in improving the performance and sustainability of neighbourhoods?
- What role can local authorities play in supporting this?
- What can practically be done in Manchester?

The final report from the study is currently being produced and should be available towards the end of February.

2.1.4 Herbie

Food Futures continues to support Herbie – the mobile greengrocer run by MERCi, an independent environmental charity based in East Manchester. Herbie runs 2 vans bringing good quality affordable fruit and vegetables, sourced from New Smithfield Wholesale Market, to areas in North and East Manchester where access to these foods is poor.

2.1.5 Areas of future activity

It is proposed to begin discussions with major food retailers, to see how they might contribute to improving access to healthy and sustainable food at a community level.

3. Community Engagement

3.1 Collaborative community and voluntary sector commissioning project

3.1.1 In 2006/7 Manchester Food Futures allocated money through a small grants programme to fund community and voluntary sector groups to carry out projects that contributed towards Food Futures priorities. This enabled valuable work to be done.

3.1.2 This year, Food Futures is commissioning work within the sector on a collaborative basis, whereby local groups have been invited to work together to deliver work around four priority areas:

- Increasing cooking and nutrition knowledge and skills
- Developing sustainable allotment infrastructure and facilities
- Improving food for homeless people
- Enriching food for older people

3.1.3 The first event for this programme took place in December and it is expected that projects will start delivering in March.

3.1.4 100 days

The 100 Days campaign, commencing on 14th February 2008, is now in its fifth year.

This year, some residents and schools have expressed interest in delivering 100 Days projects that encourage learning about, and producing locally sourced and healthy food.

In Newton Heath, the long running Ascot Road Allotment project is due to be completed as part of the 100 days campaign. Residents, along with the unpaid work unit, have been helping to create dedicated raised beds on one of the allotment plots for all four primary schools in Newton Heath - the project is due to be signed off and the beds officially handed over to the schools in February or March.

The Environmental Campaigns team, along with PACE (physical activity referral scheme run by the Primary Care Trust) and MEEN (Manchester Environmental Education Network), will be working with each of the four schools to get them involved in growing their own fruit and vegetables all year round. This will help support the eco schools and Food Futures, in helping children understand where their food comes from, how its grown (organically) and what fruit/vegetables should be grown within each season, helping

children to identify the 'food miles' that some of our food has travelled by the time it reaches the supermarket shelves.

In Cheetham Hill, a community guardian will be working with the local schools to show children where their food comes from and how it is grown. He will take classes to his allotment plot and the pupils will grow seasonal vegetables and fruit.

Further information about this year's 100 Days campaign can be found in the report elsewhere on this agenda.

4. Growing Food

4.1 Allotments

Further developing the infra-structure of the City's allotments and supporting people and groups to be involved in growing food has been identified as a Food Futures priority. To support this, Groundwork have secured funding through the Big Lottery Wellbeing Programme to carry out a three year project with two allotment sites – Gorton Reservoirs and Woodhouse Park.

A project officer has been employed to work with the community and allotment societies with the aim of encouraging individuals and groups from disadvantaged areas to get involved in maintaining allotments in order to improve physical and mental well-being. The project will encourage sustainable allotment use, physical exercise, social interaction, healthy eating and mental stimulation.

4.2 Community orchards

In 2006 as part of the BBC *Breathing Places* campaign, the BBC and Manchester City Council's *Wildabout Manchester* campaign, joined forces to run a project to create ten new 'breathing places' in schools across the city.

In a project that pulled together biodiversity and food production, a competition was launched to create School Orchards. Twelve schools were selected, some of which already had plots for growing vegetables.

The orchards have been made up of apples, pears and plums mainly from locally native varieties. The project not only enhances the area's biodiversity by introducing new trees, but also focuses on giving pupils basic information about where food comes from and how to use it. To make sure that fruit was available quickly, the trees were planted some soft fruit (strawberries and raspberries). Some of the trees are expected to bear fruits in Summer 2008.

Manchester City Council has also supported an orchard project in collaboration with the Booth Centre and one of its partners - the social enterprise, Phoenix Landscapes.

4.3 Schools

A number of schools across the city are involved in growing food, ranging in scale from small gardening clubs to full-scale allotments. St Margaret's Primary School in Whalley Range has developed a community food growing garden through the 'Friends' association. A pilot is shortly to start in Ravensbury Primary School to use food grown in the school grounds in school meals.

The Eco-Schools programme aims to raise awareness amongst the whole school community on a range of environmental issues.

Through this programme, many schools are now growing fruit and vegetables in containers, hanging baskets and some have vegetable plots and mini orchards. This can support both the Healthy Living and School Grounds themes.

Over 70% of Manchester schools are registered Eco-Schools, significantly above the average in England of 27%.

4.4 Areas for future activity – Growing campaign

The Food Futures Growing Food Group is developing plans for a communications campaign, to be run in early spring, focused on encouraging people to grow food at home. This will include provision of necessary equipment (containers, compost, seeds) and instructions and support to grow a limited range of simple crops, dependent on the space people have available. It will include taking contact details of people who are interested enough to take up the kit, so we can stay in touch and build on this initial campaign later in the year.

5. Exerting a broader influence

5.1 Fair Trade

Fairtrade food has become a familiar sight on the supermarket shelves and has changed the way many of us shop and think about the people who provide our food.

Manchester City Council unanimously passed a motion to support Fairtrade and asserting its commitment to trade justice, which was adopted on 4th February 2004. The Council resolved to take the lead in achieving Fairtrade City for Manchester, by, amongst other things:

- Seeking to make Fairtrade products available in its catering outlets, vending machines etc
- Promoting Fairtrade products in its publications, and
- Allocating responsibility for Fairtrade within the strategic performance plan.

The Council has also worked with local business through our Environmental Business Pledge to ask employers to provide Fairtrade beverages to staff and workers.

This year the Fairtrade Steering Group, led by the City Council, is planning a series of events throughout Fairtrade Fortnight ranging from a photographic exhibition at Whitworth Art Gallery to cookery sessions with some schools in collaboration with local chef Simon Rimmer.

5.2 Workforce

The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee has discussed actions that could be taken by the City Council and PCT to tackle obesity through action in their own workplaces. Food will clearly play an important part in these discussions, which will include piloting a 'Fruit on Desks' scheme. This will involve selling fruit at cost in selected workplace sites to draw attention to important health messages and improve access to fruit as snacks.

5.3 Food and Drink Festival

In order to encourage the local food and drink industry to think more about healthy eating, Food Futures works with Festival organisers and sponsors the Healthy and Sustainable Eating Award. This year the winner was Barburrito in Piccadilly Gardens. Food Futures also took part in the Festival healthy eating day in Albert Square on 10th October and helped to coordinate a range of partners to contribute including the Food Standards Agency and Yummy Mummies community project.

5.4 Food Futures Certificate

Food Futures also works with the Food and Drink industry through its certificate scheme that rewards and promotes establishments that are helping to make Manchester healthier through their provision of healthy and sustainable food.

6. Conclusions / recommendations

- 6.1 The report highlights the complexities involved in trying to ensure communities have access to healthy and sustainable food. A wide range of issues need to be considered, including the longer term strategic plans for the areas, the scale and scope of the interventions possible, the scale of support funding available, the degree of community support, and whether successful interventions can be built into regeneration plans.
- 6.2 The development of a tool-kit approach to potential solutions, makes effective use of limited resources, by identifying and communicating lessons learnt, so avoiding "re-inventing the wheel".
- 6.3 Members are asked to note the content of the report.

Appendix A

Food Mapping

Introduction

Food Mapping allows policy makers to identify areas where access to healthy food is poor / food deserts exist. A food desert is defined as an area where people experience geographical and financial problems in accessing healthy food. Food mapping should take account of public transport and socio demographic information as well as location of shops and what they sell. This then should provide a robust evidence base for the most effective targeting of resources to improve access and also acts as a baseline to allow changes in food access to be tracked over time.

Food Mapping in Manchester

Manchester PCT carried out food mapping in the 8 wards of North Manchester. This involved researching the availability of a range of staple foods within stores across the ward. This work contributed to the identification of Miles Platting as a food desert and subsequent pilot Market.

Alongside this, the Food Premises database used by Environmental Health holds information about food retail businesses by category (e.g. butchers, convenience store etc) This data can be displayed in a Geographical Information System (GIS) to allow further analysis such as number of households living a certain distance from a shop.

Challenges and limitations of food mapping

The food retail industry is constantly changing which makes the collection of food mapping data and the accurate upkeep of information difficult. Simply relying on broad category of store as an indicator of what is sold can be at best inaccurate and at worst misleading. Convenience stores vary enormously in what is sold and even within one store what is stocked varies over time depending on supply and demand issues. This level of data also does not take into account issues of affordability and opening times, which also impact on food access.

It is therefore necessary to combine this macro-level data with other local intelligence about food access in neighbourhoods to highlight areas where further assessment and intervention may be required.

Community needs assessment

This is qualitative and quantitative research carried out at a neighbourhood level to gather detailed information about food access issues in an area including eating and shopping habits, transport issues, range of food available, opening times, community safety issues etc. It can involve local retailers, community leaders, local councillors, area based staff and local residents. A good community needs assessment results in high quality information and engagement of communities in food issues, but is time and resource intensive.

Next steps

A project group with representatives from Manchester Markets, Planning, Greater Manchester Transport Executive, Environmental and Health, Manchester PCT and Food Futures has been formed to take forward food mapping in the City. This group will assess the most effective, value for money means of identifying areas for intervention, identify necessary resources to carry out the work and oversee the dissemination of the findings to ensure necessary interventions are actioned.