



Subject:	Draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy – The Belfast Way
Date:	11 June 2026
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner Sophie Healy-Thow, Sustainable Food Coordinator

Restricted Reports	
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Insert number	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual. 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present the Draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy – The Belfast Way, Action Plans and Communications Plan to SPR for consideration.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Climate and City Resilience Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. note that the draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy was co-designed by the Belfast Food Partnership (BFP), a cross-sectoral group of 29 partners working together to improve the food system and informed by significant engagement and good practice research ii. consider and approve, in principle, the direction and focus of the draft ‘Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy: The Belfast Way’ (as attached at Appendix 1) iii. note that whilst some of the action plan can commence within existing budget provision, further proactive work is underway to secure external funding that will support delivery of the multi-year Strategy. iv. agree that council officials will continue to work on the two expressions of interest for significant funding as referred to in this report as well as other funding opportunities v. note that updates will be brought back to Committee for consideration, with final approval of the budget allocation being sought from SP and R Committee.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Background
3.1.1	In 2023 the Sustainable Food Partnership was re-established in Belfast under the auspices of the Community Planning Partnership and in recognition of the growing pressures facing by many individuals and families in accessing affordable and healthy food. The Belfast Food Partnership, as it is now called, is hosted by the Climate Team through a full time Food Systems Coordinator.
3.1.2	The Belfast Food Partnership (BFP) is part of the UK wide Sustainable Food Places (SFP) initiative, a network that brings together pioneering food partnerships across the UK who are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. It is led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain. As well as offering support and coordination on NI and UK wide food challenges, the SFP runs an awards system designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined up, holistic approach to food and that are achieving significant positive change on a range of key food issues. The Belfast Food Partnership was awarded the Bronze Sustainable Food Places Award for Belfast in 2024.
3.1.3	<p>The BFP is currently made up of 29 partners across Belfast working to improve food systems. It is co-chaired by two partners and coordinated by the Council’s Food Systems Coordinator (within the Climate team). The BFP works across sectors and is driven by the following values, developed collaboratively over the past two years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems Driven ▪ Food Justice ▪ Circular and Regenerative ▪ Resilience ▪ Place-based and sustainable ▪ Participatory and asset based ▪ Community wealth building
3.1.4	Aligning with these values, a draft “The Belfast Way - Sustainable Food Strategy” has been co-designed with 6 underpinning action plans, which it is proposed will be delivered through 6 cross-sectoral working groups), 3 collective and flagship actions and importantly a costed implementation plan for the strategy.

3.1.5	<p>The development of the strategy was led by a consortium of partners including the Council, Community Garden Support, Brink! Stories CIC, Grow NI, and Ulster University, supported by the Food Ethics Council (all members of the Belfast Food Partnership). The emerging draft strategy has been informed by local stakeholders and people with lived experience of growing and accessing food in the city.</p>
3.2	<p>Engagement process</p>
3.2.1	<p>The draft Strategy was collaboratively developed with respect for a plurality of views, opinions, and beliefs gathered via many workshops, conversations, and events, and is underpinned by a considerable amount of research and references. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership meetings and three working group meetings. ▪ Presentations at each of the four Belfast City Council Area Working Groups. ▪ Presentation to the Our Planet Board. ▪ Three bespoke workshops involving people with lived experience of food insecurity. ▪ Individual meetings with DAERA Food Policy Unit, Climate Co+ Centre, Co-Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Food Farming and Countryside Alliance, Sustainable Food Places, Centre for Sustainability Equality and Climate Action, Unite, Nourish NI, Food NI, BCC officers, and others working across the food system in Belfast and Northern Ireland. ▪ Six public-facing events.
3.3	<p>Rationale for a Belfast Food Strategy</p>
3.3.1	<p>Belfast city needs a Sustainable Food Strategy to address a range of challenges facing its food system, which is part of a wider and interconnected complex global supply chain. As the food system has globalised, we have moved further from the source of our food and the people who produce it. This has created vulnerabilities including price volatility, environmental strain, reduced resilience, health inequality, and growing food security risks. These issues disproportionately affect the city’s most vulnerable communities.</p>
3.3.2	<p>The food system is estimated to account for up to 35% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. Belfast has set an ambitious target to reach net zero by 2050, and a strategy is needed so that the food system can contribute to efforts to reduce emissions. In addition to this, more people are accessing food aid in Belfast. According to University of Sheffield data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 14.8% of Belfast adults worry about not having enough food ▪ 5% struggle to access food; and ▪ 2.5% of people in Belfast are experiencing hunger.
3.3.3	<p>In NI, £7.6bn is spent by society fighting the effects of an unhealthy diet. A Sustainable Food Strategy will help to strengthen local and regional food systems, reduce emissions, and improve public health outcomes, whilst supporting community resilience through urban growing, skills development, and circular economy initiatives. The vision of the sustainable food strategy is:</p> <p><i>“To ensure that every person in Belfast can access, enjoy, and help shape a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system that promotes human and planetary health. A food system that enables everyone in Belfast to have equitable access to nutrient rich, affordable food and one that creates conditions for a strong, circular and fair local economy for all”.</i></p>

3.3.4 Taking a whole food systems approach as outlined in Belfast’s Resilience Strategy 2020, enables the city to address root causes rather than symptoms, aligning efforts across health, climate, economy, and equity.

3.4 A focus on delivery

3.4.1 As referred to above, as part of this work six draft actions plans (attached at **Appendix 2a**) have been developed in support of the delivery of the Strategy. Each plan outlines the key outcomes to be realised as well as specific actions to deliver against such outcomes. The focus of these

- i. Good Food Governance
- ii. Community Growing and Right to Grow
- iii. Food Access and Justice
- iv. Circular Food Economy
- v. Transforming Procurement
- vi. Nature Friendly Farming

A short summary of the plans is attached at **Appendix 2b**.

3.5 Initial cost projections and considerations

3.5.1 Delivering the ambitions of the Belfast Way requires sustained and diversified investment across the partnership. High level cost estimates have been developed for the six action plans over 3 a three-year below as set out below.

Thematic Area / Action Plan	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Good Food Governance	£70,000	£70,000	£70,000	£210,000
Food Access and Justice	£38,000	£328,000	£323,000	£689,000
Community Growing and Right to Grow	£33,000	£65,000	£40,000	£138,000
Circular Food Economy	£15,300	£75,000	£20,000	£110,300
Transforming Procurement	£8,000	£105,000	£100,000	£213,000
Nature Friendly Farming	£12,000	£135,000	£100,000	£147,000
TOTALS	£176,300	£778,000	£653,000	£1,507,300

3.5.2 It considering these cost projections, it is important to note that:

- An estimated £100,000 has already been secured by partners organisations through the Belfast Food Partnership which would be aligned (and offset) against an element of the costs above e.g.
 - Good Food Governance: £7,200
 - Food Access Working Group: £9,650
 - Community Growing and Right to Grow: £11,000
 - Transforming Procurement: £72,000
- the council has contributed £70k annually which includes funding the Food Systems Coordinator (a temporary post created for 18months until April 2027),
- the Council’s Food Systems Coordinator is involved in the development of the following Expressions of Interest which may secure significant funding to support the Food Strategy.
 - i. £7million EOI bid (over 5-year period) through the Belfast Food Partnership
 - ii. £6million EOI bid (over 5-year period) as part of a wider UK bid with England, Scotland and Wales for Public Diners.

<p>3.5.3</p> <p>3.5.4</p>	<p>The Sustainable Food Places network has consistently highlighted that underfunding of local food partnerships represents one of the principal barriers to translating food strategy into systemic change. As with other food partnerships across the UK, long-term financial sustainability remains a strategic challenge and work will continue to identify and seek to secure other available funding opportunities. There is also a need for ongoing coordination and engagement across a wide range of funders, including DAERA, public health bodies, the community and voluntary sector, and European-successor funding streams.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the alignment of the Belfast Way with the ‘Northern Ireland's Third Climate Change Adaptation Programme, (NICCAP3)’ and regional food strategy further strengthens the case for dedicated government investment, positioning Belfast’s food partnership infrastructure not as a discretionary addition to Council services, but as an essential delivery mechanism for regional food, climate, and public health commitments.</p>
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no current financial or resource implications for BCC in approving the Strategy. The implementation of the associated action plans will remain subject to external funding being secured; with a further report to be brought back to Committee on the funding model and seeking agreement to proceed with implementation.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An EQIA Screening is underway for the strategy.</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Belfast Way – Draft Sustainable Food Strategy 2 (a) Draft Strategy Action Plans (six) (b) Roadmap and costing of Action Plans