



**Food for Bristol -  
feeding bodies, feeding minds**

# Food Charter

**Access to safe, affordable and nutritious food is vital for people to be able to live fulfilled, active and healthy lives, in line with article 25 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and WHO Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion.**

As a local authority, the council has a responsibility for the health, wellbeing and sustainability of the city, on behalf of and in the interests of the people of Bristol. The council is tasked with “ensuring the availability of, and access to, affordable, safe and nutritious food sufficient for an active lifestyle, for all, at all times” (Cabinet Office 2008).

In January 2010, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published a food strategy, Food 2030. This lays out the major food challenges facing the country - sustainability, security and health - and a call for more joined up food policy. In October 2009, Bristol Partnership endorsed a major report, Building a positive future for Bristol after Peak Oil. This explores the implications of rising energy prices and energy security for food availability and prices.

The council, on an average day, provides (directly or indirectly) thousands of meals for a wide range of people with diverse needs, including children, older people, people in care, employees and visitors to city council premises.

This Food Charter contains 10 ambitions which will shape and underpin the council’s approach to food provision, including the way the council uses its buying power, services and influence to provide a healthier and sustainable future for the people of the city.



## The 10 ambitions

- 1** Work with all food interests within the city council and within the common definition of “sustainable food”.
- 2** Advocate for income, employment, housing, land-use planning and transportation policies that support secure and sustainable access to the food people need.
- 3** Adopt food procurement practices that serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility whilst maintaining Bristol’s accreditation as a Fairtrade City.
- 4** Ensure promotion of cooking skills and food safety programmes and services.
- 5** Ensure the cultural diversity of food in the city is celebrated and promotes the sustainable food message.
- 6** Support the development of economically viable distribution networks for sustainable food.
- 7** Work with all interests within the city council and members of the Bristol Partnership to reduce food waste across the city.
- 8** Actively make the city more secure in terms of being able to meet its own food demands from as close to the city as possible.
- 9** Encourage community based growing projects, such as community gardens, that increase food self-reliance, improve fitness, contribute to a cleaner environment, and enhance community development.
- 10** Work with community agencies, residents’ groups, businesses and other levels of government to achieve these ambitions.

By adopting the Food Charter, the council shows a clear intention to work towards a healthier and more sustainable future for Bristol's residents.

A snapshot of some of the things the council is already doing towards this goal is shown on page three. However, there is much more to do to ensure that these ambitions become common practice. The council needs to monitor and evaluate the work towards these ambitions to ensure they are fully met. The council can learn from best practice elsewhere and share examples of learning and practice developed in response to these ambitions.

## **Rational for the 10 ambitions**

### **1 Work with all food interests within the city council and within the city to agree a common definition of "sustainable food".**

It is important to have a common definition so that all parties know what is being discussed and proposed. In January 2010, Defra produced Food 2030 (defra 2010). It is a response both to the big food challenges – sustainability, security and health – and a call for more joined up food policy. It sets out the priorities for the UK Government on food and could act as a guide to define locally the key aspects of a sustainable and secure food system.

### **2 Advocate for income, employment, housing, land-use planning and transportation policies that support secure and sustainable access to the food people need.**

Health, wellbeing and the environment are inextricably linked. If policies for housing and transport take into consideration where food sources are and provide areas for allotments and community gardens, not only will this increase food security for the city, it will provide areas for communities to come together and engage in activities which will benefit their health and wellbeing. The current trend for food retail in large stores away from populated areas disadvantages those without cars or transport. The increase in traffic generated undermines attempts to reduce the local carbon footprint, and is contrary to moving towards a sustainable future. Planners need to ensure that proposals support and enable active travel to secure food and other everyday necessities.

### **3 Adopt food procurement practices that serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility whilst maintaining Bristol's accreditation as a Fairtrade City**

The council can use its buying power, influence and services to provide healthy and sustainable food. Food standards have been adopted which build on the Soil Association's Food for Life and the Department of Health's Catering Marks. These will act as minimum standards for the purchase and provision of food by and for the council. They include: menu design; preparation and presentation of food; portion sizes; procuring environmentally sustainable food (Cabinet Office 2008). The Standards include the procurement of agreed levels of local, organic, low carbon and fair-trade food.

### **4 Ensure promotion of cooking skills and food safety programmes and services**

Food safety is an integral part of food security ensuring that foods are labelled accurately so that those with allergies or specific diets are not put at risk, ensuring food production processes are in line with the current hygiene regulations, preventing spread of food and water borne disease are all essential for the wellbeing of Bristol's population. The council will uphold its commitment to provide food safety officers and environmental officers who routinely monitor and advise on these issues, in co-operation with Bristol Water plc, the Environment Agency, Public Health and the Primary Care Trusts.

### **5 Ensure the cultural diversity of food in the city is celebrated and promotes the sustainable food message**

The definition of food security is food for all at all times. Bristol is a diverse ethnic and cultural city. The council will encourage, recognise and provide for the different requirements of its population in a range of measures from sensitively planned menus to supporting a variety of cultural activities and festivals.

### **6 Support the development of economically viable distribution networks for sustainable food**

The council's Food Standards will provide a baseline for procurement practice. The council will work with partners to expand and develop these.

## **7 Work with all interests within the city council and members of the Bristol Partnership to reduce food waste across the city.**

One of the council's goals is to reduce the overall food waste. The council will co-ordinate a food subgroup of the Green Capital Momentum group to liaise with partners on ways to achieve this. This work could include engaging with local retailers with respect to food waste and try to increase people's education about food shelf life by drawing attention to the use of "use by" and "best before" dates.

## **8 Actively make the city more secure in terms of being able to meet its own food demands from as close to the city as possible.**

The more food Bristol can secure from the local area the greater its food security will be. Local sourcing has the additional benefit of cutting down on food miles and therefore having a positive effect on reducing environmental pollution. However, the requirement for local food would have to be balanced on the need to provide culturally diverse food.

## **9 Encourage community based growing projects, such as community gardens, that increase food self-reliance, improve fitness, contribute to a cleaner environment, and enhance community development.**

Providing support for community gardens, allotments and temporary use of vacant sites for food production improves neighbourhood relations and provides exercise. Growing their own food encourages people to eat more fruit and vegetables. Food is a social event for many different religious and family celebrations. This relationship with food and socialisation will be encouraged, especially for vulnerable groups such as homeless or elderly, and provide areas where there is the opportunity to join others for healthy sustainable meals.

## **10 Work with community agencies, residents' groups, businesses and other levels of government to achieve these ambitions.**

The way to move this agenda forward is to ensure and encourage all agencies to become more food aware and work together to ensure best use of resources and the highest quality of food for all in Bristol. The outcome would be a considerable increase in health with an associated reduction in health service costs. National estimates suggest

an annual 70,000 premature deaths plus £8 billion worth of medical intervention could be avoided simply by the nation adopting a healthy diet.

## **What Bristol is already doing**

### **Work with all food interests within the city council and within the city to agree a common definition of "sustainable food"**

By developing the Food Charter, the council has expressed a clear intention to lead by bringing together key interests in the city and ensure engagement with other organisations

### **Advocate for income, employment, housing, land use planning and transportation policies that support secure and sustainable access to the food people need.**

Through its health spatial, transport and regeneration policies, the council is actively making the city more accessible, encouraging walking and cycling as the transport mode of preference, linked to active support for local shopping centres and promotion of local food.

### **Adopt food purchasing practices that serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility.**

Bristol has achieved a fair trade city status and many schools and public buildings serve local and soil association certified produce, which are monitored through a contract compliance process.

### **Ensure promotion of cooking skills and food safety programmes and services**

The council has supported community cooking initiatives, in schools and for the food industry and training the next generation of chefs in preparing sustainable food. The council provides free coaching sessions through their Safer Food Better Businesses programme helping local business to improve their food safety management systems

### **Ensure the cultural diversity of food in the city is celebrated and promotes the sustainable food message**

There are many food festivals held and supported by the council offering organic, local, seasonal and culturally themed food

### **Support the development of economically viable distribution networks for sustainable food, particularly through the adoption of sustainable food procurement practices by the city**

The council is exploring initiatives that increase the amount of local food available for Bristol, thereby linking the city to its local community and rural hinterland.

### **Work with all interests within the city council and members of the Bristol Partnership to reduce food waste across the city.**

The council has an active campaign to encourage people to reduce food waste. It also provides door-to-door waste food collections for composting.

### **Actively make the city more secure in terms of being able to meet its own food demands from as close to the city as possible.**

The council is expanding management of nature reserves by grazing animals, which are then processed and sold.

### **Through the Green Capital initiative the council is seeking to support a large city-wide community partnership to support growing, food accessibility and improved nutrition projects.**

Encourage community based growing projects, such as community gardens, that increase food self-reliance, improve fitness, contribute to a cleaner environment, and enhance community development

Bristol boasts a number of inspirational community allotments, innovative growing initiatives and a total 3,800 full size allotment plots in use. The council also supports and encourages the Garden Share scheme, Community Market and school gardening projects, as a way of educating people to grow more of their own food sustainably.



### **Work with community agencies, residents' groups, businesses and other levels of government to achieve these goals.**

All of the above projects involve multiple agencies so the council has a good working network and is currently National Food Champion for community diet and nutrition and will strive to maintain this.

## **General Information**

### **Biodiversity**

The various means of sustainable growing (see [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org), [www.permaculture.org.uk](http://www.permaculture.org.uk)) seek to work with nature and actively encourage biodiversity as a means to maintain a healthy fertile soil and a wide range of other natural services including pest control and pollination. Natural services are thought to be worth trillions of pounds each year worldwide.

### **Bristol Partnership**

Bristol Partnership's 20:20 Plan contains the ambitions for the city ([www.bristolpartnership.org](http://www.bristolpartnership.org)) which include a high profile for health, wellbeing and sustainability, and the need to tackle health and wealth inequalities in the city.

### **Climate Change**

In recent years, extreme weather including prolonged cold spells, heavy snow, heavy rain, drought and exceptional heat waves has disrupted food production leading to price escalation and global shortages. Unless current levels of carbon dioxide in the air are reduced (and they are currently increasing) predictions suggest more frequent and more extreme weather with further adverse consequences for food production.

Sustainable food reduces carbon dioxide emission several fold. Local growing reduces transport costs, organic reduces the use of chemicals and small local scale distribution systems can be very efficient cutting out the many wasteful stages required by more centralised systems. Packaging is minimized to optimize resource efficiency in both manufacture and disposal.

The national average cost of wasted food currently stands at £420 per household (£610 per family) creating a massive carbon overhead which eliminated would be the equivalent of taking 1 in every 5 cars off the roads in Britain.

## **Cultural awareness**

Self determined local decision making around food promotes food diversity highlighting the value of cultural differences in contributing to a more varied diet.

## **Food 2030**

This new strategy for food was drawn up following the publication of the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit's report in July 2008 Food Matters. Food 2030 (defra 2010) is a response both to the big food challenges – sustainability, security and health – and to the call for more joined up food policy. It sets out the priorities for the UK Government on food.

## **Food Matters**

In July 2008 the government published Food Matters: Towards a strategy for the 21st century (Cabinet Office 2008). This report addresses major issues that face the food system in the UK and sets out a series of agreed actions. One of these key actions was that the public sector in England should be leading by example by providing nutritious, secure and sustainable food.

## **Food security**

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an optimally healthy life.

Overall, 40% of food (90% of fruit) is imported to Britain from other parts of the world. With increasing world populations, disruption of growing conditions through climate change and resource shortages as a consequence of peak oil, competition for at least some and possibly most of this imported food may reduce its availability while increasing its price.

## **Good health and wellbeing**

Good quality food provides the appropriate nutrition necessary for optimum health. Food growing can further provide healthy exercise, access to green spaces, an important factor in health and well-being and is often supportive of social cohesion through various food networks.

## **Health Promotion**

A healthy diet is the most cost effective form of health care available. Sound nutrition as a first line of defence, prevents a long list of dietary related diseases that annually cost an estimated £8 billion in medical intervention and lead to 70,000 premature deaths.

## **Obesity and inactivity**

The estimated cost to the wider economy of obesity is currently £15.8 billion and this could reach £50 billion by 2050. The British Medical Association predict that by 2020 over a quarter of children will be obese and will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. In Bristol it is currently estimated that 16,000 children and young people are obese and 75,000 adults. A further 11,000 children and 60,000 adults are overweight.

## **Peak oil**

The modern industrial world has become dependent on readily available cheap supplies of oil. Once 'peak oil' is reached, and many think this has already or is about to be reached, supplies will plateau then rapidly diminish. Together with increasing demand from a growing world population, prices are expected to escalate with serious implications for all aspects of everyday life.

The current, mostly industrialised, food system is especially vulnerable since oil products are extensively used at each stage. Oil products not only power the machines used for sowing, harvesting, processing, storage, distribution and waste disposal but the many chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, the packaging, the transport systems of the majority of shoppers and their means of heating or chilling the food.

## **Social amenity**

Community based growing sites eg community orchards, allotments and a range of innovative means of local food growing and sharing in Bristol establishes socially inclusive public amenity.

## **Social capital**

Is the individual and communal time and energy that is available for such things as community improvement, social networking, civic engagement, personal recreation, and other activities that create social bonds between individuals and groups. In this case it includes activities such as: Community supported agriculture; box schemes; local food networks; lunch clubs and other community activities encouraging considerable co-operation and social interaction.

## **Social justice**

Social justice is an important part of sustainability. A sustainable food network would ensure fair prices for producers and consumers and in particular include means to address health inequalities.

Bristol has been accredited a Fairtrade City by the Fairtrade Foundation.

## References

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This leaflet has been produced by Bristol Public Health on behalf of Bristol City Council. For more information, go to [www.bristol.gov.uk/food](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/food) or email [health@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:health@bristol.gov.uk)

