

Committee: **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **25<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Report Subject: **PSB Sustainable Food Programme progress update**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council**

Report Submitted by: **Howard Toplis, Tai Calon Community Housing & David Arnold, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	14.02.21			25.02.21			PSB SSG PSB

## 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Committee a progress update regarding the PSB Sustainable Food 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 Since that meeting, the programme has suffered some delays and periods where the work was paused whilst partners focussed on responding to the Covid19 pandemic. Some of this work in response to the pandemic is still ongoing but partners are now working together to progress the programme as a sustainable food partnership going forward.
- 2.3 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.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The PSB also agreed in January 2020 that the sustainable food partnership group would oversee the £23,147 capital spend awarded to Blaenau Gwent Council via the Welsh Government's EU Transition Fund Food Poverty Grant.
- 2.6 The Food Poverty Grant capital funding is to support organisations to access, store and distribute additional supplies of good quality food, including good food surplus, in particular, larger amounts of fresh food, boosting the capacity of organisations to provide good quality, nutritious food to their customers. It can be used in a variety of ways to suit the requirements in each authority, for example but not limited to: purchasing fridges, freezers and cooking equipment.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

#### 3.1 **Option 1**

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.

#### **Option 2**

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and provide specific recommendations for consideration by the Public Services Board before approval.

### 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)***

BGCBC is a holder of the EUTF Food Poverty Grant for 2020/2021 and this fund needs to be spent by 31 March 2021.

BGCBC is currently taking applications for Food Poverty Grant from local organisations/institutions to support them by providing funds for purchase of equipment needed to safely store, distribute and deliver food products to those families and individuals who need it the most in a local community.

Tai Calon and partners have recently been awarded funding from NRW for a part-time sustainable food coordinator to be put in post to oversee the development of the Sustainable Food Programme in 2021.

## 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 a further issues with food poverty and hunger in local communities going forward.

The remaining balance of the EUTF Food Poverty Grant capital funding needs to be spent by 31 March 2021. Applications for the Grant are still being received and partners are considering how any remaining amount could support the new Sustainable Food Coordinator in developing the plan.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

Project report have been developed with requirements stated in Future Generation 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.

Effective partnership working during the pandemic resulted in a number of expressions of interests for accessing part of the funding from local community groups and food organisations. The Strategic Support Group (SSG) including representatives from the sustainable food partnership considered these applications on 12 November 2020 and 18 February 2021 and approved the awarding of EUTF Food Poverty Grant funding to several local organisations providing services to tackle food insecurity.

### 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)***

The sustainable food plan will cover all key food issues and will be based on consultation with communities, businesses and anchor institutions.

Local and regional food partners attended a “Working Together to Address Food Inequality” event in Blaina on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020, before the Covid19 pandemic hit and changed the way so many services are provided. Feedback from partners was gathered about strengths of existing local provision, aspirations, and opportunities for future enhancement of services.

### 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The plan will lead to the development of an ambitious but realistic plan for changing Blaenau Gwent’s food system for the better, which will form the basis of a bid for two years of funding from the Sustainable Food Places programme to turn that plan into reality.

### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is hoped that by working together to tackle food poverty and food-related ill-health will help contribute towards a healthier, more prosperous population.

### 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Robust partnership networks already in place through PSB, SSG and other delivery groups as well as buy-in and commitment from other local partners to tackle the issue of food poverty in Blaenau Gwent.

### 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***

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.