

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Food Poverty</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>16 October 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Public Health</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report responds to the Notice of Motion regarding food banks submitted to Council on 8 May 2014; then referred to 11<sup>th</sup> July P&R. Following discussions at this meeting Members requested a full officer report on the issues, incidence and response to food poverty in the city.
- 1.2 The Corporate Plan (2012/15) sets out 3 externally facing key priorities, one of which is 'tackling inequality' for a fairer city.
- 1.3 The increase in the use and number of food banks in the city can be attributed to a number of difficult national and local economic factors such as debt, low wages, insecure jobs, rising household expenses and changes in public spending on benefits. These circumstances combined can create significant underlying financial problems with food bank use one of the symptoms.
- 1.4 Brighton & Hove was one of the first places in the country to adopt a systemic Food Strategy and action plan and the latest version of this – 'Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper (2012)' provides an overarching framework and vision where 'everyone in the city has the opportunity to eat fresh, healthy food from sustainable sources'. Work on the strategy is co-ordinated by the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership.
- 1.5 The City Council adopted a new Financial Inclusion Strategy in March 2013 which has led to the commissioning of a community banking partnership – known locally as Moneyworks Brighton and Hove. This commission responds to the underlying issues for people experiencing food crisis through the provision of advice, banking, credit, savings, and educational opportunities.
- 1.6 The Food Partnership is a named Moneyworks partner supporting signposting and advice for people at first point of contact and the inclusion of food poverty in the strategy is innovative nationally.
- 1.7 The council is also delivering a Fuel Poverty programme which makes the relevant links to food issues; recognising the 'Eat or Heat' experience of many.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee supports the council's approach to food poverty which focuses on addressing the underlying causes of food poverty through the financial inclusion strategy and the work of the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the various forms of research underway that will help us understand more about the causes and impacts of food poverty in the city.

## 3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 3.1 What is food poverty and why is it an issue?

Sustain, a national food alliance organisation, states that food poverty can be defined as 'the inability to obtain healthy, affordable food'.

People on low incomes continue to struggle to afford a healthy balanced diet with the poorest households in the UK spending the largest percentage (upwards of 30%) of their income on food. Recurring poor access to an adequate diet is detrimental to health. Diets that lack fresh food and vegetables and are high in salt and fat contribute to diet related diseases including coronary heart conditions, diabetes, strokes, obesity and some cancers.

Evidence demonstrates the contribution of food and nutrition to mental wellbeing and the development, prevention and management of some specific mental health problems and the impact of poor nutrition on children and education attainment are widely acknowledged. Nationally it has been identified that those most likely to experience food poverty are: people on low incomes or unemployed; households with dependent children; older people; people with disabilities; and members of BME communities.

Food poverty is therefore often a 'symptom' of an underlying poverty problem described and tackled in the council's Financial Inclusion Strategy. Financial difficulty can include over indebtedness (as a result of pay day lending, bank charges or loan sharking), low wages and/or uncertain unemployment. It is also the case that food poverty itself can create financial exclusion, for example missed meals leading to ill health and therefore job insecurity.

The Brighton and Hove Advice Partnership recently undertook some research that indicated that delays in benefit payments and sanctions were having a significant short term financial impact for some people and emerging research from the Trussell Trust and others indicate that this can lead to a need for 'emergency food'. People on low incomes often have no savings leaving them without a safety buffer – if an unexpected expense comes along (such as a broken boiler) then it is the food bill that is flexible and has to give.

### 3.2 Food banks in the city

There has been a significant growth in food banks nationally and this is reflected locally. There are currently 12 food banks in the city plus one in Shoreham, which

is accessed by some Brighton & Hove residents. Collectively they give out food parcels to approximately 270 households per week.

This compares to approximately 6 food banks in July 2013 giving out roughly 220 food parcels, and around 2 food banks in July 2012.

Furthermore, at least 2 new food banks plan to open soon. These will include the first Trussell Trust affiliated food bank in the city, in Whitehawk (although Shoreham food bank, just outside the border, is also Trussell Trust) plus a food bank aimed at communities in Hangleton and West Blatchington.

Most food banks in the city are run through local community, voluntary and/or faith organisations and are positive examples of communities volunteering in response to a local problem in collaboration with third and statutory sector partners.

The council are also running banks supporting vulnerable families with children under 5 through its Children's Centres at Moulsecomb, Whitehawk and Tarner with one in development at Hollingdean Children's Centre.

Appendix One illustrates all of this provision on an emergency food map created by the Food Partnership. It is also available at the following link: <https://mapsengine.google.com/map/viewer?hl=en&authuser=0&mid=zcWOGWUX124I.kCv4YZ7vjlyE>

All food banks are accessed through a referral process which means there can sometimes be a wait for more regular food parcels; although most will try to accommodate emergency need. In support, the Food Partnership has provided a very helpful infographic showing the referral process. A copy is attached for information at Appendix Two. This also sets out how to find an immediate low cost or free meal and how to be linked into longer term food poverty solutions such as growing clubs and lunch clubs.

It is worth noting that different food banks operate slightly different referrals process and criteria; for example some banks are based in neighbourhoods and operate a postcode referral system and some are for families of under 5's only.

### 3.3 Access to good quality advice and information

Financial inclusion is defined as the ability of an individual, household, or group to access appropriate financial services or products; have enough resources for basic costs and be able to cope with unexpected bills and emergencies. Without this ability people are often referred to as 'financially excluded'. The Council's financial inclusion programme has responded to this by bringing together all of the money and debt work in the city through a new Community Banking Partnership, now launched as Moneyworks Brighton and Hove. This has recently attracted additional investment from the DWP and includes the Food Partnership is a key partner.

Through this service residents have access to a single money advice line (**01273 809288**) which will signpost to emergency support (including food) and also work

with the client to address the underlying financial difficulties Furthermore there will be educational provision focussed on budgeting and fuel/food awareness. The line has only just opened but already advisors are reporting food issues as a top priority.

The Food Partnership will train all of Moneyworks team in food poverty issues and will sit as a core partner on the steering group. The Council and Food Partnership have also worked more broadly with the city's Advice Partnership (and diverse advice sector) to ensure that there is a strong link between food bank use and signposting to advice provision, including exploring the possibility of basing advice workers at food banks themselves.

Further information on Moneyworks Brighton and Hove can be found at <http://www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks/>

### 3.4 Holistic Approach

Emergency food meets immediate hunger and provides a tool for engagement and outreach. Advice responds to some of the potential causes of food poverty such as benefit delays, sanctions and spiralling debt, but community development and education deal with the early intervention and long term responses required to make systemic and lasting change.

### 3.5 Food Poverty Work in Brighton and Hove

There are currently 3 strands to the city council's involvement with food banks and wider food poverty issues:

- Partnership Working
- Organisational Response/Direct Delivery
- Commissioning and Grants

#### 3.5.1 *Partnership Working*

The council works in partnership with agencies across the city to address food poverty.

The Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (a not for profit membership organisation) plays a leading and strategic role in the city. Their aim is to create and support a healthy, sustainable, fair food system. Their work includes work with individuals in neighbourhoods across the city, support for community food projects and influencing policy.

The council is an active member of the Food Partnership and supports the work through its discretionary grant programme and various commissions across Public Health, Children's Services and Sports Development.

As part of this the Partnership undertakes work on food poverty; this includes:

Helping to set up a Food Banks and Emergency Food Network, with the aim of:

- Mapping food bank and emergency food provision in the city; (see Appendix Two).
- Supporting and developing the referrals process for food banks; (see Appendix Three).
- Developing the link between emergency food provision and the need for advice to deal with underlying causes.
- Sharing information and good practice including increasing demand and how to address this.
- Providing evidence and briefings on food poverty (and related food matters).

Providing food poverty awareness training (some of the Council's frontline Housing Teams recently attended this, with the Public Health team attending next week).

Supporting community groups who deliver food growing groups, lunch clubs and cooking classes.

Delivering 'harvest' – a food growing project which has recently attracted £500k Big Lottery funding over 3 years to support vulnerable groups to engage in community food growing for health and wellbeing.

Delivering community weight management programmes for adults and families. These programmes, which are free to participants, combine nutrition and behaviour change advice with exercise for gradual weight loss and a healthier lifestyle, including healthy cooking on a budget.

Delivery of 'Eat Well on a Budget workshops' for target groups.

Provision of annual small grants – the 'Good Food Grants'; which awards small grants for community projects aiming to improve the health, skills and confidence of local residents through healthy eating, increased cookery skills, food growing and preventing food waste. The scheme is now celebrating its 8<sup>th</sup> year and has supported 216 projects around the city but is now facing uncertain funding.

### 3.5.2 *Organisational Response/Direct Delivery*

In addition, to its partnership work the council provides a number of services directly:

The council's Housing Inclusion Team refers people to the food banks but also deliver food parcels directly to council tenants and leaseholders who are housebound. They have commissioned the Food Partnership to deliver food poverty awareness training to frontline staff so that early signs of food poverty are spotted and dealt with.

Children's Services runs several food banks from its children's centres and will provide food parcels for families with children under 5 through a referral from a Health Visitor or Children's Centre worker. A package of advice is provided through links to the Family Information Service. The centres offering this service are:

- Tarners Children's Centre
- Roundabout Children's Centre (Whitehawk)
- Moulsecoomb Children's Centre

- Hollingdean Children's Centre also has a food bank in development and due to open in the next 3-6 months.

The City Services team has recently introduced food collection points at key customer service centres such as Bart's House and these donations are collected by FareShare.

The Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) is available to people on means-tested benefits or tax credits where they are facing an unforeseen emergency which can include food shortage, for which supermarket food vouchers are provided and this is seen as important lifeline in emergency food provision. The LDSF Scheme Manager is a member of the Emergency Food Network to ensure joint working.

The free school meals service and recent introduction of universal free meals for infants is an important element of tackling food poverty and related nutritional problems. Anecdotal evidence locally suggests that children eligible for free schools meals often return to school malnourished. Recently a local faith organisation established 'Chomp' – a project offering children free meals during the holidays and this has reported very high levels of take up. In addition the council's School Meals Team are coordinating a free school meals take up campaign; ensuring those that in need are benefitting and thereby pass porting pupil premium income to schools.

The sheltered housing service is hoping to develop a range of lunch clubs and cooking projects with its tenants.

The council's Family Information Service provide a wide range of advice and support in relation to money and debt issues and will also signpost and refer families to food banks, particularly those at children's centres which are ring fenced to those with children under 5.

Adult Social Care commission the Royal Voluntary Service to provide Community Meals for approximately 200 housebound people in the city. Commissioners are currently working with the provider to review this service and consider how people's needs might best be met in the future.

### 3.5.3 *Commissioning and Grants*

Across the council the three year discretionary grants programme and various commissions address food poverty issues. These include:

A £22,156 investment in 'FareShare', which is the city's key food collection and distribution project. The funding is comprised of a Three Year Grant of £12,000pa (until March 2016) from the Communities and Equality Team and a Service Level Agreement of £10,156pa from Public Health (also until March 2016). As the main food distribution charity in the city FareShare supports and provides food to most of the food banks in the city as well as numerous lunch clubs, homelessness projects and cooking projects.

Our new Moneyworks financial inclusion commission will offer first stop advice and signposting regarding food poverty issues and the Food Partnership are a partner in the wider programme.

In addition, the city's third sector advice agencies (BHT, CAB, MACS, etc) also provide first stop signposting and advice to food banks and are working with Food Banks to embed advice into emergency food provision to tackle underlying problems facing families. The Council funds these agencies across numerous grants and commissions.

The Public Health Team provide and administer a Healthy Neighbourhood Fund and this is most frequently used by neighbourhood based groups to fund food initiatives including lunch clubs and after school cookery projects.

Finally various third sector organisations funded through the three year and annual grants programme provide food banks and/or other community food offers such as lunch clubs. Although our funding is not directly for this provision, its investment in core costs enables organisations such as the Brighton Women's Centre and Unemployed Families Project to deliver these services as part of their package.

### 3.6 Other Work

'Its Local Actually' is an online directory provided by the Federation of Disabled People. The directory allows a user to do a postcode related search to find activities and support within their neighbourhood. It includes a wide range of information about lunch clubs, which are particularly important for vulnerable groups such as older people. Their 'Connect' project also provides help to enable people to get to local activities

The council's Sustainability Team are currently exploring the possibility of further resource / projects together with colleagues from Housing, Public Health and the Food Partnership to support food poverty work alongside other third sector partners in the city.

In common with the rest of the country, local supermarkets offer food collection points which are used by FareShare. TESCO will now top up food donations by 30% and there are regular food donations and deliveries to the FareShare premises in Moulsecoomb.

### 3.7 Understanding Need and Demand

It is important to recognise that food poverty is a cross cutting policy issue – both in terms of cause and response. It has implications for health, education, housing, regeneration and equalities. This was recognised in the JSNA chapter focussing on 'good nutrition and food poverty'; <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/jsna/jsna-6.4.6-Good-nutrition-&-food-poverty1.pdf> but there no is no clear single definition and a lack of accurate data nationally and locally.

However, there are a range of ways in which we are obtaining better information and data about food poverty in the city:

- The council's Public Health team have commissioned research on welfare reform impacts which is now underway.
- A new question is being piloted in the council's annual City Tracker survey, as follows and the full survey and results will be available by the end of the year.
  - § Question: Thinking about the next year, how much do you agree or disagree that you will have enough money, after housing costs, to meet basic living costs? By this I mean to pay for food, water and heating?
  - § Answer: Strongly agree, Tend to agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree
- Similarly the Health Counts survey asks questions about access to food and the details of this are included in the JSNA chapter described above.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

In developing the financial inclusion strategy (which includes a focus on food poverty) the council explored a number of alternative options in its report to P&R in March 2013:

- 4.1 Option One: Do nothing. This would leave residents vulnerable to financial exclusion, such as falling into debt, increased risk of homelessness and health problems associated with food poverty. In addition, there are corporate risks around the failure to collect Council tenant's rents and with Council Tax payments across the City.
- 4.2 Option Two: Provide temporary resources to 'plug gaps'. This may help in short term and offer some residents useful support but is not sustainable. Additional funding for Financial Inclusion will be difficult to obtain in future years, so it is necessary to promote and develop a sustainable model which the Strategy articulates.
- 4.3 Option Three: Supporting financial inclusion as set out in the strategy and implementation plans is the preferred option because it tackles the root causes of financial difficulty and food poverty.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The City Food Strategy, Financial Inclusion Strategy and related needs assessments were produced in consultation with a range of stakeholders in the city. The current welfare reform impact research will consult with residents affected by poverty issues directly as will the City Tracker, Health Counts and Local Intelligence Surveys.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report describes how the city's council approach to food poverty focusses on the underlying causes driving the need for food bank use. The financial inclusion strategy and related Moneyworks commission means that we are providing vulnerable people with money advice, banking, access to affordable credit and financial education at the same time as using our grants and commissioning programmes to underpin food projects including food banks for those facing crisis.
- 6.2 The city's Food Partnership is at the forefront of leading the city's wider food poverty work recognising that food poverty is a long term and systemic issue that is much more than just food banks. Their work includes projects that tackle cooking, growing, and securing access to affordable healthy food in the long term.
- 6.3 Through the council's tripartite approach of working in partnership, directly delivering services and commissioning others we are focussed on a holistic and sustainable approach.

## 7. Financial and other implications

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The resources to support this approach are funded through the Financial Inclusion project, community and public health budgets. Future resource needs will need to be reflected in the 2015/16 budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley*

*Date: 3/10/14*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert*

*Date: 29/08/14*

### Public Health Implications:

- 7.3 Food poverty is a major issue for public health and much of the work described in this report is supported by public health funding. Those living at risk of financial exclusion and related food poverty issues are exposed to increased numbers and incidence of mental and physical ill health.

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 An equalities impact assessment has been completed with regard to the Financial Inclusion Strategy and this identified the key people and places in the city most affected by financial difficulties. There are specific and further considerations relating to housebound people with regard to food poverty which

are being addressed by Adult Social Care in their service planning moving forward.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 There are strong links between improved city financial inclusion and sustainability. A focus of the city's One Planet Living sustainability action plan is reducing residents' utility bills and increasing community resilience in the face of sharply rising energy bills, food and transport costs. There is a focus on reducing costs to residents in ways that will also have environmental and health benefits, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions and water use; encouraging more local growing and healthier, cheaper food choices. Unnecessary food waste costs the average UK family £5 per week and improved education and advice can reduce this, and hence the large volume of food waste generated by city residents. Reducing inequality is an integral part of the city's approach to One Planet Living.