



Food Action Plan 2020 – 2022

Introduction

The choices that we all make about food have far reaching consequences for our health, well-being, the environment and the prosperity of the town. Food is a valuable resource and people should have the opportunity to eat healthy and sustainable food that is easier to buy and offers value for money.

The Middlesbrough Food Partnership reviews Middlesbrough's town-wide approach to food. The Partnership includes individuals, community groups, organisations, businesses and Middlesbrough Council. It has identified a number of shared priorities and actions that can be taken to make sure Middlesbrough has a more sustainable and secure food future. The actions are summarised here, in the Food Action Plan.

The Food Action Plan includes a Food Charter (please see page 10). The Food Charter helps guide households and organisations to take positive actions towards the shared goals of the Food Action Plan. Please consider what you can do to help and show your support by signing the Food Charter and committing to the aims of the Plan.

We hope the Food Action Plan will inspire you to support food initiatives, get involved and make changes to choices you make regarding food. Working together, we can bring about the lifestyle changes that are needed to make Middlesbrough more sustainable with healthy and affordable food available for everyone in the town.

In 2011, a UK Sustainable Food Cities network was established, which is developing and sharing best practice with local communities. Middlesbrough is now an active member of this network. In 2017, the achievements of the Middlesbrough Food Partnership were acknowledged and Middlesbrough received a Sustainable Food Cities' 'Bronze Award'.

In 2019 Middlesbrough became the first location to progress from a 'Bronze Award' to a 'Silver Award' and joined an exclusive group (there are only three others!) that are setting an example for others to follow by driving change and transforming their city/ town through food.

Sustainable Food Cities Associate Director Tom Andrews said: "Middlesbrough's dynamic Food Partnership is delivering an immense breadth and depth of work, connecting all of this work right across the food system; this is fundamentally how towns and cities should work. Middlesbrough has a wealth of good food policies and are ahead of the game on transforming catering and procurement and ahead of the game in tackling food waste. Their support for healthy and sustainable food economy through the Growing Middlesbrough initiative is second to none."

"The town has a really strong multi-agency approach to tackling food poverty through the Food Power Alliance and is delivering a huge range of public facing campaigns, events and activities. It really feels different in Middlesbrough."

As well as recognising the achievements to date, this award provides impetus for expanding the work further in the future and Middlesbrough's bid to achieve SFC's top award, the 'Gold Award'.

The Silver Award is a significant achievement for Middlesbrough and the Food Partnership and would not have been possible without the valuable and ongoing hard work of the people, organisations and partners that have supported the Middlesbrough Food Partnership. Thank you for your interest and support.

Cllr Julia Rostron
Chair of Middlesbrough Environment City

Cllr Mick Thompson
Middlesbrough Council, Executive Member for Communities & Public Health

Background and Context

In 2010-11, Middlesbrough Environment City coordinated the development and launch of a town-wide Food Action Plan. The Food Action Plan was influenced by Middlesbrough's innovative Healthy Town programme, the One Planet Living framework and public health priorities.

Since then, Middlesbrough has been designated One Planet Living status, with a work programme to help local people live healthier and more sustainable lives in a way that often saves money. One of the ten One Planet Living principles involves a commitment to 'Local and Sustainable Food.' Evidence shows that production and consumption of food accounts for 25% of Middlesbrough's ecological footprint (the amount of land and resources required by Middlesbrough residents to maintain their lifestyle). Middlesbrough's footprint is typical of the UK's ecological footprint, which is equivalent to requiring nearly three Planet Earths to be sustainable. The interventions and ambitions in the Food Action Plan address this concern.

The Food Action Plan, developed by the Middlesbrough Food Partnership, recognises that the production, procurement, consumption and disposal of food should be a cyclical process. The actions set out in this plan cover all aspects of food issues that are important to the needs of Middlesbrough: health and nutrition; local and sustainable food; reducing food related waste; fairness in the food chain and tackling food poverty; education and skills; and a strong local food economy. It also outlines how it can support organisations, businesses and individuals to making better food choices and how people can get further involved.

During the development of this document, the Middlesbrough Food Partnership has been mindful of the need to tackle food poverty in the town and has aimed to prioritise interventions to ensure that everyone has access to healthful, nutritious and affordable food. This is a significant challenge for the foreseeable future and will remain a top priority for the Middlesbrough Food Partnership.

A broader challenge at the national and global level is sustainable food and food security. Global food production and food supplies impact upon, and are influenced by, many factors. These include climate change, global economic changes, population growth, food shortfalls, ethical production methods, fossil fuel uncertainties; and energy costs. The relationship between these is complex. The danger is that over the next decade, food prices will rise above inflation meaning that the risk of food poverty in Middlesbrough will increase unless the town makes plans for what is predicted. The Food Action Plan considers the broader interventions that are required to address food security.

The aim of the Middlesbrough Food Charter is to bring community groups, businesses and policy makers together to set and develop local priorities around shared values. The Food Charter gives the whole community the opportunity to make a positive contribution to making Middlesbrough a healthier and more sustainable town for everyone.

Middlesbrough Council, public sector bodies and private businesses recognise and refer to healthy, sustainable, local and ethical food and the food waste hierarchy in policies, strategies and plans.

Business

Support local businesses and settings to procure and provide healthy and sustainable food to boost local prosperity, encourage healthy eating and protect the environment.

1 Create a vibrant and diverse healthy and sustainable food economy

1.1 Maintain and promote the Growing Middlesbrough brand and online Local Food directory and accompanying criteria for local food.

1.2 Promote locally sourced and healthy produce and suppliers at themed events and in areas where there is little or no local and healthy food provision.

1.3 Develop a timetable of local good food events.

2 Create local procurement networks which link into local production and suppliers, and encourage participation of larger mainstream suppliers.

2.1 Further develop the Growing Middlesbrough/ Local Food brand and other opportunities locally and across the North East, such as local purchasing networks and cooperatives.

2.2 Support and promote healthy and sustainable food entrepreneurs and independent businesses through business training and support.

2.3 Support food businesses to improve sustainability across all aspects of their business through training, networks and wider support initiatives.

3 Encourage local businesses to provide safe, healthy and sustainable food and food growing opportunities to promote the health and wellbeing of their employees, customers and clients.

3.1 Continue to deliver a work programme for Food4Health with links into early years settings, workplaces and settings to promote nutrition standards, healthy options and sustainable and ethical food.

3.2 Deliver the Food4Health Business Award to encourage local food businesses to improve the sustainability and nutritional quality of their food. Target 15 new businesses to achieve the award by April 2021 and actively communicate to promote further uptake.

3.3 Make more affordable and healthy food available across the town in supermarkets, convenience stores, takeaways and vending machines, and through pop-up food retail.

3.4 Work to prevent the development of food deserts (limited access to healthy food) and food swamps (high density of fast food outlets), including support through policies and strategies.

3.5 Work with planners, developers and businesses to include growing sites (allotments, roof top gardens etc) and edible landscaping into existing and new business and industrial developments.

3.6 Work to support the North East food allergens group through supporting the implementation of local projects and initiatives that promote food allergens awareness in the community, food trade and educational establishments, and maintain communication between NEPPP and the MFP.

3.7 Increase the number of 5 Star rated food premises in the town.

4 Promote and deliver activities that support the healthy, local and sustainable food industry.

4.1 Encourage 20 local businesses to sign the Food Charter by March 2021.

4.2 Ensure healthy and sustainable food businesses are supported by planning and economic development strategies, policies and training.

4.3 Investigate and promote quality, healthy, sustainable and ethical food accreditations.

People

Inspire and enable the local food culture so that all residents have access to buy, grow, produce and cook affordable, healthy and sustainable food

5 Ensure that Middlesbrough's approach to sustainable food gives priority to supporting the delivery of the Middlesbrough Food Power Action Plan and tackling food insecurity

5.1 Produce guidance and training on access to affordable and healthful food, shopping on a budget, use of sell-by dates etc.

5.2 Coordinated through the Food Power Alliance, continue work to ensure as many people as possible facing financial crisis can access essential and healthful food.

5.3 Enhance the referral pathway of wider and holistic support available to all people accessing emergency and/ or low-cost food via free and low-cost food initiatives.

5.4 Offer education to those experiencing financial hardship in healthy eating and cooking skills on a budget, healthy weight support and social prescribing.

5.5 Provide support for people to access lower cost healthy food, including fresh fruit and vegetables.

5.6 Provide support to charities, social enterprises and organisations who collect surplus food and redistribute it to people in need and promote the service.

5.7 Deliver training to frontline staff in food poverty issues so they can direct clients to hardship funds, low cost or emergency food aid and food budgeting and cooking skills training and resources.

6 Promote Middlesbrough's Fairtrade programme to ensure producers in developing countries are treated fairly with fair pay and working conditions.

6.1 Continue the town's Fairtrade programme under the direction of the Middlesbrough Fairtrade Group with an annual programme of events and campaigns.

6.2 Work with Middlesbrough Council and wider partners to continue with their commitment to serve Fairtrade products in official meetings and provide Fairtrade products in vending machines and associated catering outlets.

7 Give everyone the opportunity to learn about healthy eating, animal welfare, farming good food and how to grow and cook healthily.

7.1 Increase public understanding of food, health and sustainability through campaigns using a variety of communication tools and increase participation and consumption of sustainable food through an increase in opportunities.

7.2 Establish the Teesside University Food Academy to support local food sector to improve food safety, public nutrition, food accessibility, and overall sustainability of the food chain.

7.3 Promote a holistic food education and engagement programme to educational establishments.

7.4 Provide adult community learning courses on a range of food topics, such as horticulture, food budgeting, cooking skills, nutrition and food hygiene and safety.

7.5 Provide cooking skills training for residents, schools and community groups to learn how to buy and cook locally sourced good healthy food.

7.6 Promote the Food Charter and increase the number of residents pledging their support. Engage a further 100 people by March 2021.

Environment

Support residents and businesses to utilise underused land for food growing and production and to increase the sustainability of food and reduce its impact on the environment.

8 Promote and deliver activities that support residents to minimise, recycle and compost food related waste.

8.1 Raise public awareness of food waste and how to reduce it by delivering campaigns, roadshows, school visits and other events (such as the Middlesbrough Town Meal).

8.2 Promote and encourage home composting to residents across Middlesbrough by delivering roadshows, school visits and other events and providing resources to communities.

8.3 Encourage residents to buy food with minimal packaging and promote the recycling of food containers using the Council's Blue Bin scheme.

9 Encourage and support businesses to reduce the amount of food related waste they generate and recycle more of the waste that is created.

9.1 Provide dedicated web-pages for businesses containing advice on waste reduction to promote zero waste.

9.2 Incorporate the Food Waste Hierarchy into relevant policies, strategies and services to reduce and/or divert food waste.

9.3 Increase uptake of Middlesbrough's food waste collection scheme in schools and businesses, and explore a home food waste collection scheme.

9.4 Develop a strategy for a fat, oil, grease collection service and promote to schools and businesses.

10. Promote and deliver activities that support residents and businesses to grow and produce more sustainable local food.

10.1 Promote and encourage community involvement in grass roots and urban/ peri-urban food related activities through improved access to support networks, resources, land or buildings through promotion of assets and allotments for community use.

10.2 Promote the benefits of self-managed allotment sites and provide support for sites through the process.

10.3 Utilise post-industrial, derelict, backland and underused greenspaces for food related production such as community allotments, forest gardens and pollinator planting.

10.4 Create edible landscapes in targeted areas of Middlesbrough including community gardens and edible planting.

10.5 Provide training, advice and support on how growers can adopt low ecological impact production and management techniques.