
SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL - TACKLING CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN SOUTHAMPTON
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillors Houghton (Vice-Chair), Coombs, Harwood, Professor Margetts and T Thomas

Apologies: Councillors McEwing and Vaughan

COUNCILLOR HOUGHTON IN THE CHAIR

13. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

The apologies of Councillors McEwing and Vaughan were noted.

14. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

15. **TURNING THE TIDE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

The Panel considered the report of the Director, Legal and Governance requesting that the Panel consider the comments made by the invited guests and use the information provided as evidence in the review.

Following discussion with invited representatives the following information was received:

Bristol's approach to reducing childhood obesity - Grace Davies, Principal Public Health Specialist, Public Health Team, Bristol City Council

- A presentation was delivered by Grace Davies detailing Bristol's approach to reducing childhood obesity.
- Key points raised in the presentation included the following:
 - Bristol had 22,000 children with an unhealthy weight and the inequality gap was widening.
 - Healthy weight, with an environment that made it easier for everyone to be active and eat affordable, healthy and sustainable food was a key priority for Bristol providing vision and a framework for collaboration.
 - The Mayor of Bristol was supportive and championing the approach.
 - Targets reflected a long term approach:
 - Halt the rise in levels of childhood overweight and obesity by 2026
 - Close the inequality gap in childhood overweight and obesity by 2029
 - A Whole Systems Approach to healthy weight embedded by 2033
 - Reflecting complexity, a systems analysis mapping exercise had been undertaken with number of key partners to develop understanding of causes and relationships of obesity in Bristol.
 - This analysis helped to identify where we could act to make the biggest impact.

- Significant amount of action was being undertaken across a number of themes. Need to involve people across the system to change outcomes. Evidence showed impact is greatest when changes made to environments where we lived and worked. Bristol was tailoring Whole Systems Approach to meet Bristol's needs.
- Healthy Food Environments – priority for action was improving food environment.
- Good Food & Catering Procurement Policy – Setting a standard for food Bristol CC had control over, including school meals, events and markets. This was beginning to have an impact on the food environment.
- Bristol Eating Better award – There were currently 200 food outlets holding an award. Aim was for 90% of food outlets to be engaged by 2030. Supporting changes to the food environment by, for example, reducing salt and sugar levels in dishes produced by food outlets.
- Bristol Healthy Schools Award – Achieving the Bristol Eating Better award was a requirement of the healthy school award.
- Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight – Set up by Food Active. This declaration, co-signed by Bristol's NHS partners, committed Bristol to 14 commitments to promote healthy weight. It was a positive long term statement that the city was going to change the food and active environment.
- Sustainable Food City – Bristol was going for gold in 2020. Citywide partnership where the Eating Better strand was a key part. Included food poverty and sustainability. A key initiative for Bristol led by Public Health & Sustainability.
- Bristol had children focused work streams to work out how children's settings could help to improve children's healthy weight.
- Bristol had a built and natural environment work stream to help ensure that health and healthy weight was a feature of planning policy and city design. Included a healthy weight Supplementary Planning Document and takeaway policy (400m rule for takeaways near schools.)
- Active environment – Sport & physical activity part of Public Health in Bristol. New strategy and targets on physical activity linked to increasing activity levels of children.
- Health and Wellbeing Board was lead strategic partnership.
- Engaging academics and health partners to explore research and opportunities to measure impacts. Understanding and research was vital.
- Working with food businesses had been challenging. Engaging with Licensing, Trading Standards and Environmental Health on the Eating Better Bristol awards had been a way to engage food premises. To understand communities, local food environments and to engage food premises a number of local councillors had gone out with Public Health speaking with food retailers, explaining and encouraging them to sign up to the awards scheme. This had been helpful, especially in diverse and deprived areas.
- Obesity mapping was helping Bristol to understand community needs and to target and prioritise initiatives at deprived communities. Otherwise it was often schools in the most affluent areas that would engage in these initiatives and this would exacerbate inequalities.

- Bristol was only really starting to tackle childhood obesity. There was a long way to go with no easy solution. Partnerships and influence were absolutely key.

A discussion with Leeds – Ravita Taheem, Senior Public Health Practitioner, SCC

- [A presentation](#) on Leeds City Council's approach to tackling childhood obesity was delivered by Ravita Taheem following her discussions with Senior Public Health officers at Leeds City Council.
- Key points raised in the presentation included the following:
 - Leeds had made headlines as the city that appeared to have bucked the trend in childhood obesity. Obesity levels (not overweight and obesity) had reduced for Year R children, with the reduction particularly evident for children from deprived communities.
 - Leeds had been actively engaged in initiatives to reduce levels of childhood obesity for a number of years. They had developed their own plans and strategies but had signed up to external frameworks to guide their journey.
 - Child Healthy Weight Plan – 'Leeds becomes an environment that is conducive to raising a child to be a healthy weight'. Included Whole School Food Policy; measuring the BMI of 2 year olds; and HENRY (Healthy Eating and Nutrition in the Really Young).
 - HENRY was a licenced programme that had been running over 10 years in Leeds. Based on healthy conversation skills. Leeds had been able to scale-up the intervention with 1400 practitioners trained across all early years, midwifery, health visitors and others and over 90 HENRY groups in the city. Promising results had brought partners together.
 - Public Health were looking to influence wider policy across Leeds through partnership working.
 - Signed up to Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight to support local government to exercise their responsibility in developing and implementing policies which promoted healthy weight. Adopted as an aspirational tool for the Council to improve practice over time.
 - Food environment activity was delivered through signing up to the sustainable food cities award. The Leeds Food Partnership set up to oversee work towards the 6 themes of the sustainable food award.
 - Governance through Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children and Young People's Trust Board.

The Year of the Child – Councillor Hammond, Leader of the Council, SCC

- Key points raised included the following:
 - 3 key goals of the Council were Greener, Fairer and Healthier. Childhood obesity cut across all of these.
 - Long term approach required to tackle childhood obesity and support from across the Council was essential.
 - 2020 was Southampton's Year of the Child. Celebrating the work of organisations in the city improved lives of young people and involved young people in the making of the city.
 - Range of policies and programme of events for the Year of the Child.
 - Feed the Future programme, run with Fair Share, had sought to address child hunger in the city. 3,000 children a day were now receiving fresh fruit and yoghurts at school. It had raised the issue of healthy eating in

schools. Seeing fruit at school had been a catalyst for some families to change eating habits.

- Demand was greater than capacity with children taking food home with them for their families. Looking to expand this initiative.
- Southampton was working to become a Child Friendly City.

The Testlands Way – Luke Newman, Chief Executive, Testlands

- [Written evidence](#) was provided by Luke Newman. Key points raised included the following:
 - Testlands would like to restructure the whole Physical Education, Physical Activity and School Sport (PEPASS) and Leisure industry across Southampton; make our children healthier and more active; and, create more opportunities for families to access leisure and sports facilities.
 - Schools, sports clubs and leisure centres should work in unison to engage, encourage and support their local communities to be active and healthy.
 - The Testlands Way had enabled the following:
 - Increased the level of participation in physical activity (within schools that Testlands works with) to significantly above national average
 - Affordable leisure facility hire for local community groups
 - Opportunity to scale up this model across the city to link primary schools with sports clubs and leisure facilities to increase levels of good quality physical activity by children in Southampton.
 - Opportunity to consider how leisure facilities could be utilised to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits they could have on the population.

Whole Systems Approach to obesity in Southampton – Debbie Chase, Interim Director of Public Health, SCC

- A [presentation](#) was delivered by Debbie Chase.
- Key points raised in the presentation included the following:
 - We needed to think about how we as a council could influence change to build a local infrastructure to make healthy choices easier.
 - Public Health England recommended councils took a whole systems approach to tackle obesity.
 - We know that the system was complicated and we needed to understand it better to know where to intervene and get the best chance of success.
 - Leeds Beckett University with PHE released their guidance on a whole systems approach last year. The approach recommended a 6 phase process.
 - We were in phase 1, we needed to secure senior level support and secure the necessary governance to implement the approach. For phase 2 the scrutiny process had been key to developing a compelling narrative.
 - For phase 3 we needed to develop a map of our local system (with leaders who could also help to change the system).
 - We were seeking support to take forward a whole systems approach in Southampton. We needed support from leaders and suitable governance structures in place. We needed to develop shared aspirations across council and partner organisations. Through this work and collectively we needed community and stakeholder engagement.

