

SOUTHAMPTON



FOOD PARTNERSHIP

Action Plan 2026-2029

August 2026



Southampton Food Partnership Food Summit 2026

Stakeholder discussions informing our Action Plan

Southampton's Food Summit 'Feeding Our City: Working Together' was hosted in May 2026 by the Southampton Food Partnership, in collaboration with the University of Southampton and Southampton City Council.

The Summit brought together about 50 stakeholders from across the city and the wider region to discuss Southampton's food system and how the partnership can support it.

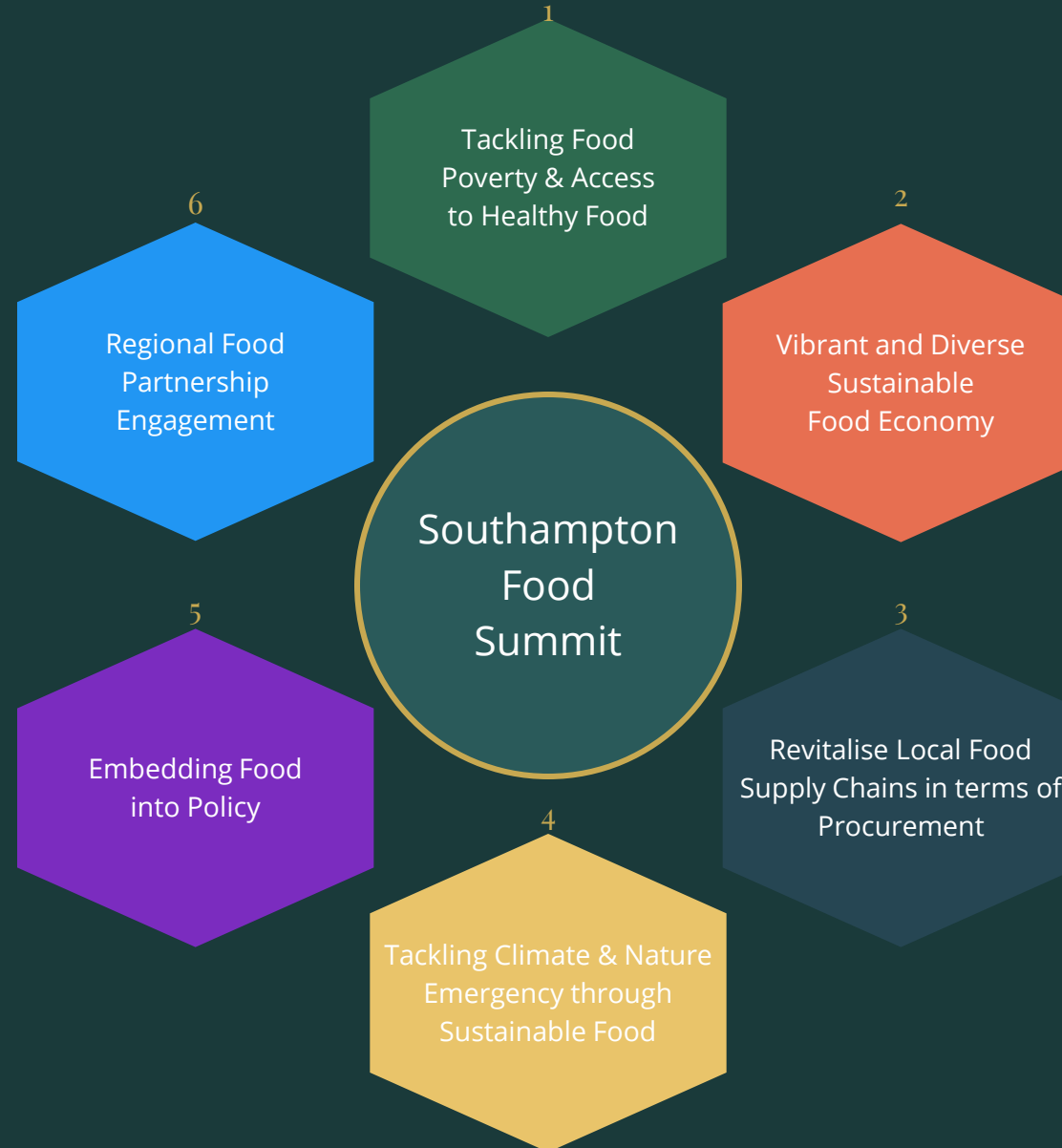
It was convened to strengthen collaboration across the city's food system and to identify priorities for the partnership's future action. In particular, the Summit created space for stakeholders to share experiences, identify barriers, explore practical opportunities, and shape the next phase of the partnership's work.

Working together at the Food Summit

- Facilitated, themed table discussions to support the development of our Action Plan and our Bronze award application
- Lunch – thanks to [Easy Tz Meals](#) (a local social enterprise who use surplus food to feed the community)



Six Discussion Themes



For each theme, the following pages present the key findings and the actions resulting from them that form our plan.

Tackling Food Poverty, Diet-related Ill-health and Increasing Access to Affordable Healthy Food

Key Findings

1. Normalisation of Poor Diets

The normalisation of poor diets is driven by the wider food environment and cultural norms rather than individual choice alone. It is linked to systemic issues including poverty, time pressure, and the dominance of unhealthy options in local food environments. Improving diets requires changing behaviours, i.e., a healthier food culture.

2. Community Initiatives

Community-led initiatives such as social supermarkets, cook-and-eat sessions, and vegetable-growing groups are effective at improving food access and food skills. Strong collaboration between organisations and communities is important for effecting change in food culture, thereby strengthening reach and impact.

3. Educational Early Intervention and Cultural Change

Early education about food, cooking, and nutrition is critical for long-term cultural change. Schools and early years settings are key sites for intervention and requires sustained, multi-generational approaches that go beyond one-off programmes.

Action Areas

1. Support community-led food access initiatives in areas of highest deprivation
2. Expand and promote community food programmes, including social supermarkets, growing clubs, and cook-and-eat sessions
3. Strengthen food education in schools and early years settings
4. Foster collaboration between communities and food organisations to increase reach and impact



Creating a Vibrant, Prosperous and Diverse Sustainable Food Economy

Key Findings

1. Cultural Diversity as a Foundation

Cultural food diversity is a strength and asset for the local food economy. Diverse food traditions offer opportunities for innovation and community connection.

2. Inclusion and Untapped Community Potential

Underrepresented communities hold valuable food-growing knowledge and expertise that remains underused. Greater inclusion of marginalised groups is needed to unlock this potential.

3. Affordability as a Barrier

Affordability remains a major barrier to sustainable food uptake for both consumers and organisations. Sustainable options must compete on price with existing food models.

4. Convenience and Accessibility

Convenience and accessibility are crucial to compete with existing food models. Sustainable food must be as easy to access as less healthy alternatives.

5. Community Engagement

Community engagement and participation are essential for building a sustainable food economy rooted in local needs and aspirations. Community engagement should move beyond surveys and be embedded within trusted community settings such as food markets and cultural events.

6. Community Food Spaces as Social Hubs

Community food spaces serve as social and economic hubs, bringing people together and creating opportunities for enterprise and connection.

7. Workforce and Skills Development

Clear volunteering-linked employment pathways are needed. Workforce development should link food skills to career progression.

Action Areas

1. Engage marginalised and culturally diverse communities through cultural food events, international food retailers and other community organisations and pilot culturally inclusive, place-based growing projects
2. Strengthen community food spaces as social and economic hubs
3. Explore funding opportunities for place-based interventions, community food businesses and social enterprises
4. Support the development of affordable local food delivery and distribution innovation models (e.g., meal-box services, community food subscription model)
5. Develop training-rich volunteer-to-employment pathways in the food sector
6. Promote cultural food traditions as assets for local economic development



Revitalising Local and Sustainable Food Supply Chains (Catering and Procurement)

Key Findings

1. Redefining Local Food

A broader definition of 'local food' is needed that includes food processed, prepared or redistributed locally, not just food grown locally, given Southampton's limited local food production capacity.

2. Local Food Directory and Visibility

A local food producers and suppliers directory and recognition mark/badge would increase visibility and support for local food businesses and producers.

3. Cost and Economic Viability

Cost remains a significant barrier to local procurement. Reciprocal purchasing models and business collaboration could improve viability.

4. Surplus Food System Redesign

The surplus food system requires redesign to improve quality, timing and logistics of food redistribution.

5. Community Growing

Community growing is valued for education and wellbeing but operates at limited scale for food supply. It requires sustained participation to ensure its long-term success.

6. Food Education and Behaviour Change

Food literacy and waste education programmes are vital, targeting multiple stakeholders including schools, households, businesses and communities.

Action Areas

1. Develop a Southampton local food producers/suppliers directory and recognition mark/badge scheme
2. Explore reciprocal purchasing models and business collaboration to improve economic viability
3. Engage supermarkets and retailers to improve surplus food redistribution timing and quality
4. Convene procurement stakeholders to increase local purchasing
5. Deliver food literacy and waste education programmes targeting schools, businesses and communities
6. Promote community growing as a food education and wellbeing intervention



Tackling the Climate and Nature Emergency through Sustainable Food & Farming and Ending Food Waste

Key Findings

1. Food Waste as an Immediate Problem

Food waste is a visible, urgent problem occurring at multiple points in the food system from production to consumption.

3. Local Food Growing and Shared Infrastructure

Local food growing and shared infrastructure are needed to build community resilience and reduce food miles.

5. Climate-resilient Crops

Investment in climate-resilient crops and varieties is needed to future-proof local food production.

2. Food Education as a Long-term Strategy

Food education is a long-term strategy that must start early and be sustained across generations to shift behaviours. Farming and food production are often not seen as attractive or visible career pathways, especially for young people.

4. Plant-forward Diets

Promoting positive, flexible plant-forward diets rather than restrictive messaging is more effective for behaviour change.

6. Community Partnership and Continuity

Partnerships linking schools, growers and volunteers are essential to maintain growing spaces and programmes year-round.

Action Areas

1. Develop food waste education and composting initiatives at the community level (e.g. community compost bins)
2. Promote food-growing and agriculture career pathways for young people
3. Explore a shared equipment library for community growers
4. Deliver positive plant-forward food outreach and cooking programmes
5. Build school-grower-volunteer collaborations for growing continuity
6. Support climate-resilient crop trials and raise awareness of sustainable varieties



Embedding Healthy, Sustainable and Affordable Food into Policy

Key Findings

Policy Domain Definition

There is a need to clarify which policy domains are relevant and what outcomes are desired from food system interventions.

Infrastructure for Food Access

Building infrastructure to improve food access should be a policy priority, including community spaces, transport, and retail planning.

Storytelling for Policy Influence

Using storytelling and participatory research, such as the Fair Food Project and Bite Back, to influence policy is more effective than data alone for engaging decision-makers.

Identifying the Win-wins

Identifying co-benefits that link food action to the green agenda, cost of living and public health strengthens the case for policy change.

Action Areas

1. Define focus policy areas and desired outcomes for food system change
2. Strengthen community storytelling and participatory research to engage decision-makers
3. Advocate for food access infrastructure in local planning and development
4. Leverage co-benefits in messaging to policy stakeholders, linking food to climate, health and cost of living
5. Build relationships with councillors and officers across relevant policy domains
6. Develop a clear policy ask document for the Southampton Food Partnership

Regional Food Partnership Engagement

Key Findings

Learning from More Mature Partnerships

Learning from established food partnerships such as Brighton and Bristol offers valuable insights into successful approaches, lessons from challenges, funding, and programme delivery.

Targeted Connections

Theme-based or role-based networking is more productive than broad engagement, enabling focused knowledge exchange on specific challenges.

Mapping Local Food-system Assets

A comprehensive mapping of local food-system stakeholders, producers and assets is needed to identify gaps and engagement opportunities.

Action Areas

1. Establish peer-learning and advisory relationships with mature Food Partnerships (e.g. Brighton, Bristol)
2. Create theme-based or role-based knowledge exchanges rather than broad networking
3. Complete and maintain a local food-system stakeholder mapping
4. Develop engagement routes and incentives for local producers to participate in the partnership activities
5. Participate actively in Sustainable Food Places regional and national networks, identify shared challenges and collaborative opportunities with regional partners

Southampton Food Partnership Action Plan Summary (page 1 of 2)

Theme	Short-term Action	Medium-term Action	Long-term Action	Key Food Partnership members
Tackling Food Poverty, Diet-related ill-health and Increasing Access to Affordable Healthy Food	1. Support community-led food access initiatives in areas of highest deprivation 2. Expand and promote community food programmes, including social supermarkets, growing clubs, and cook-and-eat sessions	1. Strengthen food education in schools and early years settings	1. Continue to foster collaboration between communities and food organisations to increase reach and impact	Food aid providers Southampton City Council – Public Health and Children's Services (inc Early Years) University of Southampton FAIR food project
Creating a Vibrant, Prosperous and Diverse Sustainable Food Economy	1. Strengthen community food spaces as social and economic hubs 2. Engage marginalised and culturally diverse communities through cultural food events, international food retailers and other community organisations and pilot culturally inclusive, place-based growing projects	1. Support the development of affordable local food delivery and distribution innovation models (e.g., meal-box services, community food subscription model) 2. Promote cultural food traditions as assets for local economic development	1. Continue to explore funding opportunities for place-based interventions, community food businesses and social enterprises 2. Develop training-rich volunteer-to-employment pathways in the food sector	Local food businesses and Go Southampton Southampton City Council (Events team, Economic Development) Southampton Voluntary Services
Revitalising Local and Sustainable Food Supply Chains (Catering and Procurement)	1. Develop a Southampton local food producers/suppliers directory and recognition mark/badge scheme 2. Deliver food literacy and waste education programmes targeting schools, businesses and communities	1. Explore reciprocal purchasing models and business collaboration to improve economic viability 2. Promote community growing as a food education and wellbeing intervention	1. Engage supermarkets and retailers to improve surplus food redistribution timing and quality 2. Convene procurement stakeholders to increase local purchasing	University of Southampton FAIR food project, Catering and Student Union Catering Southampton City Council (Procurement, Environmental Health, Public Health) Local food businesses and Go Southampton Food aid providers Local food growers

Southampton Food Partnership Action Plan Summary (page 2 of 2)

Theme	Short-term Action	Medium-term Action	Long-term Action	Key Food Partnership members
Tackling the Climate and Nature Emergency through Sustainable Food & Farming and Ending Food Waste	1. Explore a shared equipment library for community growers 2. Deliver positive plant-forward food outreach and cooking programmes	1. Develop food waste education and composting initiatives at the community level (e.g. community compost bins) 2. Support climate-resilient crop trials and raise awareness of sustainable varieties	1. Promote food-growing and agriculture career pathways for young people 2. Build school-grower-volunteer collaborations for growing continuity	Southampton City Council (Resident Services and Sustainability) University of Southampton Local food growers
Embedding Healthy, Sustainable and Affordable Food into Policy	1. Strengthen community storytelling and participatory research to engage decision-makers 2. Build relationships with councillors and officers across relevant policy domains 3. Develop a clear policy ask document for the Southampton Food Partnership	1. Leverage co-benefits in messaging to policy stakeholders, linking food to climate, health and cost of living	1. Define focus policy areas and desired outcomes for food system change 2. Advocate for food access infrastructure in local planning and development	Southampton City Council (Public Health, elected members) Southampton Voluntary Services
Regional Food Partnership Engagement	1. Establish peer-learning and advisory relationships with mature Food Partnerships (e.g. Brighton, Bristol) 2. Complete and maintain a local food-system stakeholder mapping	1. Create theme-based or role-based knowledge exchanges rather than broad networking	1. Develop engagement routes and incentives for local producers to participate in the partnership activities 2. Continue to participate actively in Sustainable Food Places regional and national networks, identify shared challenges and collaborative opportunities with regional partners	University of Southampton Southampton City Council (Public Health)