



Subject:	Update on the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership
Date:	9 November 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">I. Note the report documenting the progress of the Sustainable Food Ambition as part of the Belfast Resilience Strategy; andII. Agree to allocate £30,000 of existing City and Organisational Strategy budget to develop a 3 year Sustainable Food Strategy for Belfast.
3.0	Main report

3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>This report gives Members an update on work that has been taking place on the development of a Sustainable Food Partnership for the city and seeks members support for the development of a city-wide food strategy for Belfast.</p> <p>In 2020, the Belfast Resilience Strategy identified Sustainable Food as an ambition for the city, stating that there is a need to examine the climate impacts and opportunities for an ongoing and city-wide programme of healthy and sustainable food, which will be critical to Belfast’s resilience as a city.</p>
3.2	<p>In 2021 Belfast signed up to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration which is a commitment by local and regional governments to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies and a call on national governments to act. There is a recognition of the need to integrate climate issues and join up sustainable food working across the city in order to address some of the issues faced by Belfast and the region in terms of access to fresh, nutritious food, reversing biodiversity loss and reaching carbon net zero.</p>
3.3	<p>Belfast City Council’s Climate Team appointed a consultant team in 2022 to undertake engagement and research to review the existing Sustainable Food Places Bronze accreditation and propose a framework that would allow for the renewal of the Bronze Award and potential progression to Silver and Gold. The Council was also successful in June 2022 in securing funding from SFP for a 1.5 day per week Food Coordinator role to support this work for 2 years. The findings of the research conducted by Social Farms and Gardens, Dr Sinead Furey, Ulster University and Beth Bell, Food Ethics Council have been developed into a series of recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a need to join up food work across through the establishment of a Sustainable Food Partnership for Belfast which should be supported by the Climate and Inclusive Growth Teams in Belfast City Council. The proposed governance structure for this is shown in Appendix 1. 2. The new Sustainable Food Partnership should report into the Resilience and Sustainability Board, and be advised by the Living Here Board, to strategically align its work across the city with the priorities of the Belfast Agenda and build greater sustainability around the network. 3. A priority for SFP is the need to address the cost-of-living crisis and food poverty in the city by taking a holistic approach to building more sustainable, affordable and healthy food system for Belfast. It is recommended that work on food security should therefore sit within the SFP structures to ensure an integrated and sustainable approach to addressing these issues.
3.4	<p>Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and progressing from Bronze to Silver status</p> <p>The Sustainable Food Partnership was re-established in August 2023 and is made up of a range of multi-sectoral partners, with secretariat support provided by the BCC Sustainable Food Coordinator. Further coordination internally across BCC is currently being considered, with an officer workshop planned in November to map sustainable food work in the Council and identify where value can be best created by coordinating across Council workstreams.</p>

In September 2023, an application was made for the city to renew its Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award. In order to progress to Silver, the Sustainable Food Partnership will need to develop a Sustainable Food Strategy for the City which should be co-designed by the partners and develop workstreams across six key areas of the food system:

1. Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action;
2. Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement;
3. Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food;
4. Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy;
5. Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local and sustainable food supply chains;
6. Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste.

A sustainable food strategy for Belfast would allow the Partnership to map the current baseline of sustainable food activity in the city, align current workstreams that are underway, create a shared vision for sustainable food and what it looks like for the city, and develop a series of strategic themes that will catalyse collaboration and action in these areas for added value and to the benefit of residents, businesses and government.

A Sustainable Food Strategy for Belfast would also support the achievement of the city's climate and resilience goals which include reducing carbon emissions, reducing waste going to landfill, promoting positive behaviour change, helping grow the community and urban growing sector to produce and supply more fresh, local healthy produce in areas of need, and improve biodiversity through promotion of more sustainable food production methods.

3.5 **Next steps**

There is a substantial body of evidence and engagement which now needs to be collated and synthesised, along with wider public engagement and collaboration to develop a 3-year Sustainable Food Strategy for the city. This will include relevant impact screenings and assessments where identified.

It is estimated that the development of a 3 year Sustainable Food Strategy for Belfast will cost £30,000. This covers the cost of a suitably qualified consultant to carry out desktop research, engagement, develop a vision and strategic themes for the city, as well as identify a costed action plan for taking forward and securing investment and funding. It also covers the development of a Communications Strategy, and participation at key events taking place across the city such as the Imagine Festival to raise awareness, interest, and engage people on a sustainable food vision for the city

3.6 Financial & Resource Implications

Approval is sought to allocate £30,000 of existing City and Organisational Strategy budget for the development of a City Wide Strategy for Sustainable Food in Belfast in this financial year.

3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u> Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Governance Structure of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership