

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 14 May 2019

City of Edinburgh Council response to the Good Food Nation Bill Consultation

Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	11, 13, 44, 45

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the Council's response to the Scottish Government consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill, approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener under urgency provisions contained within Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions.
- 1.2 To note the arrangements for attendance at the Sustainable Food Cities Network annual conference in Newcastle on 13 June 2019 by the Council's Sustainability Champion, Councillor Gordon. This was also approved under urgency provisions by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convener.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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Report

City of Edinburgh Council response to the Good Food Nation Bill consultation

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report includes the Council's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on how Scotland could achieve the ambition of becoming a Good Food Nation. The response was compiled based on feedback from service areas, discussion with the Council's Sustainability Champion, consideration of the Council's agreed position on local governance, and alignment with Council outcomes and priorities.
- 2.2 As the deadline for submission of the Council's response fell before this meeting, the Convener and Vice Convenor were consulted on the intended response, and it was approved by the Chief Executive using the urgency provisions within Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions. The response was subsequently submitted to Scottish Government. The committee is asked to note this response which is attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 This report also notes Council representation at the Sustainable Food Cities Network annual conference in Newcastle on 13 June 2019. The theme of the conference is Reaching Out: Strengthening our Local, National and Global Connections
- 2.4 A conference place was offered to Councillor Gordon as Chair of the Edible Edinburgh partnership, free of cost, along with subsidised accommodation options held for delegates. However this offer needed to be taken up by 1 May and as such was approved under urgency provisions by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convener.

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Food and Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation was published in 2014. The policy set a new vision that by 2025 Scotland will be “a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve and eat each day.” The

Scottish Food Commission was established to help develop this policy and was also tasked with advocating the importance of good food to our health and wellbeing, environment and quality of life.

- 3.2 The "Good Food Nation Programme of Measures" was published on 11 September 2018. This highlighted the significant range of work that is already being done – or is planned - to develop the Good Food Nation ambition in Scotland across the five key areas identified by the Food Commission, that is, Health, Social Justice, Knowledge, Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity.
- 3.3 The consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill was launched in early 2019 and invited views on the means to achieve the outcomes needed to realise the Good Food Nation ambition, including through legislation.
- 3.4 There is already significant activity within Edinburgh around the sustainable food agenda. The Edible Edinburgh partnership, of which Councillor Gordon is Chair, works towards developing Edinburgh as a sustainable food city and outlines actions for delivering this transformation through its Sustainable Food City Plan.
- 3.5 The Edible Edinburgh partnership is a member of the UK Sustainable Food Cities Network which supports over 55 UK cities in developing cross sector approaches to building healthy and sustainable communities by transforming food systems. The Sustainable Food Cities network hosts an annual conference bringing together cities to celebrate achievements, share experience and good practice and provide networking and learning opportunities.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The consultation response, provided at Appendix 1, states that the Council broadly welcomes the ambition in the Good Food Nation Bill to link the importance of good food to health and wellbeing and to highlight the economic and social benefits of doing so.
- 4.2 However, the response also highlights concerns about proposals to place additional duties on local authorities as the best way to meet these shared ambitions. A range of food-related legislation is already in place and local authorities are already working to achieve the outcomes stated in the Bill, through healthy eating initiatives, measures to tackle food poverty and improve health, reduce food waste, encourage resident and community growing and promote responsible production and consumption. The Bill proposals would add reporting requirements that risk diverting resources away from delivering for our communities. Streamlining the national approach to duties placed on local government was raised by the Council in its response to the Local Governance Review.
- 4.3 The Sustainable Food Cities Network Conference will be held in Newcastle on Thursday 13 June. The focus of this year's conference is on reaching out more effectively to connect with people and places, issues and solutions. This includes

connections with food and health, climate change and waste, and practical local action on supporting these and a wide range of other local issues.

- 4.4 Newcastle University, host of this year's Conference, has offered all Sustainable Food Cities Network members free conference places. The Chair of the Edible Edinburgh partnership and Council Sustainability Champion, Councillor Gordon will attend the conference.
- 4.5 This year the Edible Edinburgh partnership is hoping to achieve the Sustainable Food Cities Bronze Award, which recognises and celebrates the success of cities taking a joined up, holistic approach to food and achieving positive change on a range of key food issues. The award winners will be announced at the Conference.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Monitoring the progress of the Good Food Bill and reporting back to Committee on any implications for the Council.
- 5.2 Report back to Committee via the Corporate Policy and Strategy Business Bulletin on whether the Edible Edinburgh partnership achieves the Sustainable Food Cities Award. If successful, officers will ensure appropriate media and communications about Edible Edinburgh achieving Bronze accreditation.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1.1 Overnight accommodation and return train travel costs for Councillor Gordon to attend the annual Sustainable Food Cities Network conference.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The response to the consultation has been developed based on engagement with Council service areas led by the Council's Strategy and Communications Division, and taking account of Council officers and sections involved in the delivery of healthy eating, sustainable food and community growing initiatives and programmes.
- 7.2 The developments described in this report have been assessed in respect of the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties. In summary, they will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because they support Council action in partnership across all sectors, to reduce carbon emissions, increase the city's resilience to climate change impacts and improve social justice, economic wellbeing and environmental good stewardship.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Scottish Government Consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill](#)
- 8.2 [Edible Edinburgh – A Sustainable Food City – Progress Report](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1. Appendix 1: Good Food Nation Bill Consultation - The City of Edinburgh Council Response

Consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill – The City of Edinburgh Council Response

The City of Edinburgh Council broadly welcomes the ambition in the Good Food Nation Bill to link the importance of good food to health and wellbeing and to highlight the economic and social benefits of doing so.

However the Council is concerned that placing additional duties on local authorities is not the most cost-effective way to meet these ambitions. We feel it is important to ensure that any move to legislation is on the basis that the aims and ambitions of the Bill could not be achieved by any other means, and are not convinced that all alternative avenues have been explored.

Question 1: *To what extent do you agree with the framework proposals for Ministers and public authorities to prepare statements of policy, have regard to them in the exercise of relevant functions, and report on implementation, with regard to international obligations and guidance?*

The Council is concerned that layering new legislation on top of existing provisions may further clutter the legislative landscape, cause duplication of effort and create additional costs, including opportunity costs.

Specifically, the Council is concerned about the additional burden and costs these duties would place on local authorities, especially in relation to implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Local authorities are already working to achieve the outcomes in the Bill, through healthy eating initiatives, measures to tackle food poverty and improve health, reduce food waste, encourage resident and community growing and promote responsible production and consumption. The measures proposed in the Bill risk diverting resources away from delivering for our communities in order to meet additional reporting requirements with little evidence that this would support an improvement in outcomes.

These concerns were expressed by the Council in its response to the Local Governance Review, available [here](#). The response highlights the need to simplify the legislative landscape and shift from compelling councils through duties, to empowering local government to respond flexibly to local need and to be locally accountable for the choices it makes

Question 2: *Different sectors have a role to play in achieving the Good Food Nation ambition. To what extent do you agree that Government should encourage and enable businesses in particular to play their part?*

The Council agrees that Government should encourage and enable different sectors to play their part in achieving a good food nation and councils play a key role in supporting this at the local level through our work with local businesses, the third sector and other community planning partners, including citizens themselves. However, most of the food produced and consumed in Scotland is out with the control of local authorities. Therefore, rather than focusing on placing additional duties and reporting burdens on local authorities, Scottish Government and local government should work together to agree what requires

action at the national level, and what is required to further empower and resource councils to act flexibly at the local level, in response to local need.

Additional resources will be required to ensure local government can continue to carry out work that helps achieve the policy ambitions of this Bill now and in the face of demographic change and rising demand. This work includes direct service provision by councils, but also all we do in commissioning, procuring, engaging and supporting small businesses, social enterprises, the third sector and community groups – who all have a role to play in securing a good food nation. Councils are best-placed to consider what resources and incentives are most appropriate at the local level, and to work with community planning partners to join up investment as appropriate.

Question 3: *Accountability. Scottish Ministers feel establishing an independent statutory body for overseeing the Good Food Nation Policy is unnecessary in this instance. Statements of Policy will be laid before Scottish Ministers and published, with progress being reported every two years.*

The Council agrees establishing an independent statutory body to oversee this policy is unnecessary as oversight is already provided by existing bodies in the areas described above. Furthermore, the proposed Ministerial oversight of policy and associated reporting requirements could unnecessarily compromise local democratic accountability for prioritisation and delivery to local communities.

Question 4 To what extent do you agree with the proposal for targeted legislation relevant to specific policy areas as an alternative to a single piece of legislation?

The targeted legislation described in the consultation document carries the same risks in relation to duplication, diversion of resources and opportunity costs as those outlined above. Therefore, while the Council supports the policy ambitions in this area, it does not feel that there is a strong requirement for targeted legislation.

Should Scottish Government decide to proceed with legislation, it must make sufficient resource available to local government to meet any new duties, including reporting and policy development. This would require full and accurate estimates of all potential costs, to be agreed with local government through COSLA and the allocation of the full amount of resource required to meet them, within the context of the overall local government settlement in net terms.