

Committee: **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **13th December 2021**
 Report Subject: **Sustainable Food Partnership Programme progress update**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr David Davies, Chair of PSB**
 Report Submitted by: **Howard Toplis, Chief Executive & Andrew Myatt, Director of Communities and Housing (Tai Calon Community Housing)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
		02.12.21			13.12.21			Local Well-being Partnership

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Committee a progress update regarding the Sustainable Food Partnership Programme.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 A sustainable food programme based on a whole system approach to preventing food poverty was agreed at the PSB meeting in January 2020. It was agreed that the lead PSB sponsor for this programme of work would be Tai Calon Community Housing.

2.2 Food poverty is a complex issue and therefore preventing it requires systemic and concerted efforts from a range of public, private and third sectors. The Sustainable Food Partnership programme aims to address a number of wellbeing goals as follows:

- Healthier wales
- More equal Wales
- More globally responsible Wales
- More cohesive Wales.

2.3 The programme takes an integrated view of food that takes into account the social, environmental, cultural, and economic aspects of food and supports the positive aspects of food as well as addressing the needs and challenges.

2.4 The Sustainable Food Coordinator has been in post since May 2021. The Sustainable Food Programme has started to take shape, building important relationships with key stakeholders influence significant factors to build the whole systems approach required to drive positive change in Blaenau Gwent’s local food system.

- 2.5 The first phase of the programme tackled a food system overview, building a map of the community food assets, conducting a stakeholder analysis and policy mapping exercise. As well as a desk-based study for the mapping element, there was an engagement process to collate the perceived food environment of residents and community groups. As a result, the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership now has a comprehensive food system overview.
- 2.6 The mapping process highlighted the community food assets in the area. It laid out the challenges, largely the high density of hot food takeaways synonymous with foods high in fat, salt and sugar contributing to an obesogenic environment. As widely recognised, this is a leading cause of diet related ill health and poor physical and mental well-being within Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.7 From engagement sessions there was little awareness of the identified community assets, and anecdotally, if there was awareness there was a sense these assets weren't accessible to them. The mapping process also identified a lack of food assets in particular areas, such as Blaina, having no immediately accessible emergency food provisions.
- 2.8 On completion of the food system overview, the next phase of the food partnership saw stakeholder development and building relationships with those identified and organically building a far-reaching cross sector stakeholder list. Meeting with many of these stakeholders built a picture of the needs and challenges in their experience and want activities were successful. This has resulted in several groups and individuals having a key role in the foundational activities of the food partnership. The accompanying food policy mapping exercise identified which local policies could align with the food partnerships aims, such as Community Asset Transfer Policy and the Decarbonisation Plan leading to important connections within BGCBC.
- 2.9 The current work has identified the many challenges facing the households of Blaenau Gwent, challenges set to become only more acute in the short term. This only goes to highlight the continued need for the strong partnership working to tackle the root causes of food poverty, the food environment and access to food being experienced in Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.10 Through committed and sustained engagement with communities and working groups, Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership will be able to set an ambitious direction for sustainable change in the Blaenau Gwent food system.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee note and accept the report and appendices as provided.

Option 2

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and provide specific comment for consideration by the Local Well-being Partnership.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This report is in-line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

Tai Calon and partners were awarded funding from NRW, in addition to funding contributions from Tai Calon, PHW, GAVO, and BGCBC through the Welsh Government EUTF Food Poverty Grant, for a part-time sustainable food coordinator to be put in post to oversee the development of the Sustainable Food Programme during 2021-22.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Due to the impact of COVID 19, people may have become more reliant on Food Banks and Independent Institutions providing emergency food supplies, which can potentially lead to further issues with food insecurity and hunger in local communities going forward.

5.3 ***Legal***

Project reports have been developed with requirements stated in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Tai Calon, the Soil Association, PSB partners including Public Health Wales, Natural Resources Wales, BGCBC and GAVO, and a Sustainable Food Programme Coordinator (once appointed by Tai Calon) will work together in partnership to coordinate the development of the programme.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

The approach is intended to prevent food poverty rather than just respond to it. Without this shift in focus there is a risk that food banks become an institutionalised fixture of Blaenau Gwent communities. Food aid should not replace the dignity and choice afforded to those who can afford to buy food.

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The sustainable food plan will cover all key food issues, including:-

- how to tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health;
- how to build a prosperous and diverse local food economy;
- how to transform catering and procurement;
- positively support tackling the climate and nature emergency; and
- end food waste.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

- Supply of good quality equipment and food, including good food surplus, in particular, larger amounts of fresh food, boosting the capacity of organisations to provide good quality, nutritious food.

- Access to new cooking equipment
- Healthier wales
- More equal Wales
- More globally responsible Wales
- More cohesive Wales.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

There have been several partnership engagement events to inform strategy and direction for the food plan. Initially there was an online food survey targeting groups that had been interested in the food partnership work which resulted in sixty-one responses. Collated with an on the street event at a Brynmawr market event further opinions were gathered to inform the general overview of people's interaction with the Blaenau Gwent food system.

- 6.3.1 The first Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership network meeting was online and acted as an inspiration event to be used as a springboard to gain momentum for the partnership. The event was well attended, having targeted twenty key individuals. This resulted in a subsequent planning meeting with an extended group in person. In this meeting, the burning issues which had been discussed were prioritised.
- 6.3.2 This resulted in two thematic working groups being established, "Food Access" looking to address the lack of coordination in Blaenau Gwent on food poverty and a "Land Use" group looking at accessing land for food growing. A Low Carbon Lunch helped to frame awareness of food and the climate. This is a key area and incredibly useful to address in the build-up to COP26.
- 6.3.3 One action the food partnership promoted was for the local authority to join neighbouring Monmouthshire and sign the Glasgow Declaration. The Glasgow Declaration calls for local authorities across the globe to lead the way placing food and local action at the heart of the global response to the climate emergency. Although the food partnership has so far been unable to see this action, there has good engagement with members of the climate assembly, with the beginnings of a Nature/Climate working group being formed. All of which demonstrate the whole systems approach being taken by the food partnership.
- 6.3.4 The Food Partnership has also made good progress attending and presenting at a wide range of forums such as Schools, Third Sector Community Asset Transfer, Economic Development and Regeneration and the Integrated Wellbeing Network. One such presentation to Deputy Minister for Mental Health & Well-being led to an impromptu and informal visit to see the good work being done to tackle holiday hunger at a local School. These actions have helped increase the visibility, build connections and shape influence within important areas of Blaenau Gwent.
- ### 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
- The Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Partnership has recently been accepted as a member of Sustainable Food Places member. The SFP network brings together pioneering food partnerships from towns, cities,

boroughs, districts and counties across the UK that are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. Blaenau Gwent's membership demonstrates that our transition to a health, sustainable and more equitable food system requires not only strong national policy but also collaborative action between policy makers, businesses and civil society at the local level.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Through the groundwork and relationship building of the food partnership, the available funding from BGCBC Food Insecurity grant has been identified as to where it would have biggest impact. This will mean funding is both well spent and fairly distributed to areas with the highest level of need. Resulting in food poverty issues being addressed with a community led place based approach.

Further direct action has seen the food partnership establish links with a new charity, The Fed Line Project who will deliver cooking on a budget workshops and recipe cards to those relying on emergency food provisions (food banks and food redistribution centres). This is also being done in partnership with Flying Start and local churches who have suitable community kitchen space. All of which are good examples of partnership working and a food partnership delivering a joined up and coordinated approach to tackling food poverty.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

One of the keys aspects of the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership has been its ability to support, guide and collaborate with groups operating in the food insecurity space. The best examples being helping with the Welsh Government EUTF Food Poverty grant, where local organisations and community groups were able to secure funding to deliver direct action, their bids helped by being members of the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership. Examples include a community growing space and healthy eating workshops for young people being delivered whilst also building their capacity to provide much need food relief in the local area.

The structure and governance of the Food Partnership has been well established through monthly meetings with the steering group. These meetings have also received support from Food Sense Wales and the Soil Association, helping build a collective food partnership presence in the Gwent region. With the partnership structure well established, it has led to the application for Blaenau Gwent to become a member of the Sustainable Food Places network, a key step in providing the platform to see sustainable long term, meaningful change.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

Tai Calon and partners recently submitted a bid for NRW funding which has been approved to fund a new member of staff for 3 days a week for a 6-month term. Supported by the coordinator, the partnership will oversee the development of a food strategy and action plan for the county borough that integrates to the social, economic, and environmental needs of its residents and community groups.

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***
The approach is built on the national principles for public engagement. There are number of established forums which support engagement of people covered by the protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
The PSB and SSG monitor progress through its strategic work programme performance management arrangements.