

Health and Wellbeing Board

March 2023

Director of Public Health Report 2022

For Information

1. Purpose

This report provides an overview of the independent Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report 2022 - “Feeding our Future”

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes the key findings and recommendations presented in this year’s report
- 2.2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board supports the implementation of the recommendations through respective organisations
- 2.3 That the Health and Wellbeing Board promotes the report across the borough

3. Report detail

- 3.1 Directors of Public Health in England have a statutory duty to publish an independent Annual Report to demonstrate the state of health within their communities. It is a major opportunity for advocacy on behalf of the health of the population and as such can be extremely powerful both in talking to the community and also to influence actions by key agencies to improve health.
- 3.2 The focus of the DPH Annual Report 2022 is the local food environment. The aim of the report is to:
 - Review the national and local evidence available on access to quality food, the food environment and food policy
 - Highlight where improvements are needed locally
 - Make recommendations on key actions for individuals, communities and organisations to provide a healthful, affordable, sustainable food environment for the future.
- 3.3 The national food plan (The Dibleby Report) made recommendations to escape the junk food cycle and protect the NHS; reduce diet-related inequality; make best use of our land; and create a long-term shift in our food culture.

The ambition in the report is for Walsall to have a sustainable, fair, prosperous food environment where good quality food is grown, available and promoted for our residents to have nutritious affordable food choices.

The culture of food in Britain has changed beyond recognition in the past 20 years. The type of food we eat, where it is sourced, how we cook, buy and dispose of our food waste have altered dramatically.

The food we eat has a profound impact on our health and wellbeing. Moving away from a culture of eating excess calories, high fat, salt sugar (HFSS) foods with low fruit & veg can improve our physical and mental health. Food brought in from hundreds of miles away, food waste contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, and a high density of takeaway outlets with a limited food offer all need to be addressed. Recent economic challenges mean that record numbers of our residents are relying on support to feed their families. It is a travesty that in one of the world's wealthiest countries, we have such need for food banks and food support.

The future food system should support health improvement, deliver high quality food and animal welfare standards, be resilient to global challenges, and should not damage nature or the planet.

There are actions that individuals, communities and organisations can take to improve the food environment in Walsall.

3.4 To inform the report, a series of focus groups were held with local residents to understand more about their food habits and their views on Walsall's food environment. This research has given insight into the complexity of factors that affect the food choices of individuals and families. The findings have informed the recommendations in the report.

3.5 The chapters of the DPH Annual Report are:

Chapter 1 - Food Glorious Food – what, why, how

- The benefits of a good quality diet , what we are eating, useful resources and apps.
- Residents' views, affordable food.

Chapter 2 - Enhancing the Local Food Environment

- Out of home food
- Regulation of food providers, growing food, food and climate change.

Chapter 3 – Maximising food policy to improve food in Walsall

- Using procurement rules, policies on advertising, waste and planning processes to improve the local food environment
- Influencing national food policy

3.6 The DPH Annual Report 2022 is included in **Appendix A**. The recommendations from the report are as follows:

I (DPH) recommend Walsall residents to:

Take steps to improve the quality and sustainability of their diets, for example by:

- Increasing the amount of fruit vegetables, fibre and water they have each day
- Introducing meat-free days to their diet
- Use free tools from websites, retailers and apps to make healthy changes
- Check the food hygiene rating of premises when buying and eating food outside the home (FSA website)
- Take up the local offer of Healthy Start vouchers, breastfeeding, cooking, growing

I recommend that local communities and community association networks should:

- Support residents with cooking skills by working together and sharing resources
- Sign up to and/or promote the Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme, Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals and the Holiday Activities and Food Programme
- Promote and support opportunities to grow food to increase self-sufficiency and community cohesion

I recommend that Walsall Council, local public sector organisations, housing, schools and businesses work together to:

- Develop planning policies which limit the expansion of hot food takeaways.
- Complete and implement an ambitious plan to reduce food waste, in line with national requirements.
- Draw up and implement a borough-wide food plan to ensure local people have access to quality food and opportunities to grow food
- Ensure the availability of water-filling points at new public developments, such as the new railway stations across Walsall
- Get residents involved in food growing initiatives on allotments and other community growing spaces.
- Promote diets with more wholegrains, fruit, vegetables, water and fibre for their staff and customers

- Join with national groups (e.g. LGA, ADsPH) to lobby for the implementation of the national food plan and national obesity strategy.
- Restrict the advertising of high fat, sugar, salt foods in areas accessible to children. As part of this, specifically encourage Travel West Midlands to follow TfL's lead and restrict junk food advertising on transport.
- Support nutritional training for their staff. For example, the "Understanding Cultural Diversity in Nutrition and Health" course
- Work with other West Midlands authorities to standardise enforcement work, for example on importing food, illegal food processing, adulterating of food and misrepresentation.
- Promote a breastfeeding friendly workplace and to make their spaces breastfeeding friendly
- Set procurement standards for food on their own sites and for contracts they let.

4. Implications for Joint Working arrangements:

- 4.1 Financial implications: It is anticipated that organisations will prioritise the recommendations from the report within their policy and financial planning.
- 4.2 Legal implications: N/A
- 4.3 Other Resource implications: The recommendations of the report indicate the partnership approach which is required to build an improved food environment in Walsall. This calls on effort from:
- Individuals
 - Local businesses and organisations
 - Walsall Council and partners

5. Health and Wellbeing Priorities:

- 5.1 Improving the food environment in Walsall contributes to the key priorities of Walsall's Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-25: (1) Mental Wellbeing and (2) Children and Young People.
- 5.2 The quantity and the quality of food we consume has a huge impact on our mental wellbeing, impacting on our mood, our relationships, energy and physical condition.
- 5.3 One of the key focuses within the DPH annual report is reviewing the food offer in those critical early years – from pre-conception to school years. Food and nutrition are an essential part of The Marmot review's key policy objective to "Give Every Child the Best Start in life"
- 5.4 Food is an important aspect of several local needs identified from the latest JSNA 2021, including healthy weight, behaviour choices and health inequalities.

5.5 The Marmot Review - Fair Society Healthy Lives also sets out as one of the six policy objectives the importance to “Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities”. A critical recommendation within this is to improve the food environment in local areas across the social gradient. There is a significant gap in healthy life expectancy across Walsall and strengthening the food environment in Walsall to be affordable, nutritious and sustainable, can have an important impact on health inequalities.

5.5 Safeguarding: None.

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