

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment & Infrastructure Committee

27 October 2021

PERTH AND KINROSS FOOD GROWING STRATEGY

Report by Head of Planning and Development
(Report No. 21/196)

This report seeks approval for the Perth & Kinross Food Growing Strategy. The strategy meets the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and contributes to the Scottish Government's vision to be a 'Good Food Nation' by 2025. The final document refines the consultation draft presented to Committee in October 2020 (Report No. 20/197).

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 This Food Growing Strategy responds to the Scottish Government's vision to increase the health and wellbeing of Scotland's communities by encouraging more people to grow, and eat, fruit and vegetables. This vision for a 'Good Food Nation' is that, by 2025, 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
- 1.2 Growing food helps reconnect people with the place their food comes from, to meet others within their community, and to develop new skills. Community growing also contributes to increasing biodiversity as well as tackling climate change and food poverty, by improving access to high quality, local produce that is grown and distributed in a sustainable manner
- 1.3 Both the physical and mental health benefits of growing food help build resilience within communities, which has been especially important during the current coronavirus pandemic. The demand for allotments significantly increased nationwide (State of the Market Survey 2020, APSE) during the lock down period. Having access to fresh, affordable food as well as an outdoor space to relax and exercise in became more important for many.
- 1.4 Perth & Kinross Council does not manage any allotments directly, but leases land to allotment associations, and others may also use private land. The Council has supported the establishment of around 20 community gardens, allotments and orchards, as well as assisted communities to set up and manage allotments in Letham, Tulloch, Crieff, Kinross and Auchterarder.
- 1.5 The Council now has a statutory duty under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, to publish a Food Growing Strategy that identifies potentially suitable land for allotments and other food growing areas. Local authorities are also required to create and manage a waiting list for allotments which are owned or leased by them and make reasonable steps to

accommodate local demand for growing spaces. This duty came into effect on 1 April 2020 and a report on this matter was initially programmed for March 2020. Cancellation of the normal committee schedule combined with the disruption due to the Covid-19 response has delayed progress. The strategy will advocate partnership working between the Council and communities, underpinning the Perth and Kinross Offer. It would also support the implementation of the Council's Planning Policy 14: Open Space Retention and Provision in the Local Development Plan 2. This encourages opportunities for the provision of community growing spaces and allotments as part of new developments.

- 1.6 There are several groups and organisations in Perth and Kinross, including the Council, which have an interest in food growing and have been working to establish and improve food growing spaces and expertise. The approach to developing and delivering this new strategy will be based on collaboration with these groups as part of the development of the Perth and Kinross Offer. The aim will be to promote resources which are currently available, help create new opportunities and support those who want to grow their own food.
- 1.7 The development of this strategy has been underpinned by two periods of public engagement, one in October 2019 and another in January 2021. The initial stakeholder survey undertaken in 2019 had over 200 responses and indicated increasing interest and demand for growing. We held discussions with community groups, visited community growing spaces and reached out to organisations such as the NHS, local schools and Perthshire Organic Gardeners. The information we collected was used to develop the consultation draft presented to Committee in October 2020 (Report No. 20/197 refers).
- 1.8 In January 2021, feedback was sought on the consultation draft through an online survey and two virtual workshops. 98% of responders supported the vision and objectives of this strategy with 32 individuals and organisations suggesting that they would like to work with the Council and their local communities to create new opportunities for food growing and knowledge sharing. Following the engagement period in January, the strategy document was updated and further refined, taking into account the comments received. As the comments were supportive, no significant change has been made to the strategy approach. Changes have been incorporated to add clarity to the Strategy.
- 1.9 The proposed Food Growing Strategy forms part of the Council's wider 'Good Food' agenda which seeks to tackle a range of interlinked issues including food security; healthy eating; sustainable food economy; catering & procurement; promoting sustainable food production (growing); consumption; and resource efficiency. Planning is underway to consider the feasibility of developing a Good Food Strategy with key stakeholders and partners and exploring the viability of establishing a local Good Food Partnership as a governance model. This work will underpin the progress of the net zero and the Climate Change Action Plan and contribute to ensuring a green recovery

in a post pandemic world. A report will be brought forward in due course to provide more background to the Good Food Strategy proposal.

2. Proposals

2.1 The proposed strategy has been prepared following public consultation and is attached in Appendix 1. It includes the following components:

- background – setting the context and how this strategy links to other initiatives such as Zero Waste Perth and the Food Share Network, the range of food growing areas and the benefits of food growing.
- a vision and 4 key objectives to achieve it. The vision is that *“People across Perth and Kinross will have more opportunities and will be better skilled at growing their own food, thereby leading healthier, more sociable and sustainable lives”*.
- the current food growing position - identifying and mapping existing food growing opportunities and gaps where we know there is unmet demand.
- identification of barriers which currently prevent more individuals and groups growing their own food and suggestions on how these can be overcome.
This will include setting up an allotment waiting list; supporting communities to develop the skills to grow their own food and make healthy lifestyle choices; and identifying potential future growing spaces.
- action plan – sets out how the Council and partners will deliver the objectives. It identifies opportunities for skills and information sharing as well as the timescales and necessary resources to deliver these improvements.

2.2 It is proposed that the Council adopts the Food Growing Strategy (Appendix 1). However, whilst much of the preparatory work in developing the concept of Good Food Strategy has been progressed by officers from across the Council, it has become evident that the strategy co-ordination and delivery is not possible solely utilising current existing resources.

2.3 The statutory requirement to deliver a Food Growing Strategy has highlighted this problem and generated significant interest and additional demand for help in identifying and delivering Allotments and Food Growing Areas. The implementation of the Strategy will require both a fund to support the establishment of food growing areas and an additional staff resource to support communities find sites and set up the necessary organisational structures.

2.4 Working within existing budgets an initial one-off fund of £30,000 has been identified to support the development of food growing areas themselves. The £30k will be funded from existing budgets identified within this year, to be spent over the next few years on areas identified as necessary to take the sites forward such as topographical surveys, costs associated with planning applications, ground clearing and fencing etc.

- 2.5 The staff resources required for the delivery of this strategy are being considered in the context of the wider `Good Food` agenda and the other workstreams that would be progressed under the emerging Good Food Strategy. To maximise efficiency and provide flexibility, resources will be shared between teams and food related projects. In addition to this shared resource the identification of food growing areas; obtaining statutory consents; and the establishment of allotment associations will require an additional full time equivalent (FTE) officer. Current budgets can support at least 50% of the costs and work is ongoing to identify and fill the funding gap. It is anticipated it will be early 2022 before full support can be offered to communities to enable the funding gap to be identified and the post filled.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Perth and Kinross Food Growing Strategy sets out the Council's proposed approach to meeting the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
- 3.2 Comments from communities and other stakeholders throughout the engagement process were predominantly supportive of the strategy approach. The strategy will assist in meeting the Council's objectives in relation to health and wellbeing, sustainability, and education/skills development. It will also assist in identifying where growing spaces could be delivered as part of new developments.
- 3.3 The Food Growing Strategy is an integral part of a wider group of strategies and projects which will help the Council deliver the Scottish Government's vision for a 'Good Food Nation' by 2025. It supports other workstreams already underway, such as tackling food poverty, reducing food waste and encouraging healthier eating choices.
- 3.4 The resources required for the delivery of the strategy and its action plan are partially identified and work is ongoing to secure the required additional funding. This will allow delivery of a wide range of food growing opportunities to ensure that people who would like to grow their own food can have the opportunity to do so. Support for community groups and individuals will be needed along with skills and information sharing, with an emphasis on the most deprived areas of Perth and Kinross. This will support the Perth and Kinross Offer as well as the delivery of the wider Good Food Strategy.
- 3.5 It is recommended that the Environment and Infrastructure Committee:
- (i) approves the Perth and Kinross Food Growing Strategy (Appendix 1).
 - (ii) notes the work being progressed to address the resourcing issues outlined within the report.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	
Community Plan	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan

1.1 The Food Growing Strategy relates to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan in terms of contributing to the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 The Food Growing Strategy relates to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities by contributing to the delivery of:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

2. Resource Implications

Capital

- 2.1 No additional capital funding is required for implementing the Action Plan at this point.

Revenue

- 2.2 Approximately £30,000 of funding has been identified from existing revenue budgets which can be used to support setting up new food growing projects. It is estimated that this would be spent over the next 5 years. Moving forward, further capital resources will need to be allocated to support continuing this work. Work is ongoing to identify the resources for the additional 1 FTE. There is flexibility within the current budgets of a half FTE (£24,328) capable of supporting at least 50% of the costs. As the additional staff resource (new post) has yet to be evaluated by Human Resources, it is not quite clear what the deficit will be, work is ongoing to identify and fill the gap funding.

Workforce

- 2.3 There is a requirement for officer time to manage the development and implementation of the Food Growing Strategy and action plan. The main tasks will include:

- Working with allotment associations to create and manage a waiting list for PKC leased sites.
- Acting as the main point of contact within PKC for community food growing and assist groups in exploring opportunities within their areas.
- Assisting with site searches and initial negotiations with landowners (Council or otherwise) and carrying out public consultation with neighbours.
- Managing the capital budget, exploring further funding streams / grants for the delivery of new growing projects and managing the delivery of new food growing infrastructure.
- Assisting with the search and initial negotiations on sites (Council or otherwise). Carry out public consultation with neighbours.
- Working as part of the wider PKC Good Food working group and help develop the Council's Good Food Strategy
- Support related initiatives such as tackling food poverty and reducing food waste.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.4 The Council will be required to secure land to meet the demand for food growing either through new development or acquisition.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 The Food Growing Strategy was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) and were assessed as relevant and the following positive outcomes are expected following implementation.
- 3.3 The Food Growing Strategy aims to provide support for community groups and individuals as well as identify opportunities for skills and information sharing with an emphasis on the most deprived areas of Perth and Kinross.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.4 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.5 The matters presented in this report were considered and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:
 - in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
 - in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and in a way that it considers most sustainable.
- 3.7 The Food Growing Strategy aims to encourage locally grown community food production on suitable areas of land. This will encourage more healthy living, a reduction in food miles and make good use of available land.

Legal and Governance

- 3.8 Implementation of the Food Growing Strategy may require the acquisition of land and development of management rules for public food growing opportunities. The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted on the policy presented within this report.

Risk

- 3.9 There is a risk that the Council may not be able to meet its statutory duties under the Act if it is unable to meet the demand for food growing opportunities.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 Head of Legal and Governance, the Head of Finance, and the Head of Planning & Development have been consulted during the preparation of the Food Growing Strategy.

External

- 4.2 The results of the engagement on the Food Growing Strategy are available on demand.

5. Communication

- 5.1 The Food Growing Strategy will be made available for stakeholders to view on the Council website and regular updates on project opportunities will be sent to those on our mailing list.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 No background papers, as defined by section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – Food Growing Strategy