

Appendix 2 - Overview of the consultation responses (Leeds Food Strategy)

Overview

The consultation on the Leeds Food Strategy lasted for 8 weeks (October 24th – December 18th, 2022) and comprised of an online survey, face to face/virtual sessions, and community engagement. Food Wise Leeds, the city's food partnership delivered the consultation alongside Leeds City Council (LCC), with a focus on sessions in the community.

A total of 307 individuals and 28 businesses/organisations completed the online survey and approximately 700 people were verbally updated about the consultation at the face to face/virtual sessions.

How the consultation was promoted

A communications campaign was undertaken to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage residents, organisations in Leeds, and other stakeholders to have their say on the draft Leeds Food Strategy—either by reading the strategy document and filling in a questionnaire or by sharing feedback at a consultation event.

Key messages included inviting respondents to “help create a better food future for Leeds” and “have [a] say on council policy” whilst emphasising that “we want to hear from as many voices as possible”. The hashtag #LeedsFoodStrategy was used across social media platforms and the draft strategy and consultation questionnaire was hosted at www.leeds.gov.uk/foodstrategy. Due to council-wide spending restrictions in place during the consultation period, the communications campaign had no dedicated budget beyond existing resources, so the approach was taken to maximise ‘owned’ digital channels and earned promotion. This included promoting the consultation via corporate and climate council social media channels, internal and external email newsletters, a press release, promotion on the council's intranet homepage, and an email signature added to all internal and external council emails. The council engaged with a variety of stakeholders to secure promotion across their own channels. Several face-to-face engagement opportunities were also held to provide an opportunity to engage residents in an offline setting.

The Leeds Food Strategy webpages were loaded a total of 2,368 times throughout the consultation period.

Results from the online survey

307 individuals completed the online survey in total.

Compared to the Leeds population (based on the most recent census data), respondents were overrepresented by over 45-year-olds (68.4%), females including trans females (59.5%), and people who identify as English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British ethnic origin (83.4%).

Face-to-face community engagement was carried out within many of the communities which were underrepresented demographically in the online consultation responses to try and ensure that feedback received was as reflective of the Leeds population as feasibly possible.

The following tables show the age and gender of respondents to the online questionnaire:

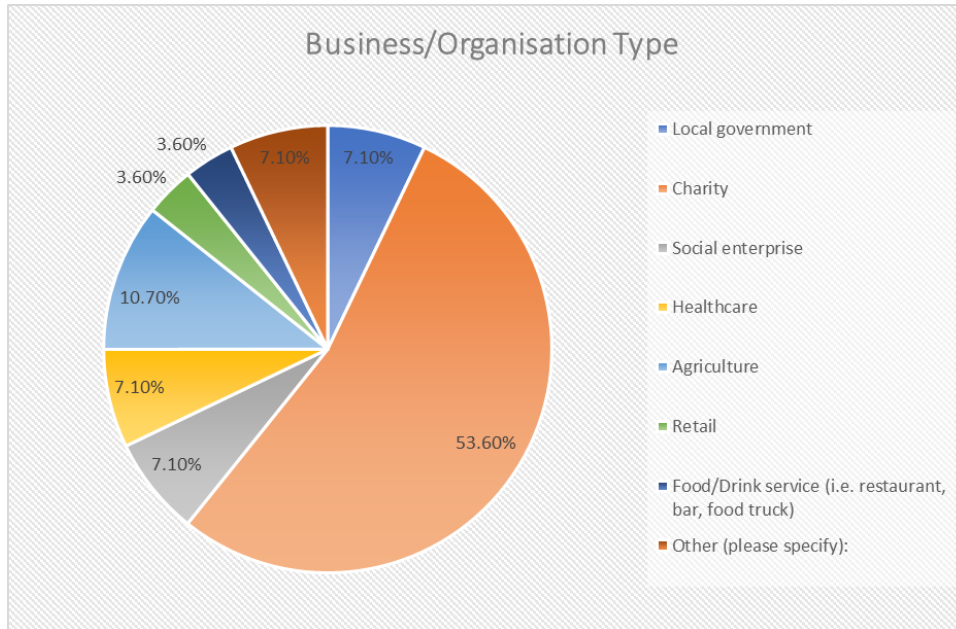
Age Group	Respondents as a %	Leeds Baseline Data Population as %
Under 18	0.0	20.9
18 - 29	6.3	19.2
30 - 44	21.6	20.9
45 – 64	43.5	23.2
65 +	24.9	15.6
Prefer not to say	3.7	-

Gender	Respondents as a %	Leeds Baseline Data as %
Male (including Trans Male)	30.6	49.0
Female (including Trans Female)	59.5	51.0
Non-Binary	1.0	0.11
Prefer not to say	3.7	-
Other	5.3	0.06

28 respondents completed the online survey in an organisational capacity. Most of these represented charities or social enterprises in the third sector (60.7%). Just over a fifth (21.4%) of these responses were from the private sector, whilst 4 (14.3%) of the organisational responses came from the public sector. The table and chart below provide more information about the size and types of organisations that responded.

Sector		Number of employees	
Public sector	4	0-19	13
Private sector	6	20-49	7
Third sector	17	50-249	4
Unknown	1	250+	4

Total	28		28
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Postcode data shows most respondents were located across the north and north-eastern areas of the city region.

Vision

The overarching vision for the proposed strategy was that:

“Leeds has a vibrant food economy where everyone is able to access local, healthy and affordable food, produced in a way which improves our natural environment and embraces innovation”

90.7% of those that completed the survey agreed with the vision statement (62.3% strongly).

Themes

The Leeds Food Strategy follows three themes, which align with the three pillars of Leeds City Council's Best City Ambition:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Food Security and Economy
- Sustainability and Resilience

89.2% of those that completed the survey agreed on focusing on these three themes (61.4% strongly).

Health and Wellbeing

Below are the Health and Wellbeing objectives ordered as ranked by survey responses. Besides each objective is also the percentage of people that agreed with that objective:

1. Ensure people of all ages know how to access and eat food that supports their health and wellbeing - 94% agree
2. Champion community food initiatives that support healthier eating - 91% agree
3. Change our city environment to help make healthier food more available and appealing - 89% agree
4. Offer targeted support that helps people most likely to develop diet-related diseases - 90% agree
5. Develop a skilled local workforce that works collaboratively to advocate for healthier eating and changes which enable it - 83% agree

Overall there is high level of agreement to all the objectives.

The most popular order to rank the objectives based on survey responses was the same as previously in the draft strategy except what previously was Objective 4 has now been pushed up to number 2. Objective 5 has the lowest agreement percentage (and the largest portion of "neither agree or disagree" of the 5 objectives), although a significant majority of respondents were supportive of the objective.

Food Security and Economy

Below are the Food Security and Economy objectives ordered as ranked by survey responses. Besides each objective is also the percentage of people that agreed with that objective:

1. Tackle the root causes of food insecurity – 92% agree
2. Improve access to, and inclusivity of, emergency and affordable food initiatives to help more people in need of support, e.g. food banks, food pantries, community shops – 87% agree
3. Continue to build a strong partnership approach across all sectors and with the people of Leeds – 87% agree
4. Support inclusive growth within Leeds' food economy – 80% agree
5. Promote Leeds as a vibrant food city—celebrating our independent food, drink, events, and culture – 79% agree

Overall there is high level of agreement to all of the objectives.

The most popular order to rank from the survey responses is that same as previously in the draft strategy. Relatively speaking, Objectives 4 and 5 have low levels of agreement in comparison to the others. These objectives relate to economy rather than food security—suggesting that respondents people feel that actions tackling food security should be prioritised.

Sustainability and Resilience

Below are the sustainability and resilience objectives ordered as ranked by survey responses. Besides each objective is also the percentage of people that agreed with that objective:

1. Tackle waste by reducing, redistributing, and utilising surplus food – 95% agree

2. Empower residents to choose healthy diets by raising awareness of choices that are good for the planet – 85% agree
3. Encourage and enable innovative and community-led food production – 91% agree
4. Support local farmers to transition to resilient and profitable agriculture which improves the environment – 93% agree
5. Champion environmentally sustainable and resilient procurement – 90% agree

Overall there is high level of agreement to all of the objectives.

Respondents to the survey suggested changing the order of the objectives compared to the draft strategy. Objectives 2 and 5 in the draft strategy were ranked as more important and have become objectives 1 and 3 respectively in the above list. Objective 3 in the draft strategy was ranked as lowest priority in the above list and has become objective 5. Whilst being ranked as the second most important objective for this section by respondents, "Empower residents to choose healthy diets by raising awareness of choices that are good for the planet" was the objective with the lowest level of agreement—suggesting a greater range of public views than some of the other objectives.

Overall key themes throughout were:

- **The cost of living crisis** strongly influenced comments with highlights of increasing consumer costs, a perception that many people can only afford 'unhealthy' food, an awareness that food banks can only share what is donated and available to them, etc.
- **A partnership and rounded approach with policies and strategies that consider the relationship between dietary choices and both physical and mental health.** It was also highlighted the need for accessible services to support those on low household income
- **The importance of education** was highlighted as vital in terms of ensuring public understanding of these issues before people can be supported or empowered to make changes. Suggestions that further education was needed included regarding: awareness of how and where to access affordable and

nutritious food, and knowing how to cook and prepare meals—taking account of the seasonality and convenience (speed of preparation etc) of different foods.

- **The importance of free will and availability were** also highlighted. Many people felt that they should have a range of foods available to them, even where a plant-based diet is encouraged.
- **Cultural food/ dietary requirements** were highlighted as not being sufficiently highlighted in the draft strategy.
- **Advertising of ‘unhealthy’ food** was perceived by many as too prevalent and a concern for children's health. Many respondents had strong views and felt that the council should lead by example and not allow the advertising of ‘unhealthy’ food.
- **Suggestions for local policy** included comments about how LCC should use its local influence and decision making to be “brave” regarding:
 - the use of spare land for supporting additional allotments, grow your own, or other community food initiatives,
 - utilising the planning and licencing approval processes to reduce the number of takeaway food outlets (especially in areas where many already exist) and to encourage use of local produce and reduced waste,
 - the introduction of policies restricting advertising in the city of ‘unhealthy’ foods,
 - some respondents felt the draft strategy was too “big brother” and didn’t like feeling “preached” to.
- **Suggestions for national policy** raised by respondents included bans on ‘unhealthy’ food advertising and more interventions to tackle the sources of food insecurity to reduce the underlying need for food banks. This included calls for an improved welfare system and policies to ensure adequately paid jobs so that nobody was ‘working poor’ or having to choose between ‘eating and heating’.

- **Allotment** users and supporters felt that the full benefits of allotments across all the strategy's missions were not felt to be recognised in the document.
- **Support for growing and selling produce locally** featured throughout, including sharing surplus food at an individual level. This included individual actions such as households sharing pre-packaged quantities of vegetables with friends and neighbours if it is too much for them to use, as well as calls for surplus produce from allotments, food producers, and supermarkets to be used within communities/ food banks/ community cafes (eat as you feel) etc.
- **The importance of reducing food waste** was frequently mentioned by respondents. This included comments about how food waste could be tackled at the source (such as preventing overproduction), through to how packaging is used. There were also calls for kerbside collections of food waste in more than one area of the city, composting options being made available locally, and for more ways to deal with takeaway waste and littering.
- **Partnerships** with food businesses including large retail supermarket chains (based locally) to seek their buy-in and commitment to support sustainability and reduce food waste.

Results from the face-to-face and virtual sessions

FoodWise Leeds, the city's food partnership, delivered the face to face/virtual sessions alongside the council. FoodWise Leeds hosted workshops in the community whereas the council's in-person engagement included presenting at stall events and public meetings.

Over the 8-week period of the consultation a total of 40 sessions/meetings were held, engaging approximately 700 people.

Throughout these sessions, there was a generally positive response towards the draft strategy. A variety of themes were discussed in comments, however those views that reoccurred were the following:

- **Language.** Some felt that language used within the strategy could be more inclusive or was currently too difficult to understand. Some examples given included terms such as: inclusive growth, food security, and safe food.
- **Availability of unhealthy food.** Some respondents believed that fast food and unhealthy foods are currently too widely advertised and too available in Leeds.
- **Allotments.** It was suggested that the role of allotments was not mentioned enough throughout the strategy, and that allotments can play a role in supporting all three of the strategy's missions.
- **Impact of food insecurity/the rising cost of living.** The importance of addressing food security and the rising costs of food was stressed by respondents, with many explaining how they were being impacted. Respondents were concerned that they are having to buy lower quality and less nutritious food out of necessity, rather than choice. Some residents said that, due to rising costs, they are having to shop around different stores which takes more time and increases stress. Others remarked on the time and energy costs associated with cooking meals and how in response they are cooking quicker, simpler meals (such as ready meals) to minimise energy costs whilst being aware that these are typically less nutritious. Respondents worried about the effects of food insecurity on their mental as well as physical health and wellbeing. One person shared her experience of food insecurity as a child saying that: "it stays with you always; you don't forget it".
- **Lack of capability to cook meals.** Respondents commented that people are generally time poor and often lack cooking skills, and therefore rely on ready meals rather than cooking from scratch. This reliance contributes to the increased cost of food as well as having impacts on health, nutrition, and obesity. Most people want to see more cooking being taught in schools and through other means but did not believe that they had a role in sharing cooking skills. However, respondents felt that some groups (especially older people) typically have a lot of food skills including cooking, growing, and preserving. They value food and know how to get the most from it.
- **Changes to emergency food provision.** People recognise that there has been a dramatic rise in emergency food provision. However, many

complained that the food available from this provision doesn't meet their health or cultural requirements. Respondents commented that food banks and other providers are struggling to meet demand for food, noting that donations have decreased as there's not as much surplus food around. Respondents felt that food pantries provided more choice and dignity than food parcels, and therefore more support should be available to organisations who are providing pantry offers rather than parcels. Respondents believed that nutritious food must be a priority in all emergency food provision.

- **Role in tackling climate change.** Most people generally believe that issues such as improving food access or food security are of greater importance than food's role in responding to climate change. However, respondents would welcome more education about the links between food and environmental impacts within school settings as well as wider community education. Respondents noted that many people are now eating less meat for cost reasons rather than to reduce their carbon footprint, e.g. by adding lentils to meat dishes. Most people see food waste as a big issue, especially younger people. There is a general awareness of surplus food redistribution but many respondents want to see more done by organisations and businesses so that less is wasted. There was interest in composting and community composting initiatives.

Results from other consultation routes

Inbox

The team also received comments during the consultation period to the Leeds Food Strategy inbox. Comments mentioned via this route were:

- Allotments being undermentioned in strategy
- Babies and breastfeeding missing from strategy
- Plastic food packaging missing from strategy
- Prioritise tackling primary school aged obesity
- Access to cultural food important to mention

- Good wages for jobs in food sector
- Importance of community growing

Community Interviews

Colleagues from Public Health also undertook community engagement over the consultation period. They spoke to 100 people living in the Harehills and Chapeltown areas. The survey sample of 100 was selected from communities which were likely to be poorly represented on the online consultation.

Interviews were face to face and took place in a variety of sites including the post office, hairdressing salon, local café, Polish Centre, Bangladeshi Centre, Compton Centre and cashpoint machine.

Interviewees expressed a keen interest in food related topics especially healthy eating and the cost and availability of fresh food. Many expressed concerns over the rising cost of food items and had made changes to their shopping habits. Other topics of discussion included food waste and the use of food banks.

The language used in the strategy was found to be an obstacle, both for those British born as well as migrant groups. No respondent understood the term 'procurement'. Likewise, few understood the phrase 'Leeds food economy' or 'community led food production' and many were uncertain of the objective 'Continue to build a strong partnership approach across all sectors and with the people of Leeds'.

By way of contrast, the respondents showed familiarity with and understanding of key terms such as sustainability and resilience.

In respect of results the first ranked objectives for each theme were as follows:

- Health & Wellbeing - Change our city environment to make healthier food more appealing and available.
- Food Security & Economy - Improve access to, and inclusivity of, emergency and affordable food initiatives to help more people in need of support e.g. food banks, food pantries, community shops.

- Sustainability & Resilience - Encourage and enable innovative and community led food production.

The conclusion to be drawn from conversations with these 100 people is that the consultation is not 'community friendly' in some of its language. This will need to be looked at in the final draft to increase accessibility.

Proposed changes to draft Leeds Food Strategy

Overall, the response to the draft strategy was largely positive, with high levels of agreement in the vision (90.7%), themes (89.2%), and objectives (79-95%), therefore these will remain in place for the final version.

The order of objectives within each chapter will be altered to reflect that of the ranking proposed in the consultation (both the online survey and the community engagement) to reflect that which residents, businesses and organisations believe to be the most important for Leeds.

It was highlighted within the consultation that some of the language used across the strategy is not fully inclusive and could not be understood by people living in the city. As part of the strategy update to the final version, the phrases highlighted in the consultation as being hard to understand will be reviewed and better explained or updated. This will also include the wording of some objectives.

A number of comments were received in relation to the under mentioning across the three strands of the strategy of:

- Allotments
- Waste food packaging
- Cultural food

These comments have been heard and they will be highlighted in the updated version.

Action Plan

As well as updating the draft food strategy wording to create a final document, the food strategy team will also create the first annual action plan to support the strategy. This will include actions underneath each of the 15 objectives of the strategy, which will be continually monitored and reviewed annually with Food Wise Leeds. The strategy will be edited according to ensure it is in alignment with any changes to government policy.