

Cabinet - 13 December 2023

Walsall Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme

Portfolio: Councillor Flint – Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces

Related portfolios: Councillor Elson – Children’s Services

Service: Public Health

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To ensure Walsall Council delivers a programme of interventions to promote and influence healthy eating and growing in early years settings, schools and communities.
- 1.2 This programme will be working with school staff, caterers and parents, as well as with community organisations and food retailers, to improve the food environment in Walsall.
- 1.3 The contract to deliver this programme is intended to be in force from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 with an option to extend two periods of twelve months (2 x 12 months) basis, giving a total maximum contractual term of 5 years.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This Cabinet report seeks approval for the award of a contract for provision of Walsall’s Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme following the conclusion of a compliant procurement process.
- 2.2 The contract for current provision is due to end on 31 March 2024. The new service has been remodelled in line with a review of the current provision, which was proposed at Cabinet on 14 December 2022. This new model has introduced some strategic elements into the service and has broadened delivery into local communities.

2.3 This is a key decision as it impacts children aged 2-11 and families in all wards across the Borough.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That, following consideration of the confidential report in the private session of the agenda, Cabinet approve the award of a contract for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027, with an option to extend for two periods of up to twelve months (2 x 12 months), with an anticipated value in the region of £1.148m to the Soil Association Limited (The) for the delivery of the Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme.

3.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to enter into a contract to deliver the Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme, and to subsequently authorise the sealing and signing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.

3.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to Director of Public Health and the Executive Director of Adult Social Care , in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for such services should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any contracts and provided they are in line with the Council's Contract Rules and any relevant legislation, including Public Contract Regulations 2015.

4. Report detail – know

Context

4.1 Prevalence of obesity and overweight for Reception and Year 6 children in Walsall are significantly higher than national average for England and have been consistently rated by the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) as amongst the worst in the country (Figure 1).

Reception (age 4-5) excess weight by local authority, 2021/22												
High percentage overweight or obese				Low percentage overweight or obese								
Local Authority	Survey estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	Local Authority	Survey estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI					
Sandwell	14.9%	13.8%	16.0%	Richmond upon Thames	5.4%	4.5%	6.6%					
Barking and Dagenham	14.8%	13.7%	16.0%	Surrey	5.7%	5.2%	6.1%					
Greenwich	14.6%	13.5%	15.9%	Trafford	6.7%	5.8%	7.7%					
Kingston upon Hull	14.5%	13.2%	15.8%	Windsor and Maidenhead	6.7%	5.5%	8.1%					
Wolverhampton	14.2%	13.1%	15.5%	Calderdale	6.8%	5.8%	7.8%					
Hartlepool	14.1%	12.1%	16.5%	Sutton	6.8%	5.8%	7.9%					
Enfield	13.4%	12.4%	14.6%	Bath & NE Somerset	7.1%	6.0%	8.5%					
Middlesbrough	12.9%	11.4%	14.4%	Central Bedfordshire	7.2%	6.3%	8.0%					
St. Helens	12.9%	11.4%	14.4%	Wokingham	7.2%	6.2%	8.4%					
Doncaster	12.9%	11.8%	14.0%	Merton	7.3%	6.2%	8.5%					
Walsall	12.8%	11.8%	14.0%	Devon	7.4%	6.8%	8.1%					
Knowsley	12.7%	11.2%	14.1%	Stockport	7.7%	6.9%	8.8%					

Year 6 (age 10-11) excess weight by local authority, 2021/22												
High percentage overweight or obese				Low percentage overweight or obese								
Local Authority	Survey estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	Local Authority	Survey estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI					
Sandwell	34.0%	32.7%	35.4%	Surrey	12.4%	11.7%	13.1%					
Barking and Dagenham	33.2%	31.8%	34.9%	Richmond upon Thames	12.8%	11.3%	14.3%					
Wolverhampton	32.2%	30.7%	33.7%	Bath & NE Somerset	15.4%	13.9%	17.3%					
Newham	32.0%	30.7%	33.4%	Wokingham	15.5%	14.1%	17.1%					
Walsall	30.9%	29.3%	32.4%	Rutland	15.9%	11.9%	19.9%					
Middlesbrough	30.4%	28.3%	32.4%	West Berkshire	16.2%	14.4%	17.9%					
Liverpool	30.4%	29.1%	31.7%	Kingston upon Thames	16.8%	15.2%	18.7%					
Westminster	30.1%	27.5%	32.9%	Dorset	17.0%	15.7%	18.3%					
Sunderland	29.7%	28.0%	31.3%	Windsor and Maidenhead	17.5%	15.7%	19.6%					
Nottingham	29.7%	28.2%	31.2%	Devon	17.6%	16.7%	18.5%					
Stoke-on-Trent	29.7%	28.2%	31.3%	Trafford	17.9%	16.5%	19.3%					
Tower Hamlets	29.7%	28.1%	31.4%	Buckinghamshire	18.0%	17.0%	19.0%					

Source: NHS Digital, [National Child Measurement Programme 2021/22](#), Tables 3a_R_UTLA and 3a_6_UTLA

Figure 1 Rates of overweight and obesity in reception and year 6 (2021-2022)

- 4.2 Eating a good quality diet can have positive effects on our physical and mental health. It can reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, keep hearts healthy by maintaining blood pressure and cholesterol levels, keep bones and teeth strong and, help to keep a healthy weight. A good diet can also help improve our mood, give us more energy and help us think more clearly.
- 4.3 Similarly, poor nutrition is not just about “bad foods”. Both undereating and overeating (even of the “right foods”) can have adverse effects on health such as:
- overweight & obesity
 - tooth and gum disease
 - vitamin deficiency
 - heart disease & stroke
 - type 2 diabetes
 - high blood pressure
 - cancers.
- 4.4 The procurement process has been informed by national policy, local needs assessment, evidence, knowledge gained from other neighbouring procurement exercises, and a consultation with parents, stakeholders, and partner agencies.
- 4.5 The Walsall Healthy Eating Children and Families programme will provide an evidence-based approach to healthy eating which will impact not only on children while in educational settings but also improve the health and wellbeing of children,

families and the wider community. In line with the draft Walsall Food Plan, it will also promote sustainability and reduce inequalities.

- 4.6 Consultation with residents highlighted overwhelming support for healthy eating services for children.
- 4.7 Work with families and schools, Early Years and community settings provides opportunities for children to learn and develop healthy eating habits.
- 4.8 Improving children's diet and activity levels may also have wider benefits and is associated with higher academic achievement, better health in childhood and later life, higher motivation at school and reduced anxiety and depression.
- 4.9 Evidence shows that people are more likely to try new foods and make changes to their diets if they cook the dishes for themselves. The proposed contract will ensure community skills and confidence are developed through training and sharing the basics of growing food, and practical and healthy cooking techniques. Using community influence and knowledge is a sustainable way to improve the health outcomes of communities in Walsall.
- 4.10 The Walsall Children and Families Healthy Eating programme will deliver the following priorities:
 - Develop an Accreditation Scheme for Healthy Eating in early years' settings and schools.
 - Work with organisations on policies and processes to improve the dining room experience.
 - Lead a local food partnership to drive implementation of the emerging Walsall Food Plan.
 - Deliver a programme on growing food in community sites, at home and in school and Early Years Settings.
 - Use effective communications and promotional campaigns to improve food knowledge, skills and experience.
 - Train staff and volunteers in a range of community settings to deliver Cook and Eat sessions.
 - Work with local businesses and agencies on food purchasing and reducing food waste.
- 4.11 This programme aligns with prescribed/mandated services or standards for the local authority including the National Child Measurement Programme, and the DfE National School Food Standards which are monitored by Ofsted's common inspection framework.
- 4.12 Key local issues associated with food include:

Lack of Balanced Food Consumption

- 4.13 The Public Health Outcomes Framework shows that only 51.3% of adults in Walsall meet the recommended '5 a day' on 'a usual day'. Research has demonstrated that eating well in childhood will often be continued into adulthood.

Child Oral health

- 4.14 Child oral health is directly linked to food consumed. In 2021/22, about a quarter of 5-year-old children (24.8%) in Walsall had experience of visually obvious dental decay.
- 4.15 In 2019 (most current data) 5-year-old children in Walsall had an average of 0.78 (per child) decayed, missing or filled teeth (similar to national rate).

Too Much Food

- 4.16 The Public Health Outcomes Framework shows an increase from 22.3% in 2006/7 to 24.7% in 2021/22 in the proportion of reception children who are overweight or obese in Walsall.
- 4.17 For year 6, 34.6% children were overweight or obese in 2006/7 and this rose to 46.9% in 2021/22. This is significantly above the national average for both reception (22.3%) and year 6 (37.8%).

Responsible & Sustainable Food Offer

- 4.18 As in other parts of the UK, we have a culture which does not avoid food waste. Walsall Council is developing a waste strategy in line with the national environmental plan goals to use resources from nature more sustainably. The strategy includes actions to meet the national requirement for the introduction of separate weekly food waste collections.

Cost of Living and Food

- 4.19 Walsall fares particularly badly in terms of income with 44 out of 167 of its neighbourhoods (LSOAs) being amongst the most deprived 10% in England compared to 34 in 2015. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation now ranks Walsall as the 25th most deprived English local authority (out of 317), placing Walsall within the most deprived 10% of districts in the country.
- 4.20 Many of the issues that challenge the borough match the geography of deprivation. 1 in 3 residents aged under 16 years are living in low-income families, higher than the national average of 1 in 5 (HMRC, 2016). Recent resident focus groups reported that cost was a major priority when choosing food.

Exemplar and Procurement

- 4.21 The national food plan (The Dimbleby report) has stressed the need for improvements in the monitoring system for the national buying standards for food (GBSF) for public sector organisations.
- 4.22 More recently, the 2022 Director of Public Health Annual Report 'Feeding our Future' Publications - Walsall Insight (walsallintelligence.org.uk) recommended that Walsall Council, local public sector organisations, housing, schools and businesses work together to: restrict the advertising of high fat, sugar, salt foods in areas accessible to children, and get residents involved in food growing initiatives on allotments and other community growing spaces. Also, that they set procurement standards for food on their own sites and for contracts they let.
- 4.23 In response, Walsall Public Health is therefore seeking a refreshed programme to improve healthy eating for Children and families.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.24 The Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board has set three priorities for 2022 to 2025
- Mental wellbeing
 - Children and Young People
 - Our Digital Approach – infrastructure and inclusion.
- 4.25 Within the children and young people priority, specific mention is made in the Walsall Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2022-25) to ensure that Walsall Children are provided with the best start in life so they can fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to their communities.
- 4.26 Walsall Right for Children Inclusion Strategy identifies the need to involve students to build their knowledge and skills to make healthy choices and develop their independence.
- 4.27 Walsall's draft Food Plan has 4 key themes which cover:
- Good Food Choices
 - Good Food Environment in Communities
 - Responsible & Sustainable Food
 - Exemplars & Procurement of Food
- 4.28 Walsall in 2040 will be the most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances.

4.29 This will work to the following outcome from the We are Walsall 2040 Vision:

- Child Friendly Borough - “By 2040 all Walsall Children will have the best start in life with excellent support available to families to ensure they thrive”.
- Living Active - “By 2040 people in all areas of the borough will live in better health, and we will have narrowed the gap in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy across all neighbourhoods”.

Risk management

4.30 The risks relating to both the procurement and service implementation have been actively assessed and managed as part of the tendering process.

4.31 Failure to award this contract has the potential to widen inequalities across Walsall.

Financial implications

4.32 It is anticipated that the Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme will be delivered for a period of up to 5 years. This project will be funded from the existing budget within the Public Health Grant. Also, £56k has been identified from non-recurrent funding in 2024/25 to support Y1 mobilisation.

4.33 The annual budget of this contract is £220,515 (Plus £56,000 for Y1 mobilisation) and based on current utilisation levels, the lifetime value of this contract is anticipated to be £1,148m. This creates savings against the budget of £10,954, over the contract lifetime.

Legal implications

4.34 Legal Services have and will continue to work with the relevant Council Officers to ensure that the correct duly completed contractual documentation will be entered into under the Council’s Seal.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

4.35 The contract has been tendered in compliance with the Council’s Contract Rules and the PCR 2015 using an open tender process which enabled local providers to bid for the contract.

4.36 The Social Value element resulted in measurable benefits for Walsall as part of contract delivery. These should be reviewed and monitored by the Directorate.

4.37 Tenders were sought for management and delivery of Walsall’s Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme using an open procurement process which

commenced on 13 October 2023. A public advertisement was placed on the Council's e-tendering portal 'Intend' and published on Contracts Finder and on the Find a Tender Service on 13 October 2023 in accordance with Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules.

- 4.38 There were 19 expressions of interest who accessed the documentation with 2 suppliers submitting a tender. The tender evaluation model used a combination of price and technical merit/quality. The overall weightings used were Price 20% and Technical Merit/Quality 80%. Bidders were required to complete a technical questionnaire which sought to test their understanding of the service requirements as well as their capacity and capability to manage and deliver the service.
- 4.39 Tenders were opened on 13 November 2023 by Dr Nadia Inglis, Interim Director of Public Health and Olena Florek, Senior Procurement Officer, using a formal opening ceremony on the Intend e-tendering portal.
- 4.40 The non-price criteria was evaluated by a range of partners including senior officers from Walsall Council's Public Health, Community Equality & Cohesion, Trading Standards & Licensing and the Procurement, in accordance with the scoring criteria published within the ITT.
- 4.41 See table below for a breakdown of the non-price criteria:

	Criteria	Maximum Word Count/ Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
1	Social Value	2 sides A4	5%
2	Mobilisation and Implementation	2 sides A4 Plus Gantt Chart	10%
3	Engagement and Retention	2 sides A4	10%
4	Service Delivery	3 sides A4	15%
5	Recruitment & Training	3 sides A4	10%
6	Legacy	2 sides A4	7%
7	Resources and Co-production	2 sides A4	8%
8	Innovation	2 sides A4	8%
9	Data Capture	2 sides A4	7%
Total			80%

- 4.42 Following evaluation against the advertised criteria and on consideration of the outcome of the evaluation, it is recommended that the contract is awarded to Soil Association Limited (The). The total cost (including all optional extension periods) will be £1,148m from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 and including options to extend for two periods of up to twelve months (2 x 12 months) until 31 March 2029.

- 4.43 The successful tenderer will be required to demonstrate how they offer Social Value in economic, environmental and/or social benefits to their employees and residents of Walsall. The Council's Social Value Toolkit is used as a guide.

Property implications

- 4.44 There are no implications for the Council's property portfolio.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.45 This programme will target interventions to improve the health of children and families and impact future life outcomes. This will have particular emphasis on residents at higher risk of poor health outcomes and lower educational attainment.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.46 The Marmot Review and the public health white paper 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' highlighted the importance of early life interventions in improving health and reducing avoidable health inequalities across the life course. The 6 Marmot Principles were adopted by the council in September 2012.

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

- 4.47 This programme will build upon the learning from the existing contracted provision, including co-designing activities with residents from protected groups.

- 4.48 The new Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme will work in the community including, but not restricted to, working with local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, faith groups, businesses and residents' groups. This will enable engagement with underserved vulnerable populations and those who find it hard to access services.

- 4.49 The Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme is a universal service. However additional targeted interventions are provided for those schools, families and communities where greatest need is identified including:

- Communities and populations with higher risks of ill-health and health inequalities
- Educational Settings/areas with high prevalence of overweight, obesity
- Residents from Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority populations

- People with learning disabilities

4.50 The appended EQiA completed in September 2023, showed no adverse impact of the programme on people with protected characteristics. (See Appendix A)

Staffing implications

4.51 There are no staffing implications for council staff arising out of this report.

Climate Impact

4.52 Positive environmental impact may be delivered from a better understanding by residents of the impact of food on the environment. The benefit of reducing food miles through local growing of food and reduction of food waste will also be promoted.

Consultation

4.53 The principles of the programme specification have also been endorsed by key colleagues across the Council and community network.

4.54 Consultation with residents highlighted overwhelming support for healthy eating services for children as detailed in the EQiA at Appendix A.

5. Decide

5.1 That following consideration of the confidential report in the private session of the agenda, Cabinet approves the award of a contract for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027, with an option to extend for two periods of up to twelve months (2 x 12 months), with an anticipated value in the region of £1.148m to the Soil Association Limited (The) for the delivery of the Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme.

5.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and the Executive Director of Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to enter into a contract to deliver the Children and Families Healthy Eating Programme, and to subsequently authorise the sealing and signing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.

5.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for such services should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any

contracts and provided they are in line with the Council's Contract Rules and any relevant legislation, including Public Contract Regulations 2015.

6. Respond

Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations, Public Health will work with corporate colleagues to progress the completion and mobilisation of Walsall's new Healthy Eating Children and Families Programme contract.

7. Review

Once awarded, the Healthy Eating Children and Families Programme contract will be reviewed in line with the contract performance review process.

Appendices

Appendix A (EQiA)

Background papers

Service Specification

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24 November 2023



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1 December 2023