

COUNCIL

DATE	18 th July 2024
REPORT OF	Cllr Ron Shepherd, Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Helen Isaacs, Assistant Chief Executive
SUBJECT	Food Providers
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	N/A

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Facilitating the availability, affordability and safety of food provision in North East Lincolnshire supports the Council's stronger communities priority. Our vision for the health and wellbeing of residents includes wanting people to be informed, capable of living independent lives, self-supporting and resilient in maintaining/ improving their own health. This is, in part, underpinned by healthy eating.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the meeting of Full Council on the 14th of March 2024 a report was received from Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities in respect of food bank providers. The report set out considerable activity undertaken in the preceding 12 months with and by a number of individuals and organisations across North East Lincolnshire.

Council requested that the report be deferred, and specific regard be given to addressing the points raised in the original resolution from Council in 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that this report be received.
2. It is recommended that the members of the Communities Scrutiny Panel be invited to visit the two main foodbank providers.

REASONS FOR DECISION

This report addresses points of the March 2023 Council resolution, as requested.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The resolution from March 2023 is set out in bold below and addressed in the text that follows.

1.1 That the Council continue to:

- **Work with the appointed Cabinet Member to champion the reduction and prevention of food poverty throughout the borough.**

The Portfolio Holder evidenced the extent of his engagement with food

providers over the last 12 months which has included attendance and contributions to a regular food forum meeting which takes place every 2-3 months. He continues to have oversight of work being undertaken with, and by, communities in the area.

• Continue to deliver the successful food poverty action plan currently being delivered by North East Lincolnshire Council.

There was a misunderstanding in council when the original motion was passed in that there is no specific “food Poverty Action plan”. There have been agreed actions with partner organisations that have taken place to help mitigate and support people who experience difficulties in accessing affordable food. Two major funding streams have provided capacity to support Council action in this area:

- 1) the Household Support Fund (which has funded food providers, commissioned cookery skills courses, encouraged community growing and issues summer and Christmas Food vouchers to approximately 8000 children eligible for free school meals, made direct payments to families in hardship, enabled warm spaces over winter, enabled resident with prepayment meters access to support with energy costs). A full evaluation report on the outputs and impact of the administration of the £3.2m fund is available and will be referred to Scrutiny. Funding for the period April to September 2024 was announced in March 2024 and work supporting food providers in 23/24 will continue during this period. This will include community research into the use and need for food providers, which will help inform the future work of Public Health.
- 2) The Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) which is administered by children’s services and includes food provision as an integral part to the school holiday activities it commissions - a report on HAF activity including funding for 2024/5 was considered by Cabinet in April 2024.

• Request that the Cabinet continues to monitor the local food strategy for North East Lincolnshire, we will continue to work with manufacturing, farming, retail, hospitality, food service, voluntary sectors and local community groups within the greater Lincolnshire area. The objective would be to continue the sterling work carried out by this authority and continue the strategic approach to local food supply in our area.

NEL is represented on the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership (GFLP) <https://lincolnshirefoodpartnership.org/> and have recently been successful in supporting the reestablishment of a North Lincolnshire Food Partnership. It should also be noted that the Director of Public Health’s annual report has highlighted “the Food we eat” as one of the eight wider determinants of health. This will be one of the areas of focus for the future work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

• Where possible, investigate waste food prevention of commercial surplus food.

In terms of distribution of surplus food providers do share when they have surpluses and have been encouraged to minimise waste. The food

coordinator has also, from time to time, been contacted with surplus food offers and facilitated the sharing as appropriate. In respect of disposal of food which is no longer safe for consumption this has not been possible to progress to date, but given the £1.2m announced by Government for the roll out of food waste collection from 2025, officers will seek to integrate local food banks into future arrangements.

- **That the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities report back to Council every six months on progress.**

Visits to all providers were originally envisaged to take six months but these took longer than expected, hence the delay in reporting back to Council.

- 1.2 At the March 2024 Full Council meeting an amendment was proposed as follows and remains extant:

- i) That the Food Poverty Action Plan be referred to Communities Scrutiny Panel for review.
- ii) That the Portfolio Holder refers the matter to our two local Members of Parliament to lobby on behalf of the Council for a further extension of the Household Support Fund, or a sustainable successor source of funding after the 6-month extension.

While the Council does not have a “Food poverty action plan”, it is suggested that any plans form part of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and be considered, in due course, by the Communities and Health scrutiny panels.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The accessibility of affordable, healthy food is a priority for our population given a range of poor health outcomes in NEL. The continued high level of foodbank usage is not sustainable or desirable. We will continue to address these challenges with communities through a range of initiatives including growing, cooking and education (including budgeting).

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 In respect of the outstanding motion, Council may wish to lobby MPs for further support to address food poverty.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Council will continue to work closely with community groups to understand demand, coordinate provision and provide information to the public.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 External funding identified by the Council, has enabled the employment of a coordinator by Sector Support for the last 4 years and this ceases at the end of July. The Council will revert to the pre-covid position whereby officer support will be given, but it will be limited. The VCS continues to pursue

alternative funding options for a similar role.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications arising from the report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications arising from the report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

There has been no consultation with Scrutiny on this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications associated with the recommendation to receive this report. It is understood that the Council will continue to provide limited resources to support activity and pursue external funding opportunities where available.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal issues immediately arising from the content of this report, given that it is a vehicle to advise and update as to the current position.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resource implications arising for the Council in respect of the report.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All Wards.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Council March 2023 (NEL.68) Report to Council March 2024 (NEL.89)

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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Cllr Ron Shepherd,

Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities