SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2025

This form is for completing an SFP Bronze or Silver Award application. **If you are considering applying for a Gold Award, please contact the SFP team at info@sustainablefoodplaces.org to discuss the process.**

Before starting your application, please fully read this form as well as the following documents:

- SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx

Please do not alter the formatting of this form or redesign it and only return as a Word document not a PDF. This is essential for you application to pass the initial eligibility check.

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
West Cheshire Food Partnership
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Rebecca Story, Food Strategy Lead, Cheshire West Voluntary Action. Email: rebecca.story@cwva.org.uk
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Cheshire West and Chester
Award you are applying for*:
Bronze

Please provide us with background information about your place (not scored)*: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

The borough of Cheshire West and Chester is in the North-West of England and is a mix of urban towns, the City of Chester, and rural villages. It has a population of 371,652 and covers 350 square miles. Compared to other parts of the country, deprivation is low, incomes are higher, and health is generally good. Many of our residents enjoy a good quality of life, however, some of our residents encounter significant disadvantage and experience poorer health outcomes, living conditions, educational attainment, and economic prospects.

There are pockets of deprivation across Cheshire West and Chester, with over 24,000 of our residents living in small neighbourhoods (LSOAs) that rank in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Child poverty (income deprivation affecting children index) ranges from 38.9% in one of our most deprived wards to 3.8% in one of our least deprived. Over 1 in 5 (10 of the 45) wards in Cheshire West and Chester are red for the child poverty indicator, meaning they are statistically worse than the England average.

Given the geography of Cheshire West and Chester, there are inequalities relating to the rurality of the borough in terms of access to transport, health care provision and digital exclusion. This is also true for access to affordable, healthy food.

Less than a third (31.0%) of adults meet the '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable consumption recommendation, this is statistically similar to the England average.

The proportion of adults classified as living with excess weight or obesity is 61.6% which means almost two in three residents over the age of 18, are above a healthy weight.

The latest National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data for the borough shows that 23.1% of our reception age children are above a healthy weight. This rises to 33.9% for our year 6 children (2023/24 data) and is as high as 47.9.0% in our 20% most deprived neighbourhoods (combined data from 2021/22 to 2023/24).

In Cheshire West and Chester, the inequality gap for life expectancy at birth is 10.9 years for men and 8 years for women.

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership (not scored)*: ? Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are key golden threads to the Food Partnership. The vision of the Food Partnership is to ensure 'Everyone in Cheshire West has access to a healthy, affordable, sustainable and enjoyable diet.' This means considering everyone in what we do.

The Food Partnership has evolved from a food security initiative and so poverty and low income are considered in all of the work led and coordinated by the partnership.

Local voices are integral to the work of the Food Partnership and help to shape the priorities, direction, and actions across all workstreams. We have a lived experience consultant who works with the Food Partnership one day a week to help members embed the voices of lived experience within their work. They are also working with us to create a Food Ambassadors model that will bring together community and wider food system voices as equal partners in shaping food system change. All Lived Experience work is guided by the Local Voices Framework developed by Cheshire West Voluntary Action and partners to make sure there is a consistent approach to coproduction.

Diverse and inclusive diets is one of the key workstreams within the Food Partnership, encompassing culturally appropriate food, alternative diets, and exploration of the wide range of dietary needs of different populations. The Food Partnership sits on the Cheshire West for Sanctuary forum for voluntary, social, community and faith organisations working with vulnerable migrants, and has a standing agenda item to bring the food conversation to the meeting. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker team in the council is now embedded within the Public Health team, which ensures closer working across agendas.

Work to also support adults living with learning disabilities and university students showcases the broad and inclusive remit of the partnership.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants before completing this section.

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the relevant key issues (1-6) and action areas (A and B) below.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words for each action area (i.e. for each A and B under the key issues). Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. For sections C, 250 words is the mandatory limit.

For Bronze and Silver awards, there are mandatory actions for some key issues. These are laid out in *SFP Awards - Activity and Impact:* SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx. This document also provides a broad benchmark for each award, rationale for SFP's inclusion of each key issue, and example actions for each action area.

Only submit additional documents for food action plans and strategies related to Key Issue 1 mandatory criteria. All other additional documents will not be assessed. You may add links to online documents but always check the links and permissions as we will not be requesting changes from you after submission.

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

NB failure to provide Key Issue 1, Action area B mandatory criteria will result in rejection at the eligibility stage.

- Bronze applications require a one-year action plan
- Silver applications require a three-year action plan

1. **Have you submitted a current food action plan or food strategy with an action plan?**
    - Yes
2. **How are you evidencing this action plan?**
    - Attachment as a Word, PFF, Excel document? Yes
    - Link to a document? No
    - If a link place here as well under Key Issue 1
    - Action Plan link:
3. **Has the action plan less than 6 months to run?**
    - Yes
    - If less than 6 months to run what is happening after the action plan expires? (100 words)

The Food Partnership is currently delivering a coproduced, annual action plan (2025-26). The ambition is to supersede this with a three-year action plan as part of a borough-wide Eating Well Strategy (2026-29). Work has begun on codeveloping this plan with partners and residents with a focus on a whole-system approach.

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action

Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership

The West Cheshire Food Partnership has existed in its current form since 2021. With its roots in food insecurity, the Food Partnership has evolved to encompass a wider remit around food, including those relating to health, sustainability, climate, and economy. The history of the Food Partnership and previous incarnation as the Welcome Network, means that all the work planned and delivered is done through a food security lens, with a focus on making affordable, sustainable, healthy, and enjoyable food accessible to all.

The West Cheshire Food Partnership is coordinated by Cheshire West Voluntary Action, with funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council. Reaching silver Sustainable Food Place membership is an ambition set out within the Cheshire West and Chester Borough Plan 2024-28. The Food Partnership reports to the Eat Well Be Active Partnership, which then reports directly to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Food Partnership recently undertook a 'ripple mapping' exercise to help us to understand better the impact that the partnership has had so far. Here is a link to the mapping so far: https://cwva.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/West-cheshire-food-partnership-Ripple-Effect-Mapping-July-2025.pdf%20## . This exercise is due to be added to with a series of follow-up sessions planned to ensure we gather input from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible.

The Food Partnership has broad membership including public sector (local authority departments including public health, poverty, total environment, planning, regulatory services, communities and climate change; NHS Trusts, education), private sector (local retailers, national chains and the University of Chester), community sector (including community, voluntary and faith organisations), and community representatives, including those with lived experience.

Several sub-groups support the work of the West Cheshire Food Partnership as detailed in the structure diagram: https://cwva.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/West-Cheshire-Food-Partnership-structure-April-2024-1.png. The sub-groups include additional stakeholders specific to the remit of the particular group, with chairs/representatives attending the Food Partnership meetings to report on progress. Sub-groups cover a range of topics under three themes: Start Well, Eat Well and Grow Well. They include addressing issues such as Food and Early Years, School Holiday Provision, Community Growing and Diverse and Inclusive Diets. The structure of the Food Partnership will be reviewed as part of the co-development of the next West Cheshire Food Partnership action plan (2026-29).

The West Cheshire Food Partnership has a clear terms of reference which has been codeveloped by its members. The Food Partnership operates in an open and transparent

way. The terms of reference are reviewed annually to ensure they are relevant and meaningful: Oct-2024-WCFP-Charter-and-TOR.pdf. The Food Partnership meets quarterly, with the sub-groups meeting as frequently as they feel is required to deliver the work programme. The partnership also recently co-produced a Charter which has started to gain support, this will be reviewed regularly. Link above.

Food Partnership meetings take place in a different locality across the borough on a rotational basis. This has helped us to engage with a wider range of stakeholders, supporting us to be more cross-sector, as well as reducing transport-related emissions. Significant progress has been made to engage partners in the Food Partnership using the Sustainable Food Places framework to support cross-sector and cross-issue working.

Members of the Food Partnership come from a wide range of organisations, sectors, and communities, each with their specific areas of interest and influence. Link to current stakeholder/ member list: https://cwva.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FP-stakeholders-and-members-2025.xlsx. A key focus of the Food Partnership over the past 18 months has been widening the representation of partners including private businesses, educational establishments (schools, colleges, and the University of Chester) local growers, farmers, and producers. This work is still ongoing and although we have made significant steps forward in our representation, we also recognise that this work needs to continue to ensure we are a strong and diverse cross-sector partnership which is representative of our whole food system locally.

Members with lived experience of food insecurity are vital to the work of the Food Partnership, and the chair of our Community Food Security sub-group is a person with lived experience. This role has developed over the last 12 months from initially being co-chair to taking on the chair role independently which has helped to support their personal skill development, confidence, and experience. The Food Partnership is working towards ensuring there are members with lived and living experience on each sub-group.

The Food Partnership is a member of Feeding Britain, Sustainable Food Places and the Food Active Network through Council commissioning. Being part of, and therefore supported by, these national organisations/programmes is invaluable with the offer of training, webinars, and networking support. They also provide a reliable source of information to share with our members and help inform our work.

In early 2024, the 0-19 Eating Well Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was published. This was heavily informed by Food Partnership members, and the partnership is responsible for reporting on the associated action plan. Work is ongoing to codevelop an Adult Nutrition and Health Needs Assessment which will be used alongside the 0-19 Eating Well JSNA to inform an all age, Eating Well Strategy for the borough. The Adult Nutrition and Health Survey is being supported by a survey to Cheshire West and Chester residents which aims

to understand the barriers and challenges people face in accessing and affordable, healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable diet and the opportunities available to improve this.

Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

The Food Partnership works to deliver on an annual action plan which runs from April to March to align with the fiscal year. The Food Partnership consults members and wider stakeholders each year on the priorities for the following year. This is done through meetings, workshops, events, and surveys.

Monitoring of the action plan is reviewed at quarterly Food Partnership meetings. Adjustments are made to short- and long-term targets in relation to both what has worked well and what has not, but also against the changing financial and strategic landscape. Reporting templates have been codeveloped with sub-groups to support them with logging progress in a simple and accessible way, but also as a way to note challenges and risks. This supports cross-organisational sharing of best practice and learning to inform future practice and delivery.

A webpage, assets and an ebulletin have been launched to provide the West Cheshire Food Partnership with a brand and identity. We use the *Slack* communication platform to communicate with our Food Partnership members, this is a great tool for sharing information, news and opportunities and the Food Partnership channel can also be used as a space for discussion. Our ebulletin is sent monthly and currently 285 people are signed up to receive it.

The team at Cheshire West Voluntary Action (Development Officer, Lived Experience Consultant and Strategic Lead) coordinate and oversee the Food Partnership, convening meetings, events, and training, plus acting as the central point of contact for all food related queries. The team is very knowledgeable about the food system in Cheshire West and Chester and is skilled at connecting and coordinating, identifying and instigating opportunities for partnerships and funding, and responding to issues and challenges. The team has identified several gaps in knowledge and expertise – particularly private sector procurement, farming and growing - and has worked hard to build relationships with those who can help to fill those gaps. Examples include recent conversations with the local college about sustainable catering and opportunities around procurement. In addition to linking up with neighbouring food partnerships to progress opportunities around saving surplus farm produce to support community food provision.

Engagement with Food Partnership (Jan-Aug 2025)

- People actively engaged with the Food Partnership: 138
- Organisations actively engaged with the Food Partnership: 80

- Collective hours of engagement or support through the Food Partnership: 670
- Collective attendances at events, meetings, or support sessions through the Food Partnership: 305

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

NB at Silver *we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced, or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

Our most recent annual, Food Summit, was held in March 2025. The event engaged over 50 people to explore and delve into our local food system. The Summit included sessions led by Feeding Britain, Feeding Liverpool and workshops on local procurement, food growing, sharing surplus food within local projects, and capturing data and impact. CWVA holds successful second West Cheshire Food Summit | Cheshire West Voluntary Action : Cheshire West Voluntary Action. The outputs from the summit have informed the content of the Food Partnership action plan for 2025-26. Out of the 33 people who responded to a short post-event survey, 27 said the Food Summit was excellent, while six said it was good. 32 people said the event helped them make new connections and learn something new from the workshops.

There is a strong and vibrant food scene across Cheshire West and Chester with regular food events taking place such as the Great British Food Festival in May at Arley Hall, Northwich, which brings together food vendors in a family friendly event.

July saw the Storyhouse (Home | Storyhouse), a Chester-based arts charity, host a Street Food Weekend in Chester, which was a celebration of Chester's food and drink scene, promoting local producers, retailers and eateries. This free to access festival opened the Storyhouse summer series of events.

Chester Green Weekend About Chester Green Weekend - Chester Green Weekend in June brought together likeminded residents from across the city to celebrate climate friendly living. Food was an integral part of the weekend, with local producers and retailers promoting their products at the event.

Social enterprise Healthbox CiC ran two community events during August 2025 with partners. The events brought together hundreds of residents to have fun, take part in activities and to find out about support and services they can access. Healthier food and drink, as well as sustainability was a big part of the events, with free fruit for the children and take-home packs of planet friendly items including reusable straws.

Radiate Arts Creative Food Project has been working with two groups of young people, Deaf & Sensory Network's Youth Vibe and students from Dorin Park SEN School linking with local food producers (Groobarbs Farm and Kingsway Allotments). This project was instigated by, and funded through, the Food Partnership and combined creative workshops, visits to local food producers, and public exhibitions to inspire pride in sustainable local practices and deepen community connections through tailored creative sessions. This project also focused on celebrating local food by collaborating with producers and incorporating their stories into art. It has also been used to help raise awareness of sustainable food systems and community identity via exhibitions, a downloadable recipe book, and postcards. The project collaborated with young people to build awareness about local food systems and sustainability, develop creative skills, confidence, and new talents. It has also helped encourage inclusivity and fresh perspectives from diverse youth communities, amplifying voices and cultivating lifelong advocates for local food and the environment.

Following a successful feasibility study funded by the Council through UKSPF funding, Cheshire Community Action has been leading a programme of work to increase visibility of growing spaces across the borough. Working with residents in different localities, the team has produced directories of community growing initiatives which residents can get involved with. Lots of new connections have been made, including links between growers and schools to share surplus produce. An example directory can be seen here: Online Ellesmere Port Directory (Approved). This project has engaged more residents in local projects and has supported the distribution of surplus fruit and vegetables as well as increasing social connectivity and belonging. The Food Partnership has been influential in making links between the growing networks and food projects. These networks form the 'growing' sub-group of the Food Partnership.

Other initiatives have included opportunities to juice apples to reduce waste by Chester Sustainability Forum, and the Incredible Edible's September Festival where excess produce was handed out to those who attended the event.

In April 2024, the Food Partnership supported the screening of the film 'Six Inches of Soil'. The screening was hosted locally at Picture House who are part of a national 'Green Screen' initiative to support discussion on environmental issues raised in the films they show. The Six Inches of Soil showing was a sell-out. A panel of local farmers and campaigners were invited to discuss the issue around regenerative farming. The event was supported by the Council's Public Health and Climate Team. The Cabinet Member for a Fairer Future, Public

Health and Mental Health chaired the panel showing how important the agenda is locally. One of the Food Partnership members, Eco communities, is now working with the Picture House to promote and curate more Green Screen opportunities.

In late 2023, the Food Partnership launched the Food for the Planet Pledge in Cheshire West and Chester. Food for the Planet helps food businesses to take simple actions to tackle the climate and nature emergency through food. Eco Communities has been supporting independent and community-based organisations to take the pledge, whilst also promoting the pledge with the public. Nine food businesses have signed up to date, with several more currently progressing the pledge.

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

Community food providers meet regularly to share good practice, challenges, and successes, as well as also coming together to benefit from training, funding opportunities and other expertise. The network meets quarterly and hosts meetings at different community food initiatives across the borough to share good practice, learning and inspiration. This approach has proven very successful in not only sharing what is working, but also helping providers to overcome specific challenges and building strong and supportive relationships. This group have started sharing surplus food that they have with each other. The group is continuing to explore this and how they may make this a more formal arrangement to benefit more of our community projects and the people they support.

To support the community food sector, the Food Partnership manages an online map of community food support. West Cheshire Food Partnership map | Cheshire West Voluntary Action : Cheshire West Voluntary Action for the borough which details community and affordable food provision in the area. It includes details of foodbanks, surplus food projects, holiday food provision and community kitchens and cafes. There are currently 39 'pins' on the map. The map is shared far and wide and is a useful resource for residents and front-line staff who may need to signpost residents to places where they can access emergency or affordable food. For example, healthcare staff at two NHS Trusts are sharing this through a Making Every Contact Count programme.

There are many examples of where food groups from across the borough support their communities and engage them in cooking, growing or other food activities. This includes:

1. Blacon Beacon run cooking sessions and recipe bag projects run by a wellbeing mentor focussing on healthier food sources and non-processed meals.

2. Soul Kitchen work with The Townhouse hotel in Chester to run the Sunset Cafe From grassroots kindness to lasting change in Chester | Cheshire West Voluntary Action : Cheshire West Voluntary Action.

3. The Peoples Pantry in Ellesmere Port run slow cooker sessions to encourage healthy eating on a budget, they also incorporate some growing into the sessions and encourage families to try growing at home.

4. Mid Cheshire Foodbank offer recipe kits alongside their foodbank parcels to anyone accessing the foodbank, these kits include all the ingredients needed to make the recipe and instructions.

5. Lived Experience Consultant working with Food Partnership members to embed voices of lived experience within their organisation, ensuring that these voices are listened to and used to help shape projects.

Over the past 12 months, there has been a focus on engaging children and young people in conversations about food, using their experiences and insight to inform and shape how they are supported. Two examples include:

1. What good food means to you (youth project) – working with the Youth service and a local high school, the 'what good food means to you'" youth project sought to understand from young people the challenges they faced in eating well and understanding what changes they would like to see. The sessions included a cooking activity, where the young people prepared a healthy meal, along with a series of engagement activities and a debate. The young people came up with a series of recommendations for the Food Partnership, including involving young people in decisions about food, which is available to them, empower young people to be positive role models to their peers, and to provide healthy cooking sessions to parents and young people.

2. Fairer Future Champions – the Council's Poverty Team worked with five schools (four primary and one secondary) in a deprived ward in Chester to look at poverty-related issues for children and young people. The sessions were wider than food, but food did feature heavily in the discussions. The children and young people had concerns around school food, affordability of healthy food and stigma in accessing food support. The Fairer Future Champion project is due to run in an area of Ellesmere Port, this October.

Cheshire West Voluntary Action in partnership with the Cancer Alliance have planned and delivered many projects in the West Cheshire area addressing health inequalities with a focus on food. This work addressed the most vulnerable and seldom heard in our communities including working with Live! Cheshire which focussed upon the critical need to raise cancer awareness among individuals with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, while also tackling the health disparities this community encounters. The project has subtly engaged, by offering a programme that enables participants to enhance their lifestyle and consequently, their life prospects. The programme has been designed to focus on

improving fitness, understanding and challenge dietary habits and provide easy read/easy learn access to important health and cancer related information that covers signs & symptoms, screenings and how to check your body. https://www.canva.com/design/DAG0c6lqeBo/CVdbPm8TBlkCn8_9NmdZlQ/edit?utm_content=DAG0c6lqeBo&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

As part of the School Holiday Activities Sub-Group, partners collate a directory of full-funded or low-cost activities which children and young people can attend during the holiday periods, many of which include food. A link to the Summer directory can be found here: School holiday activities | Cheshire West and Chester Council

Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

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Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Tackling food insecurity has been a priority for Cheshire West and Chester Council since 2017, with funding allocated to support community groups via the Welcome Network (now the Food Partnership). More recently, the community food security group has been brought together, including foodbanks, surplus food projects, community food groups/organisations with the aim of learning from each other and sharing potential challenges and partnership opportunities. In addition, the group share information about funding and how partners are listening to the voices of those with lived experience. All community groups champion a dignified approach to food insecurity.

In 2022, after mapping the affordable food provision across Cheshire West and Chester, it was clear that there was a strong offer in the east of the borough, but significant gaps in the west. Funding was identified to pilot the '*Bread and Butter Thing,'* which is now operating from four hub sites, in Ellesmere Port and the Blacon area of Chester. Each 'Bread and Butter Thing' hub can serve 65-70 individuals or families each week.

Nearly all of the frontline charities and community projects offer wrap around care for those accessing their services, for example at West Cheshire Foodbank sessions, they have

a series of additional services to help people attending. This can include, financial inclusion workers, Citizens Advice, the Council's 'Let's Talk' team, and the refugee and asylum seeker support team. Some venues also have access to clothes and bikes at no cost or minimal cost, as well washing and drying facilities, and showers for those who need them.

Mid Cheshire Foodbank works with community grocery The Very Green Grocery in both Winsford and Northwich. Anyone using the foodbank is given a 'token' to use the grocery for free in addition to receiving a foodbank parcel. This is helping people access an affordable food provision which is open and available to everyone, with no referral needed. They have seen people who have accessed the foodbank returning to use the grocery, this supports a food ladder approach.

The Council and partners have worked together to gather insight and intelligence into food access, availability, and affordability. Using data from the Priority Places for Food Index which was developed by WHICH? and Leeds University, colleagues at the Council have developed a local version of the tool called the 'Food Equalities Tool', overlaying the existing data with further local data to provide a more detailed view of food related issues at neighbourhood (LSOA) level. The tool has so far been used to inform several key pieces of work, including identifying the most appropriate sites for the Bread-and-Butter Thing provision, and to inform the content and recommendations within the 0-19 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Age Friendly JSNA.

Work to increase uptake of Healthy Start has been led by members of the Food Partnership with a wide range of partners involved in the working group. A multi-agency approach has supported the delivery of the action plan including joint communications (for example a local leaflet encouraging families to check their eligibility), building Healthy Start conversations into all baby and infant development checks, Healthy Start champion training, and working with local retailers to ensure they can accept the digital Healthy Start payment cards, this has been particularly helpful for those families who are close to a food pantry or larder as it means their Healthy Start allowance can stretch even further.

Work has commenced to explore auto-enrolment of free school meals. This initiative will automatically register all eligible families to receive free school meals.

Back in October 2022, West Cheshire Foodbank identified an increase in the number of people living in temporary accommodation who were having to access emergency food. Initial conversations with the families in temporary accommodation gave valuable insight, including the fact that some families had to access West Cheshire Foodbank. There were no cooking facilities in the hotels, so the families had to either eat out, order takeaways, or buy ready meals on a daily basis, due to lack of food storage. The families' priorities were to be able to cook a family meal, wash clothes and get their children to school. West Cheshire Foodbank convened a meeting of community and statutory partners, including people who had experience of being homeless. Through sharing their personal experience,

this really struck a chord with the hotel owner and as a result he approached the Council with a proposal to move families into another hotel he owned – this hotel can accommodate up to 28 families, has shared fully fitted kitchen facilities and a small communal food cupboard, which West Cheshire Foodbank stock. The partnership group, now known as "It's Only Temporary" continue to support people living in temporary accommodation, to make the experience the best it can be. The Food Partnership helped to secure some funding to support these families during school holiday periods to access activities and food when the HAF program wasn't available or able to be accessed. This funding has enabled families to enjoy swimming sessions, as well as football sessions and other activities along with meals during school holiday periods.

After two Poverty Truth Commissions, Cheshire West and Chester Council developed a dedicated group of champions with lived experience. The Beans on Toast Group of Poverty Truth Inspirers focused primarily on food poverty and have been instrumental in driving much of the work forwards, developing a 'decent meal wheel' which details the key 'ingredients' for a meal. This is embedded into all food security work led by the Food Partnership.

The Beans on Toast Group supported by the Food Partnership has also developed and delivered a very successful training programme to increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of the real-life challenges of food insecurity with frontline staff from system organisations. The Beans on Toast training has now been delivered to 120 people over 10 sessions and has been adapted into an online resource for individuals and groups to access the training. The Trussell Trust also use this training for their staff and foodbank volunteers https://cwva.org.uk/foodpovertyandinsecuritytraining/.

The partnership also have a 'Worrying About Money' leaflet developed with IFAN (Independent Food Aid Network) in both paper and digital form for West Cheshire, which aligns with our dignified and, where possible, cash first approach to food support.

The Council is a local living wage employer and encourages businesses across the borough to also pay the real living wage. There are over 60 accredited businesses and organisations who pay the real living wage, including Cheshire West Voluntary Action, who host the West Cheshire Food Partnership.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

There are many examples of organisations promoting healthy eating across Cheshire West and Chester, this ranges from large public sector organisations including the NHS Trusts and the Council, to schools, leisure, private businesses, and the community sector.

The Council adopted the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight in 2019, committing to ensuring healthy weight was considered across policy and practice. The Council and partners then supported the development of the Healthy Weight Declaration Partner Pledge which supports organisations to 'provide a working environment and culture which is conducive to increased physical activity and a healthier diet.' To date, 10 organisations in the borough have signed up.

The Declaration has been used to support several Council policy decisions, including:

- Restrictions on new hot food takeaways which would be close to schools and/or in areas of higher-than-average childhood obesity, areas of deprivation and high proliferation of other hot food takeaways.
- Healthier advertising policy – restricting the advertising of less healthy food and drink, high in fat, sugar, or salt, on council owned advertising sites and all bus shelters across the borough

Work is also taking place to review the vending offer across all NHS and leisure sites as part of a project with Bite Back, funded by the Westminster Foundation. This project is using youth insight and youth voice to advocate for improvements in the vending offer in these places, supporting healthier eating for those who use them.

A series of projects have started with schools across Cheshire West and Chester. Focussing primarily on those in areas of highest deprivation, eight schools are working on the Schools Pledge for a Healthy and Active Future. Supported by Food Active, the pledge takes a whole school approach to supporting healthier eating, moving more and overall wellbeing, engaging pupils, staff, and the wider community. Schools are also being supported with initiatives such as Give Up Loving Pop (GULP), to encourage pupils to reduce sugary drink consumption, Veg Power's Boosting Beans project, and the planning of a local project with

the University of Chester to use co-production with pupils to design food across the school day. This is all led by the School Food sub-group of the Food Partnership.

Community providers across the borough are key to supporting our residents to eat well. Through the HAF programme, many providers have undertaken nutrition training which they have rolled out to their wider provisions. The Food Partnership engaged with a number of the groups to be involved in the development of Food Active's 'Increasing access to healthier foods in food pantries' training module.

The Council is in the final stages of publishing a catering and procurement policy which will support Council officers to ensure that food and drink provided at council meetings and events is healthy and sustainable. The development of this policy has been supported by council staff engagement and a survey to teams who procure food and drink.

Local Work Zones support people back in to work through training and support. The team run a series of courses which include health and wellbeing as part of the curriculum. They use the topics of healthy eating and physical activity to support adult learning across various subjects including maths, whilst encouraging healthier behaviours. The team also offer standalone courses 'Five meals for a fiver' and 'cooking on a budget' which are similar to those developed by Love Food Hate Waste, supporting eating well and reducing the environmental impact of food waste.

The learning disability team at Cheshire West and Chester council run cookery workshops to support people with learning disabilities and their carers to prepare healthy, balanced meals.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

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Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

The Food Partnership aims to create a local food system which champions local, sustainable, healthy, affordable food which people want to eat. Whilst significant progress has been made within the community sector, the Food Partnership recognises that we are at an earlier stage with part of the wider food system.

There are some fantastic examples of places across the borough where the local food scene is vibrant, prosperous, and diverse. One example is Hoole, a small village on the outskirts of Chester. Hoole has an independent food market, greengrocers, butcher, and fishmonger all of whom supply local cafes, community settings and restaurants with produce, keeping the Hoole food economy thriving. Following a successful local procurement workshop at the Food Summit earlier this year where colleagues from Hoole Community Cafe shared their approach, work is ongoing to run a series of events in different parts of the borough to see how a similar model could be used, supporting local supply chains and food businesses.

Conversations are underway to develop a series of tools to map the wider food offer across Cheshire West and Chester from farm to fork. This has been initially mapped out and will include farmers and growers, producers, retailers, and restaurants. The aim of this project is to make connections and support local procurement and the local economy.

Following the Food Summit, the Food Partnership was invited to be part of a Food Futures event run by the University of Chester. The Food Futures event brought together academia, agriculture, retailers, and those working in the community to discuss how collaborative working could improve the local food system, build resilience of our food system, strengthen the local food economy and support those in the greatest need. Many connections were made during the event with a series of potential projects being explored.

A network of community and voluntary sector organisations across the borough work together to redistribute waste food. Using contacts with supermarket distribution centres located locally, organisations including the Very Green Grocery, Lache Larder, The Port Grocery, and the Bread-and-Butter Thing collect food which would otherwise be wasted and redistribute to residents for a very low-cost option.

There has been a significant amount of work by Food Partnership members undertaken to remove the stigma of affordable and emergency food, with several of the providers focussing on the benefits to the environment rather than a focus on food insecurity/ poverty. These provisions are available to all residents with no referral needed.

As mentioned previously, the Council has committed to publish Catering and Procurement Guidance for Council meetings and events with a view to supporting other large employers and local organisations to develop their own guidance in due course. This will encourage council teams to procure food from local, sustainable suppliers.

Thrive to Survive are a community organisation who support families and individuals experiencing financial hardship. For their slow cooker sessions they sourced the vegetables from the green grocers at the local market. The sessions provided the opportunity to talk with the participants about using the market as an alternative to the supermarket for fresh produce and some participants went on to buy more from their local market.

Bread Together is a grassroots bread making cooperative in Chester. In 2020 they set up a micro-bakery and ensure everything they bake is fairly priced so that handmade bread products are available to everyone. Bread Together took part in a recent panel discussion the Food Partnership held about local procurement, and they are keen to continue this conversation with a wider group across the borough.

The Greenway Grocer is a mobile greengrocer, delivering fruit and vegetables into local communities via e-bike where there is a lack of access to affordable fresh produce. Set up using funding sourced through the Food Partnership, the Greenway Grocer procure their fruit and vegetables from Hoole Food Market supporting the local economy.

Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

There are a number of directories which promote independent food businesses across Cheshire West and Chester, these include:

Taste Cheshire host a directory of independent restaurants who use local suppliers: *https://tastecheshire.com/places-to-eat/*

Visit Chester and Cheshire: *Food & Drink | Visit Chester & Cheshire*

A regular publication called *The Good Times Magazine* promotes local independent food in Chester.

Eco Communities regularly promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers through their Tellus magazine, Sustainable Cheshire map, events, weekly e-newsletter, and blogs. https://ecocommunitiesuk.com/

The borough has committed to supporting food businesses to work towards the Food for the Planet Pledge. Food Partnership members have been using the resources to promote the opportunity to businesses and those businesses who have successfully become accredited are able to promote the award to residents.

The new Chester Market has been many years in the planning and involved a lot of consultation with residents and businesses. They adhere to a set of principles, including:

- Good for the planet – Every little thing we do can make a difference to the world around us, and by caring from the outset our foundations are firmly rooted in doing the right thing for our planet. Our environmental approach is not to add gimmicks, it is to think differently about everything and encourage local sourcing.
- Good for good food - Our fresh food market offers the best of everything for good eating, supporting our healthy eating choices from our produce and food traders.

We care passionately about the quality of the food available in our market and we care that there are affordable options too.

- Good for business - The market is here to trade. Customers want quality and value; traders want to provide a service and make a profit. We are here to provide the support for that relationship. The Market is a collaboration of all involved for the benefit of everyone.

Newly revamped, the Ellesmere Port Market supports traders to promote their local, affordable products, many of which are food and drink related. Promoting the market's greengrocer, the website states that 'one of the best things about shopping at a market stall is that you can buy just the amount you need without waste. They are also kind to your pocket, with year-round offers on seasonal items.'

Work is underway to develop an accreditation for local food businesses who are working with sustainability at the heart of their business, this will be led by Eco Communities.

The Council has long been a supporter of the Fairtrade movement. Chester became the world's first Fairtrade city in 2002, and Cheshire West was first accredited as a Fairtrade Borough by the Fairtrade Foundation in July 2011, as part of a wider multi-disciplinary Fairtrade group. Last year, the Council was awarded accreditation as a Fairtrade Community, confirming it as a strategic partner supporting awareness of Fairtrade and promoting the use of Fairtrade products in the borough. The Council works alongside brilliant volunteers in Chester and Neston who have long established active Fairtrade groups.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising **local and sustainable food supply chains**

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Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

Teams at the Council are developing a catering and procurement policy to support healthy and sustainable catering at Council meetings and events. This was in direct response to the Sustainable Food Place framework and instigated by the Food Partnership.

Criteria within the policy will encourage suppliers to have accreditation with the Food for Life Served Here programme and the Food for the Planet Pledge. It is hoped that once launched and tested, a version can be developed to support other large employers in the borough to take a similar approach.

The Going Greener Café, located inside the Women and Children's Building at the Countess of Chester Hospital, opened its doors in November 2023 and is an innovative new eatery that offers a variety of food including a plant-based deli bar, salad options, fresh fruit, and healthy snacks. All food is locally sourced from within a 10-mile radius of the hospital and the café uses fully recycled and sustainable equipment that has been re-used from elsewhere across The Trust, including within The Countess of Chester, Ellesmere Port and Tarporley hospitals.

As a major local business, and as part of the wider national Higher Education sector, the University of Chester's procurement decisions also consider the environmental, social, and economic impact of activities through:

- Design.
- Material selection.
- Manufacture.
- Transportation.
- Usage.
- Disposal options of the goods and services required.

Where possible, they have committed to using food suppliers with an ethical approach to food service, with reduced packaging and with box collection services.

- Their fish is sourced from Marine Conservation Society accredited fish stocks. They are MSC certified, audited yearly, to ensure we are sourcing sustainably.
- Where possible, meat and dairy are from ethical sources.
- They are increasing the number of plant-based menu items.
- They work with local suppliers to help reduce our food miles and support local economies.

The Catering Services department aims to fully involve the student community in sustainability mission from their initial arrival at the University through cooking sessions, sustainable cooking practices and limiting food waste sessions run by the head chef during welcome week.

Edsential catering teams serve over 5 million meals in schools every year, carefully sourcing ingredients to bring young people sustainable, seasonal, healthy, and super tasty food. A member of the Food Partnership, Edsential have committed to ensuring that:

- All the meat is British and produced responsibly. It comes from a traditional local butcher ensuring they can trace top quality meat from field to fork.
- All fish is certified as Fish to Eat meaning it is sourced responsibly and comes from a certified sustainable fishery.
- Edsential is the first catering company in the world to use only sustainable palm oil in their menus.

Brio Leisure is the Council's leisure, health, and wellbeing provider. With sites across the borough including onsite cafes and entertainment spaces, it is important for Brio to get the food offer right. Brio has implemented several measures to create a healthier food offer for customers, including:

- Using the Government's buying standards to create healthier food options in the cafes.
- The removal of bottled drinks containing sugar.
- No imagery of high fat, salt, sugar foods.
- Restrictions on confectionary sold in the cafes.
- Drink options for the meal deals are still or sparkling water only.
- Used vending guidance to reduce the percentage of less healthy items and ensuring less healthy items are not at eye level.

Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

The Council's Procurement Strategy 2022-25 supports local spend, for example, the strategy includes commitments to:

- Ensure good communication channels and the promotion of procurement opportunities are made accessible to local Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME's) and VCSE sector and subsequently maintained.
- Consider that larger contracts may be broke down into smaller packages to benefit MSME's and increase local spend.
- Monitor local spend and to consider local employment and local supply chain.

The Compact for West Cheshire has recently been refreshed, outlining a set of principles that will support the community and public sectors to work collaboratively together to benefit local communities.

Based on eight key principles, the Compact aims to recognise that all sectors and organisations are unique, and act as a guide for everyone to work as effectively as possible together.

Key principles:

- Shared purpose – all organisations are working towards a stronger future where we all play our part in thriving, caring and sustainable communities.
- Equal partners – we achieve so much more together and there is more that unites us than divides us, taking a collaborative approach across organisations is vital to making a difference.
- Involvement of all – work with people, communities, organisations, and those with lived experience at all stages when designing and developing services.
- Partnership and collaboration in decision making – we will work together to think creatively, focusing on solutions rather than problems, we want our residents, communities, and organisations to have the opportunities and resources to make a difference.
- Keep it local – build strong local partnerships to maximise local strengths, support local suppliers and employment to retain wealth and jobs in West Cheshire.
- Funding and commissioning – work together to support the commissioning of services to ensure that they involve and engage all communities that they affect. Ensure that the widest range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services.
- Social value – focus on the common goal to have a positive impact on the community of West Cheshire through gaining additional value in how we deliver services.
- Independence – collectively acknowledge the differences between the sectors that have agreed to this Compact and recognise that due to these differences, we as a collective are strengthened.

Delivery of the Land Use Action Plan has supported ongoing engagement with the NFU (the voice of British farming) and local farmers. As a result, the climate team at the Council has been arranging walks for local Elected Members to understand the reality of local farming, including the opportunities and risks. Further to this, work to support the Land Use Action

Plan has resulted in significant progress on biodiversity net gain/ afforestation delivery, resulting in 119 hectares of trees planted over the past three years and 68 hectares planned for this year.

Following the Food for the planet project delivered by Eco Communities in late 2023 and early 2024, they have started to build a local supplier list for businesses, to support small scale organisations to find suppliers who are local, ethical, and sustainable. Work is ongoing to develop this further, especially for the voluntary cafes with smaller budgets.

Along with Cheshire East Food Alliance and Warrington's Food Network, the Food Partnership has been working on model to distribute surplus food from local farms to community food initiatives. We applied to the DEFRA from the Farm Gate funding with a joint bid which was unsuccessful, however, we are continuing conversations about working together in this way in future.

Each year, the local authority funds 3,000 Let's Cook Recipe Kits for families in receipt of benefits-related free school meals as part of the HAF programme. They are given to families at Christmas and include all the ingredients for two main meals and two desserts, along with recipe cards which children can follow. The project is now into its fourth year and its third with the current delivery model using the charity Changing Lives Together (CLT) who lead the project. The charity works very closely with the local branch of Sainsburys to purchase the food items which Sainsburys source and deliver free of charge. This model only works because of strong relationships with the local store manager who is passionate about supporting local people. The volunteer project coordinator at CLT approached every supermarket in Northwich and they all said they couldn't help with the volume of stock that close to Christmas. The local store manager for Sainsburys had to work closely with his head office to highlight the benefits of working with the wider food system and supporting local people. The volunteer project manager has also built strong relationships with a local greengrocer to provide the fruit and vegetables and a local famer who provides the eggs. It is now a slick operation which uses over 250 volunteers, a lot of goodwill and strong procurement agreements and relationships to make it happen.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

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Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

Land use is key to mitigating and adapting to the climate and nature emergencies and this is set out in the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan's land use, adaptation, and climate repair theme, which is further expanded into the Land Action Plan. Due to the nature of its climate and soils, Cheshire is most suited and one of the best places for dairy production in the world. Therefore, the dairy production in Cheshire needs support to continue in a climate and nature friendly way. One of the actions in the Land Action Plan is supporting anaerobic digestion which mitigates emissions from dairy, provides green energy and the digestate from cattle waste is recycled as fertiliser, reducing the quantities of chemical fertilisers needed for grassland and other arable crops within Cheshire.

A sub-group of the Food Partnership has been convened and met with local estates to promote anaerobic digestion and discussed other regenerative farming practices including soil carbon enhancement. This is an ongoing process. Further discussions are scheduled with local farmers on emerging opportunities and technologies, such as biochar production.

Cheshire West and Chester supports sustainable land management and regenerative and low carbon agriculture within the borough as part of the Land Action Plan. Soil health is key to achieving this outcome. In addition, the Council's Cheshire wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) supports farming systems that encourage wildlife recovery at landscape scale. For example, hedgerows on farms sequester carbon, provide habitats for wildlife to thrive, and improve livestock health and welfare. Sustainable land and soil management also provides ecosystem services; improves water and air quality.

The Council in collaboration with neighbouring local authorities Cheshire East & Warrington, is leading on the formation of the Future Farming group, which will promote the adoption of resilient and sustainable farming initiatives across Cheshire. This will be implemented as part of LNRS and Cheshire West and Chester is the lead authority.

Even though Council owned farms are being sold to raise the capital receipt for the Council, the disposal process requires that the future owners of the farm's estate land whether external or internal comply with an evaluation matrix during the bidding process. The evaluation matrix requires the farm's land delivers on the Council priorities which are food production, climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity net gain and habitat connectivity, air pollution, chemical, nitrogen and phosphorus loading, well-being, and economic impact.

Within the woodlands and habitats being created on ex-Council farms will be community orchards and wood pastures, all part of integrated land use and sustainable food production

Furthermore, the habitats which are biologically diverse, enable resilience within the surrounding landscape for example increased pollinators populations and other beneficial insects. The soils will be able to conserve water within the landscape reducing flood risk during periods of high rainfall intensity, improving water storage, and slowly releasing during drought spells.

The Food Partnership has been working with the Total Environment Team at the Council to explore the Right to Grow initiative, allowing residents to use unused Council land to grow. The team is currently exploring options around both Community Use Agreements and mini leases (similar to allotments).

Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

There are several organisations across Cheshire West and Chester who use a redistributed food model, working closely with supermarkets, factories, and other businesses to collect and provide surplus food to residents at a very low cost. The Very Green Grocery has been operating for a number of years (previously Cheshire Food Hub) and whilst they are the next step on the ladder for those in need of emergency food, they have rebranded to appeal to residents who would not normally use a food larder/social supermarket by focussing on the positive environmental impact of consuming food which would otherwise have gone to landfill.

Cheshire West Recycling and the Council have been using social media to help improve residents' understanding of how to maximise recycling through the kerbside collection service. The 'Let's recycle better together' campaign was launched in March on social media, along with printed leaflets for distribution via public buildings and through officers during resident engagement.

The Council ran a campaign at Christmas to encourage residents to reduce their food waste. The key messages were around shopping sensibly, preparing the right amount of food, correct food storage and making the most of leftovers. Food waste | Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust have also run campaigns with local communities to reduce food waste Reduce food waste | Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

Hoole Community Centre over 55's club run a weekly meal which is cooked by their onsite cafe. This meal is prepared with surplus produce where possible, mainly supplied by Fairshare, the meal is planned and cooked from ingredients that are available that week.

All food waste from catering outlets at the main University of Chester site, Exton Park is recycled in the on-site Biotech Seed Food Digester, which uses enzymes to break down food

and safely flush it away. All other catering outlets across their sites recycle food in the food bins provided, so no food ends up in the general waste stream.

Catering Services have made improvements to their operations to help reduce the amount of food waste. This includes:

- A student-led waste project which resulted in the introduction of smaller plates to decrease the amount of waste.
- Menu changes.
- Staff training and awareness around portion sizes and food waste.

The result of all of this hard work has seen a reduction in food waste at Exton Park of 47.13%.

Food is made to order to limit food waste and the 'Too Good to Throw' scheme means that any meals that are left at the end of service are available for students or staff to buy at a reduced cost to further reduce food waste across all sites.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has committed to developing a single-use plastic free events policy, ensuring that there is clear guidance in place for the use of reusable items at Council meetings and events.

Eco Communities coordinate a number of schemes to reduce plastic waste, these include:

- The Cheshire Cup which is a reusable coffee cup token scheme in participating venues. For a small fee customers can purchase a cup which can be swapped for a clean cup at certain cafes when they purchase their next drink. The aim is to reduce the number of disposable hot drink cups used. Many venues offer a discount on the price of the drink if using a reusable cup.
- Event cups hire from Eco communities aimed at reducing single use plastic waste.
- Plastic-free Cheshire campaign - working with a range of organisations, schools, and towns to reduce plastic waste with an accreditation scheme. https://sustainablecheshire.uk/plastic-free-cheshire-2/.
- Refill scheme registered in Chester and managed by Eco communities: Refill Schemes | Refill | find a scheme and Join the Refill Revolution.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Cheshire West and Chester Council is introducing honey bees into new areas of woodland creation. As pollinators, bees help the broader food production system through pollination of food plants, and also other flowering plants in the natural environment.

In addition, in future schemes we plan to scale up honey production on these biodiversity sites, and we plan to integrate pollinators and edible nut tree species in an agroforestry scheme. This could involve locally produced food brands, which are part of the solution to nature and climate emergencies. Furthermore, alongside the woodlands, we are reviewing the potential for "natural food banks" and foraging zones, comprising edible fruit species and edible herbages and where the public could access food, while enjoying the green spaces. Think a community orchard - but even more wild!