



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Sustainable Food Programme
<b>Date:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director Organisational and City Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mura Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner

**Restricted Reports**

**Is this report restricted?** Yes  No

**Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.**

Insert number

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

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Call-in**

**Is the decision eligible for Call-in?** Yes  No

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
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1.1	To provide an update on the sustainable food programme for Belfast.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Note the contents of the report.</li> <li>II. Note the ongoing work of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and the city's success in re-establishing its Bronze Sustainable Food Award status.</li> <li>III. Note that the Sustainable Food Strategy work is underway and due for completion by April 2025.</li> <li>IV. Note the progress that has been made on the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project and agree to request a six month project extension until February 2026, subject to agreement by the funders.</li> <li>V. Agree to a knowledge exchange and learning programme for the UPSURGE project being developed through the Sustainable Food Partnership's Community Growing Working Group, subject to agreement by the funders.</li> <li>VI. Note the work ongoing to establish a baseline of community growing space in the city, and agree this approach is developed further. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Note the grant offer from the Shared Island Fund to test community growing within the UP2030 area, partnering with Cork Food Policy Council to work collaboratively to improve community growing provision in both cities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award</b></p> <p>Belfast previously achieved its Bronze Award from Sustainable Food Places in 2016 but it had since lapsed and needed to be renewed. A previous unsuccessful attempt for Bronze in September 2023 indicated that there wasn't sufficient evidence of partnership working for it to be renewed. The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership has now been established and collectively developed a new bid for Bronze in June 2024 which has been successful.</p> <p>Funding from Sustainable Food Places for a Sustainable Food Coordinator role (0.3FTE) to support the bid for Bronze has now ended. The role to date has been delivered by the Adaptation and Resilience Advisor in the Climate Team. Given the expansion of the programme during this period, there is now a need to resource the Sustainable Food Programme work through an additional temporary part time post (1 day per week) shared between the Climate and Anti-Poverty &amp; Inclusive Growth teams for two (?) years. This will help service the Partnership and its working groups, and help develop a Sustainable Food Strategy and a 3 year plan to progress to Silver Award status in line with the Belfast Agenda. This work is currently underway, with the Strategy due for delivery by April 2025.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership</b></p> <p>The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership was established in August 2023 and currently has twenty three individual partner organisations, representing local and regional government, businesses, and the community and voluntary sector. The Partnership has met five times to date and delivered two food network events to over 200 members of the public. A cross council officer workshop has also helped identify the key areas that the Council is responsible for and can influence, in relation to sustainable food. This includes food poverty, waste, environmental health, community growing, procurement, climate, education and outreach, culture and regeneration.</p> <p>In April, the Climate Team supported Northern Ireland Environment Link to host a Food and Farming Conversation with DAERA, and also supported Brink!, one of the SFP partners to deliver a programme of free events centred around food and sustainability as part of their Summer Solstice Weekend.</p>

	<p>Working groups have been setup representing key areas of focus for the partnership. These include food access, food supply chains, community growing, and climate and nature. The partnership also supports the Belfast Food and Drink Network in its ongoing work to encourage food businesses in the city to become more sustainable. Further work is needed to develop a governance and food waste working group in the future. The purpose of the working groups is to engage citizens across the city on the sustainable food issue and develop a 3 year goal as part of the Sustainable Food Strategy work.</p> <p>The Partnership has also supported a placement student in the Climate Team to carry out spatial mapping of the food system in Belfast, with food access and community growing mapping underway to establish baselines. Another work based placement student is currently researching policy and legal issues relating to the Right to Grow which was brought forward as a Motion by councillors in November 2023, with the report to come forward with findings once completed.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p><b>Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Update</b></p> <p>The Climate Team has been progressing with the Horizon UPSURGE Project since 2022, developing a demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens. A Project Board structure was established and is overseeing a capital delivery group and operational group of council officers from CNS, Climate and Property and Projects. There are four nature based solutions being tested on the site with capital works almost completed:</p> <p>Nature based solution 1: Agroecological community garden</p> <p>Nature based solution 2: A soil decontamination and food growing research space</p> <p>Nature based solution 3: A climate resilience garden</p> <p>Nature based solution 4: Habitat enhancement works</p> <p>In addition to the above, improvements to the paths, a new entrance and active travel infrastructure has been installed on site. Environmental sensors that are recording live data on climate and pollution are due to be installed this month.</p> <p>There has been engagement with local groups throughout the process, and a number of volunteer days have been delivered, including a garden open day and tree giveaway, a bioblitz, planting, and weed pulling days, working in partnership with CNS.</p> <p>The project will move into its operational phase in September, with a knowledge and learning exchange programme for climate action and community growing to be delivered, centred around the main demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens.</p> <p>The original funding application was to develop five BCC satellite sites in the city, however upon discussion with key stakeholders and officers, it is agreed that a more inclusive way to distribute the funding should be via a participatory budgeting exercise, made available to groups across the city (North, South, East, West and Central) and that the learning programme also be widened across the city. Participatory budgeting is a recognised process that allows local people to decide how money is spent within their city or local community and has been piloted by the Council through the Move More and Eat Well and Bank of Ideas projects already.</p> <p>The proposed criteria for participation of groups in the programme would be that they are involved in active or future potential community growing spaces, and that they should become a member of the SFP Community Growing Working Group to participate in the UPSURGE programme.</p> <p>Due to unforeseen delays across the five UPSURGE cities, the project partners are being asked by the funder to seek a project extension from August 2025 to February 2026 to allow the demonstrator sites time to develop, gather data, and to allow the programme of activities and research to be completed.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p><b>Shared Island Funding</b></p>

	<p>Members were informed in August that an offer of Shared Island Funding had been secured through the Cork – Belfast partnership (which previously accessed funding for the solar PV study). Alongside funding to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre, this offer included funding for Cork Food Policy Council and Belfast City Council to deliver community growing improvements across the two cities. The letter of offer has subsequently been accepted, and the funding (€30,000) will be used support the improvement of community growing infrastructure across the UP2030 project area, as one of their key strategies for greening across these inner city neighbourhoods. There may be an opportunity to link this funding with the UPSURGE programme by doing a joint participatory budgeting exercise. This is currently being scoped by officers.</p>
3.1	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no financial and resource implications.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None known.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>
4.1	<p><a href="#">Application by the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership for Bronze Award.</a></p>