

London Borough of Hackney
SCRUTINY PANEL
Municipal Year 2020/21
Date of Meeting: Monday, 8th March 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Scrutiny Panel held
virtually from Hackney Town
Hall at 19.00 hrs

Chair	Councillor Margaret Gordon
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Polly Billington, Cllr Peter Snell, Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Sharon Patrick
Apologies:	None
Officers in Attendance	Sonia Khan (Head of Policy & Strategic Development) Claire Witney (Strategic Lead), Lisa-Raine Hunt (Strategic Delivery Manager), Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer)
Other People in Attendance	Kye Lockwood (CEO, Hackney Foodbank), Sue Bell (Chair, Hackney Foodbank Board of Directors), Morven Oliver-Larkin (London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator, Sustain), Colette Allen (CEO, Hackney Quest), Ali Kakande (Founder, Carib Eats), Kome Owuasuu (Development Manager, African Community School), Nicolette Nixon (Director, Morningside & Gascoyne), Oladapo Awosokanre (Programmes Coordinator, Community African Network), Joe Walker (Director, Round Chapel), Cllr Nick Sharman (Chair of Audit Committee)
Members of the Public	None
YouTube link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH0HIA1c8
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Councillor Margaret Gordon in the Chair

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
 - 1.1 There were no apologies.
- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**
 - 2.1 There were no urgent items.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 National Food Poverty Landscape

4.1 Chair introduced the item citing that since the pandemic, Hackney Foodbank has had to distribute over 18,000 emergency food parcels and that usage of foodbanks has risen over 200% over 2 years.

4.2 Chair clarified that while the agenda listed invited guests for the item as being from the Trussell Trust, that they were actually representatives from Hackney Foodbank which is within the Trussell Trust's network of food banks.

4.3 Chair welcomed to the meeting:
Sonia Khan (Head of Policy & Strategic Development, LBH)
Morven Oliver-Larkin (London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator, Sustain)
Sue Bell (Chair, Hackney Foodbank Board of Directors)
Kye Lockwood (CEO, Hackney Foodbank)

4.4 Chair invited the Head of Policy & Strategic Development to speak.

4.5 Head of Policy & Strategic Development stated that the whole of the items on the agenda is the way that the food poverty strategy is being delivered rather than just her specific section, clarifying further that there is no need to distinguish strategy from delivery.

4.6 Head of Policy & Strategic Development's presentation made the following points:

Pre-Pandemic Response to Food Poverty

4.6.1 During 2019, we had been working with Hackney Food Partnership to develop a food justice alliance and a food poverty plan. This responded to the fact that poverty has increased in recent years including in work poverty and that food poverty partners had seen a stark increase in demand on their services.

4.6.2 It enabled us to focus on food poverty as part of a wider commitment to tackle poverty.

4.6.3 The Food Poverty Action Plan, developed through lived experience insight, engagement and co-production with organisations was adopted in February 2020 with a focus on:

4.6.4 Better join up of emergency provision, better join up between food poverty and wider support and longer-term prevention.

4.6.5 We had 40 members and immediately went into the pandemic- now much larger number.

4.6.6 Action plan and underpinning research and insight:
<https://hackney.gov.uk/hackney-food-justice-alliance>.

Pandemic Response

- 4.6.7 Always knew the response needed to go well beyond those who were shielding to support wider groups impacted directly and indirectly.
- 4.6.8 Lockdown 1 - Council delivered direct support with food, funded an offer in the Orthodox Jewish community and this complemented a much wider offer delivered by volunteers and in the community through members of food justice alliance, other organisations, and mutual aid groups.
- 4.6.9 From summer - we decided to work with those community organisations to develop a partnership so that we could draw on these organisations directly rather than deliver direct support - different ways of working in partnership evolved:
- Consortia to take direct referrals from the helpline
 - Community partnerships network
 - Wider food justice alliance.
- 4.6.10 Ultimately, we were looking to have partnerships in place that could continue to respond to the material impacts of poverty and pick up on the more developmental areas highlighted in the food poverty plan - not losing sight of the actions needed to reduce poverty that are more structural and preventative.

Headlines

4.6.11 Pre pandemic:

- Just under 20% (17.9%) of Hackney households live in poverty before housing costs and this rises to over a third (36.3%) after housing costs - Hackney is ranked the third highest out of all London boroughs for poverty after housing costs.
- In 2019 it was estimated that 48% of children in Hackney were living in poverty after housing costs. Certain families are more likely to be affected by child poverty including lone-parent families, families with two or more children and families with children under 5 years old.
- 100% increase in food bank referrals from 2018-2019 - from 2500 over 5000.

4.6.12 Pandemic impact

- Whilst we don't have official data that shows how poverty has been impacted by Covid-19 we would expect this to have worsened because of the increase in benefit claimancy.
- Research from Trust for London also finds that areas that were the most deprived have been hit the hardest by unemployment during the pandemic.
- The latest figures of children who have applied for free school meals and been found eligible for them indicates a rise since this time last year: from 32.2% to 35.2% - an increase of 777 to 12,064 in total in the October 2020 school census.

Ways of Working Together

- 4.6.13 National context: no single policy or funding response to food poverty during the pandemic. By building a network we have been able to lever external funding and also to improve the way food surplus is brought into the borough and distributed:
- Worked with partners on a bid to DEFRA for food donations, investment from Investec of 12 weeks' worth of food and smaller grants for youth organisations from UNICEF or Sustain.
 - We have so far routed £280k from the Council's Community Grants budget to support communities impacted by the pandemic. This has been awarded through the London Community Response Fund.
 - We have also awarded £120k of grant funding from the DEFRA emergency assistance funding awarded to Local Authorities over the summer
 - We have grant funded organisations from the Orthodox Jewish community and funded a fuel voucher scheme funded through the Winter Grant to complement the funding of free school meal vouchers.
- 4.6.14 By opening a 3rd food surplus hub in Hackney City Farm we are able to maximise the level of food surplus received by Hackney and allocate this effectively out to groups. We have tried to pick up on logistical issues - transport, accommodation.
- 4.7 Chair thanked the Head of Policy & Strategic Development and invited Morven Oliver-Larkin of Sustain to present.
- 4.8 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised that Sustain has been conducting research about what London Borough Local Authorities can do to help.
- 4.9 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised the piece of work/ report is called "Beyond the Food Bank" (BTFB).
- 4.10 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised that the report had somewhat changed owing to C19.
- 4.11 It was advised that the updated report compares measures in place prior to the pandemic and what measures are in place now. The information was primarily gathered via a survey. All the recommendations contained within the report should reflect what is happening on the ground with local authorities and food poverty.
- 4.12 It was echoed that levels of food poverty were high before the C19 crisis, but that the levels have certainly been exacerbated.
- 4.13 It was advised that, very broadly, local authorities can look at: systemic, holistic approaches, convener and coordinator, and cash-first approaches (i.e. investing in local schemes over investing in emergency relief).
- 4.14 Morven Oliver-Larkin directed attention to the list of recommendations found in Sustain's report which can be found in the agenda reports pack.

- 4.15 Expanding on cash-first approaches, Morven gave examples of paying living wage/ living hours to staff, investing in local welfare assistance schemes, and wraparound support within services. The report shows that councils already using this approach were able to respond rapidly, and respond well, to the demands of Covid-19 on Food Poverty.
- 4.16 In cases where councils had to start new schemes, it has been noted that this is a very substantial amount of work compared to the cash-first approaches.
- 4.17 Chair thanked Morven Oliver-Larkin and invited Kye Lockwood and Sue Bell of Hackney Food Bank to present.
- 4.18 The presentation focused on what has happened in regard to the food poverty landscape since the outset of pandemic. A statistic that was given that more residents used the Hackney foodbank in the second quarter of the year than in the entire year previous.
- 4.19 In terms of trends, it was observed that an increase in demand on Food Banks occurs whenever a lockdown is in place, and whenever schools are shut. Further, the longer the lockdowns last, the worse the increase on Food Bank demand becomes.
- 4.20 It was noted that the increase in Food Bank users between 2019 & 2020 was 20,000 from 8,000. Also, at the outset of 2021, the Food Banks are commencing with a higher demand than when lockdowns first arrived, painting the picture of a growing need.
- 4.21 A 'heatmap' of London was shown depicting where the areas of greatest Food Bank demand are. It was noted that Hackney Food Bank was one of the few banks in the Trussell Trust's network that remained open during the initial lockdown.
- 4.22 Prior to COVID, the Food Bank operated with a 'café style' approach; residents were referred to the bank via another service, and they could sit in the bank and select food, but owing to social distancing constraints, the service moved to an 'at the door' style approach, a notable difference being that the element of selecting which food to take away was eliminated for pre-packed parcels.
- 4.23 It was noted that the Food Bank ran lunch clubs during school holidays to address childhood hunger, and that the clubs had to be replaced with other services during the pandemic.
- 4.24 One of the key challenges for the Food Bank has been partnership working with other services. It was noted that agencies usually refer people to the Food Bank, and that those agencies are usually in a position to assess need and provide other wrap-around support, as well as advice on auxiliary issues like applying for benefits.
- 4.25 The Food Bank representatives advised that many of their partner organisations were invited to the Food Bank to sit and provide advice, but that too has had to stop due to the pandemic restrictions. It was noted that as an alternative, the Bank has created 'signposting sheets' which indicate to their users where advice services can be found.

- 4.26 The Food Bank representatives echoed that 'cash-first' is best practise when combating local food poverty, giving examples of pension credit investment to alleviate the numbers of over-65's using Food Banks.
- 4.27 The lack of face-to-face meetings and digital poverty were noted as substantial concerns of the Food Bank & advice services.
- 4.28 Chair thanked the Food Bank representatives and introduced the next item, inviting the Strategic Delivery Manager to commence the item with a presentation.
- 4.29 Chair welcomed to the meeting:
Claire Witney (Strategic Lead)
Lisa-Raine Hunt (Strategic Delivery Manager)
Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer).

5 Hackney Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network

- 5.1 Strategic Delivery Manager's presentation on the Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network covered the following:

Hackney Food Justice Alliance (HFJA)

- 5.2 In 2018 the Council made a commitment to create the first inclusive economy strategy for Hackney and develop a poverty reduction framework, to work towards making the borough a place where our residents thrive.
- 5.3 Founded in 2018 by residents from the Hackney Food Partnership, the HFJA was originally a coalition of over 40 statutory services and community and voluntary organisations across the borough. Membership now has over 100 partners.
- 5.4 Membership spans public health services, schools, faith groups, food growers and suppliers, community food projects and advice providers.
- 5.5 The Food Poverty Action Plan 2020-2022 was developed in 2019 through engagement with HFJA partners and wider stakeholders that included a workshop with over 50 services and organisations attending in October 2019.

HFJA Aim and Objectives

- 5.6 To reduce food poverty in Hackney by both mitigating its impacts and addressing the underlying causes.
- 5.7 Better understand the causes and consequences of food poverty in Hackney and use it to create lasting local solutions.
- 5.8 Empower those with the lived experience to contribute to the analysis, design and delivery of HFJA actions, as equals.
- 5.9 Map existing food justice actions, information, and resources, and identify gaps.

- 5.10 Improve sharing of information, learning and best practice and strengthen coordination between partners.
- 5.11 Develop and deliver an inclusive, cross-sectoral Food Poverty Action Plan.

Covid-19 Response - lockdown 1

- 5.12 Survey to HFJA network, to try and understand what support could be offered by the Council to support HFJA efforts to respond to Covid-19.
- 5.13 Staff member from P&SD dedicated to co-ordinating suggestions, asks, and offers.
- 5.14 Encouraged the use of HFJA mailing list and collaboration between groups to continue partnership independent of the Council as well as direct Council support.
- 5.15 Council stepped up an ambient food parcel offer through a newly created helpline and Here East food hub. 4x VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector) partners grant funded to provide hot food services.
- 5.16 HFJA partners began independently providing hot food and grocery parcels and many wider VCS partners pivoted activities to respond to community food needs.

Covid-19 Response – maintaining support

- 5.17 Government announced the end of shielding support, and the Council continued the Covid-19 helpline.
- 5.18 Community Partnerships Network established to continue to support residents impacted directly or indirectly by Covid-19, in closer partnership with VCS.
- 5.19 Council stepped down its direct food offer in July 2020. Food Network established to increase partnership and support for VCS groups directly providing food.
- 5.20 Increased staff resource directed into supporting partners to stabilise their food offer and understand capacity in the system to meet demand.
- 5.21 Support included signposting and advice for grant applications, establishment of community surplus food hubs, linking partners to venues, volunteering and more.

Covid-19 Response - Increased Demand

- 5.22 Number of residents needing food support increased through 2020, with a sharper increase in January 2021 due to the impact of winter season and the latest lockdown.
- 5.23 Food partners worked with the Council to develop an open system of referrals/sign posting based on regular self-assessment of their own capacity.

- 5.24 Building on this, our team worked with partners to develop local food 'consortia' of groups prepared to work more closely with the Council to develop a direct referral system for residents self-isolating as 'shielding' or following a positive C-19 test.
- 5.25 Six food consortia funded by direct Council grants for residents shielding or isolating.
- 5.26 Broader food poverty response funded through the Council's contribution to the London Community Response Fund.

Food Network - Achievements To Date

- 5.27 Over 40 Hackney voluntary and community organisations providing food parcels, cooked food, food hubs, community supermarkets and co-ops.
- 5.28 Focus on local place based and asset-based community programmes.
- 5.29 Estimated 1500+ hackney residents volunteering to enable the network.
- 5.30 Movement from food aid to food solidarity - increase in programmes led by residents with lived experience and recipients are enabled to actively participate and volunteer.
- 5.31 Increased offer of culturally and dietary specific food.
- 5.32 Network partners are forming local consortia and networks, independently supporting each other with food, space, volunteers, and deliveries.
- 5.33 Over 300,000 food parcels and cooked meals provided since April 2020.

Food Network - Sustainable Provision

- 5.34 Food partners are beginning to shape and lead network meetings and future planning.
- 5.35 Research and development of community supermarkets, food coops and cash first approaches - HFJA subgroup has submitted an application to the GLA Food Roots Incubator programme to further this development.
- 5.36 Management Trainee 6-month placement across Community Partnership Network and Anti-Racism Action Plan will work with partners to further record lived experience of food poverty and to ensure sustainability of culturally specific food access.
- 5.37 Food Network contribution to wider Hackney strategy and transformation - including Poverty Reduction, Green Recovery and Preventative Approach development.
- 5.38 Increased independent collaboration with Hackney Community Halls, Public Health, and wider Council services.

Food Network - Meeting HFJA Objectives

- 5.39 Better understand the causes and consequences of food poverty in Hackney and use it to create lasting local solutions.
- Increased insight gained that will shape more effective future solutions.
- 5.40 Empower those with the lived experience to contribute to the analysis, design and delivery of HFJA actions, as equals.
- Many food programmes are now led by residents with lived experience who play a vital role in ongoing analysis, design, and delivery.
- 5.41 Map existing food justice actions, information, and resources, and identify gaps. Find Support Services Map and Food Network signposting sheet established.
- 5.42 Improve sharing of information, learning and best practice and strengthen coordination between partners.
- Monthly Food Network meetings, weekly mailing updates, active HFJA email network.
- 5.43 Develop and deliver an inclusive, cross-sectoral Food Poverty Action Plan.
- Increase in culturally and dietary specific provision, increased diversity of HFJA partners.
- 5.44 Chair thanked Strategic Delivery Manager for the presentation and moved onto the next segment of this topic: hearing from representatives of the Hackney Food Network. Chair invited Colette Allen (CEO, Hackney Quest) to present.
- 5.45 Colette Allen advised that Hackney Quest was previously (pre-pandemic) delivering meals to young people in the borough but after the first lockdown they adapted that service into a food bank, partly through partnership working, giving the example of a temple in Slough that provides substantial amounts of food for them to distribute.
- 5.46 It was advised that the small foodbank they operated that distributed 30 meals each Friday was able to increase that number to 90 via their partnership working. This food was delivered to isolated community members.
- 5.47 It was advised that Hackney Quest is now the lead consortia partner within its consortia, noting that the organisation was already working with other members of the consortia prior to COVID-19.
- 5.48 It was stated that she is very impressed with the work of the Hackney Food Network, mentioning Lisa specifically, and noting that the sense of trust was valuable to collaborative working, and working rapidly.
- 5.49 Colette Allen was briefly cut out from the virtual meeting owing to a connection problem, and on her return, the chair asked a question about recommendations going forward.
- 5.50 It was advised that, making sure the recipients of food from Hackney Quest need to be remembered and included to make sure the wider food networks in

the borough can cater to their needs as the situation progresses up to and beyond the end of pandemic/ lockdowns.

- 5.51 Chair thanked Collette and invited Ali Kakande (Founder, Carib Eats) to present.
- 5.52 Ali Kakande advised that Carib Eats has not long been established and was created as a response to a mutual aid call-out message from a vulnerable resident in the borough who'd recently had a lot of their support network fall through. Ali was cooking Caribbean food when she saw the message and decided to deliver food to that person. Since then, the organisation has grown to delivering 72 meals a week.
- 5.53 It was advised that in addition to delivering the meals, the service connects and chats with the recipients (as far as social distancing allows) and conducts a welfare check once a week.
- 5.54 It was advised that working with partners in the network has been of benefit, giving the example of emails sent highlighting services to each other that they may not have been otherwise aware of.
- 5.55 Ali Kakande also spoke to what is lacking in terms of support, stating that she's running Carib Eats alone, effectively, and stating that more accessible funds would be crucial for the organisation to continue in its work. It was noted that the waiting list to use Carib Eats is larger than its current client list and funding applications are very time consuming for someone in her position to regularly complete.
- 5.56 It was advised that some of the referrals are on behalf of residents for whom plant-based food is culturally inappropriate, hence the necessity for her service.
- 5.57 It was advised that the organisation makes use of a space in Lea View house, but on a limited, 1-day per week basis and has a team comprising of: a head chef, a community cook and a young person. It was stated their aim is to bring in more young people from the community to assist with deliveries
- 5.58 In terms of recommendations, it was suggested that micro-organisations like hers should not be forgotten about in terms of funding and support, giving an example of a referral that came to her shortly before the meeting that she unfortunately had to decline. Ali's hope is to be less reliant on funding and more self-sustaining for the long term.
- 5.59 Chair thanked Ali Kakande for their contribution and asked Kome Owusu (Development Manager, African Community School) to present.
- 5.60 Kome Owusu advised the group was initially supporting families with shopping online, but due to COVID-19, since March, the group has been helping families access culturally appropriate food.
- 5.61 Kome Owusu extended thanks to the Food Network for their assistance in the work of ACS but stated that there is a concern around the feasibility of continuing their work in the long term.

- 5.62 Chair thanked Kome Owusu and invited Nicolette Nixon (Director, Morningside & Gascoyne) to present.
- 5.63 Nicolette Nixon advised that Morningside & Gascoyne receives regular supplies from the Felix Project, and they were able to distribute that mainly amongst their estate.
- 5.64 Nicolette Nixon told an anecdote about a resident who'd suffered strokes and a heart attack who had struggled to secure support or food, even with the assistance of their care worker. The resident phoned by chance and the organisation was able to assist him. Stories like this, Nicolette explained, helped focus their efforts.
- 5.65 Nicolette Nixon stressed the importance of involving young people in these efforts, which they did from an early stage. In addition to delivering meals, it's of key importance for the young to engage with older residents, talk to them, and discover what other needs they might have.
- 5.66 Nicolette Nixon observed the benefits of partnership work in the last year, noting that the mutual support has strengthened the network as a whole.
- 5.67 While Nicolette Nixon is of the opinion that sometimes councils can appear to release funding in an uneven manner, the funding for the food network since pandemic has been much fairer.
- 5.68 It was advised that some residents who are in receipt of food are also helping the organisation deliver it, something which has proved fulfilling for them in terms of contributing to the system of food delivery that they benefit from.
- 5.69 In terms of recommendations, it was warned that the borough would likely continue to see food poverty even when lockdown ends, and that further support will almost certainly be needed to continue their work. Nicolette also praised the food hubs, noting that Morningside & Gascoyne is one of 3 in the borough.
- 5.70 Chair thanked Nicolette Nixon and invited Oladapo Awosokanre (Programmes Coordinator, Community African Network) to present.
- 5.71 By way of introduction, Oladapo Awosokanre explained that the community African Network is made up of 11 African-led charities, and the network has focussed on health and wellbeing since its inception in 2016.
- 5.72 Owing to the pandemic, the network has had to adapt and focus on food access, noting that many African service users have been unable to access culturally appropriate food.
- 5.73 It was advised the network is made up of 2 Congolese charities that accommodate French speakers in Hackney, a Somali organisation, 2 organisations that work with Eastern African residents including Swahili speakers, and an organisation that works with Eritrean & Ethiopian residents. Oladapo that many residents within these communities were affected by losing their jobs, and owing to visa issues, many have to recourse to public funds.

5.74 It was advised that around June/ July last year, funding was made available to support undocumented residents. Despite that welcome funding, it proved inadequate, only being sufficient to help a few residents rather than all. As a main recommendation, Oladapo called for continued and greater funding.

5.75 It was noted that the network has been able to serve African and Caribbean residents during pandemic, including food deliveries on Saturday; over 500 families have been supported in this manner in the last 9 months. There has also been support rendered for topping up of utilities and mobile phones.

5.76 It was stated that despite the group receiving funding from DEFRA and the London Community Foundation, partnership networking and funding will be essential to meeting needs beyond lockdown. Oladapo called for more availability of culturally appropriate food, and further support for those with no recourse to public funds and undocumented migrants.

5.77 Chair thanked Oladapo Awosokanre for their contribution and invited Joe Walker (Director, Round Chapel) to present.

5.78 Joe Walker advised that Round Chapel was already rendering food support when the pandemic hit. When the first lockdown was introduced, Round Chapel's response was very reactive, and they utilised their own networks, mutual-aid groups, and partners to try and accurately identify the level of need.

5.79 Working directly with their housing team that speaks with families in temporary housing specifically, Joe observed that supporting these families in terms of food poverty as well as other issues was another focus of their diagnostics. A phone line and an online support portal was established for these families, the purpose of which was to create a safe space for these families to discuss their issues around food poverty and access to other services. Round Chapel is currently working with 29 families which are particularly vulnerable with complex needs. Joe noted that these families are very socially isolated, and that the fear of being able to get outside with their children could've been a hindrance to support. Joe advised that staff members were trained for low-level casework to assist.

5.80 Joe Walker provided a statistic that 23/29 families Round Chapel is working with received support from Round Chapel exclusively. This identifies a gap between services that are in place via the council and what is actually happening in the community. Joe would offer the recommendation of taking the experience of the food partnership network and advancing that work as the country comes out of lockdown and harnessing that work to 'reset' the relationship between statutory services and residents most in need, both in terms of food poverty, but also wider needs. The opportunity to redesign how these services and support networks operate is upon organisations as a result of the lockdown response.

5.81 Chair thanked Joe Walker for their contribution and announced the meeting would break for 5 minutes.

5.82 Chair resumed the meeting and invited Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer) to the meeting to present on the Strategic Direction of HFJA and Food Action Plan.

5.83 Strategic Delivery Officer highlighted the positives from the lockdown, namely the networks food response and the power of food bringing people together.

5.84 It was highlighted that the original food Action Plan was incorporated into Hackney's response to the pandemic, noting culturally appropriate food as one way that the original plan featured in the reactive response.

5.85 It was advised that a range of models would be needed going forward, i.e. co-op models, community supermarkets, and other social enterprise models. Food growing was also provided as an example of a potential emerging model.

5.86 Strategic Delivery Officer's presentation on the next 12 months and the Strategic Direction of HFJA Action Plan Contained the Following:

5.87 Key questions:

- What food access landscape do we want to develop in Hackney?
- What is the strategic direction the HFJA wants to go in?
- How do we maintain what has been achieved over the past twelve months and develop this further?
- What can we give more attention to as we head into the summer and beyond?

5.88 Some ideas to test:

- Developing different models for food provision and access (e.g. Food co-operatives, community supermarkets, social enterprise models)
- Food growing schemes
- Connections between food access and other services (e.g. advice, housing and health)
- Specific groups and issues: young people and the strategic approach to FSM (Free School Meals) and food access for older people.

5.89 Strategic Delivery Officer advised that the conversation with the members of the Food Network & Justice Alliance is due to start shortly.

5.90 Head of Policy & Strategic Development wished to expand on Adrian's presentation making a distinction between the direction of the Hackney Food Justice Alliance and the wider goals of the organisation.

5.91 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that two developments have started, one to ways of working (the 'Here to Help' line) which has developed a range of strength-based tools around having conversations with service users. These tools will be applied elsewhere in the council in the future as well as in other organisations. The work on embedding the trust that's developed between organisations and residents will be looked at in terms of how best to preserve it.

5.92 Where the network goes next is another development being considered. While there will be no 'business as usual' immediately after lockdown ends, some of the members of the food network initially based as a youth provider will wish to return to those activities. It therefore will be a necessary piece of work to determine which groups want to remain in this space, and what the core group who remains will need to continue their work. Another example was given as to what extent partnership

working with the council will continue, and conversely, whether in some cases whether the council will step back. Sonia emphasised that this work isn't 'ending' but will continue, and as it does so, the specific needs of people will be addressed in addition to the general needs that have been addressed thus far.

5.93 Chair thanked the Head of Policy & Strategic Development and invited Claire Whitney (Strategic Lead) to present on the advice services update.

5.94 Strategic Lead advised that the council's model for advice has been largely informed by existing systems thinking review which was initiated in 2016. It was important to approach this work with an understanding of advice services from client's perspectives, but also from the perspective of frontline workers. It is also a method by which the council can fully engage with the advice sector rather than imposing a top-down service review.

5.95 Strategic Lead advised that the aim of the approach is to work with partners, learn, and implement learning on an ongoing basis; one benefit of this approach is being able to work together when informing new models for advice.

5.96 There is also a consideration to understand the management thinking that shapes the advice systems in place for everyone working within it, the wider systems, and the complex impacts on advice providers from external sources (local authority, DWP), and how demand coming into the service is being viewed and managed.

5.97 Systems change requires challenging cultural and behavioural system shifts, and longer-term redesign of services is a substantial undertaking. One of the key things we've learned is that 'unlearning' is difficult and challenges existing thought on the subject, but necessary.

5.98 A new framework for advice was launched in November 2018 which had a clear purpose – to help service users solve their problems and regain independence by promptly being given the right advice and support. The frameworks set out the range of measures that the council sought to better understand and learn from. Recommendations were taken to cabinet in March 2019.

5.99 It was advised that this was the point at which there was engagement with scrutiny, and work with approximately 20 organisations which the council wanted to fund and work with following a grant application process was underway.

5.100 Since May 2019, there has been an intensive process of working with providers to put the new service into practice. As a new service, there was substantial investment and commitment to getting it right. Over the first year, regular meetings were held to share learning, address emerging issues in the service, and there was a lot of work that included observing the work, learning together, and peer observations between providers.

5.101 This work has attempted to replace the more traditional performance management approach. The measures of success put in place focus on who was accessing the services, who is unable to access the services, what's driving that demand, and how people's needs are being met. It was important that judgements were not made on advice providers' ability to administer their service but ask how well systems are working and then determining what the council needed to learn and change.

5.102 It was advised that this approach was going well until the pandemic hit, and at that point, the approach had to stop. It wasn't possible to continue to work so closely with advice providers, especially on their premises. As a team, they looked more towards community support.

5.103 Strategic Lead advised the pandemic revealed and made-worse the levels of vulnerability and as such a major focus of their work shifted to supporting protected residents. The traditional processes the team had been trying to move away from fell away as the team tried to wrap their service around vulnerable residents. It was noted that the experience of assisting these residents during the pandemic has helped the team learn the new ways of working that they were aspiring to.

5.104 It was advised that the team went to cabinet in December asking them to extend the advice grant for the 20 partners they're working with, adding that consistency to support and advice services is particularly important at this time.

5.105 It was advised that owing to the increasingly essential nature of the advice services, and the change of work that's taken place since pandemic, this is an important time to look at ways of working analytically to ensure the service is fit for purpose moving forward. It was advised that a major aim is to work through the initiatives that have emerged through pandemic with the advice providers to ensure they're sustainable, and to fully understand how they work.

5.106 Chair thanked Strategic Lead for their contribution and opened the meeting to questions.

5.107 Chair posed a question to the representative from Sustain, asking what their main recommendations for Hackney would be.

5.108 Morven Oliver-Larkin responded by saying strength-based approaches have a lot of value within a wider framework of work, but for certain demographics, in particular older residents and those with disabilities, there is a need for particular service provision. Morven advised Sustain does have a report looking at meals on wheels services during pandemic, and the findings show that there will always be a demographic that relies on this type of support. This was noted to be a key recommendation. Strong referral processes and tendering & funding were listed as recommendations, and so too was the introduction of mapping exercises e.g. seeing if a basket of culturally-appropriate food within 15 minutes of home is affordable.

5.109 Cllr Billington referred to the recommendation in the Sustain report regarding the continuation of 'meals on wheels' services, what the Head of Policy & Strategic Development's opinion is of the loss of the meals on wheels service in Hackney, and what kind of replacement service might be needed going forward.

5.110 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development responded by saying the question would be better posed to decision makers within the council, i.e., cabinet lead, but in terms of pandemic response the need for hot food to be provided to a large group was clearly identified. Further, that need is best served through a culturally appropriate offer,

5.111 Cllr Hayhurst stated the necessity for the cohort of people with no recourse to public funds to be able to comfortably access food & Covid-19 vaccinations, no

questions asked, calling for something firm, and recommending the council approach Hackney Migrant Centre.

5.112 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development responded saying there is full understanding of these requirements, and that a hardship fund was developed over the summer specifically to support residents with no recourse to public funds, adding that alone isn't sufficient. There is ongoing work across council departments to understand how the council can improve the offer for those with no recourse to public funds, it is at the forefront of the council's mind; the complexity of need is driving approaches to a connected response.

5.113 Cllr Snell posed a question about whether the sustainability of government funding for volunteers during cuts is on the council agenda to ensure a continuity of service.

5.114 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised there has been work with Volunteer Centre Hackney on freeing up their existing funds, so not all the funding had been additional. It was stated that feeding the work of volunteers into the upcoming grants review, and that the funding for volunteers will continue to be looked at.

5.115 Cllr Snell asked if there could be more research and outreach into what kind of food is healthy, and also culturally appropriate to ensure funding goes as far as possible.

5.116 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that linking food poverty to healthy living is part of conversations already underway with Public Health, and standards around healthy living will be built in.

5.117 Cllr Patrick raised a concern about vulnerable service users 'slipping through the net' once the pandemic ends and the continuity of support.

5.118 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that identifying these gaps and closing them is part of the work looking at ways of working, and part of the learning that is coming out of the pandemic response.

5.119 Strategic Lead added that partnership working with smaller community groups is the best way to reach vulnerable service users that might otherwise be unidentified to the council.

5.120 Cllr Patrick also observed the presence of food deserts in several wards in the borough, asking whether the council could work with local, smaller shops, which are usually more expensive, to work together to increase their buying power and in so doing, lower their prices.

5.121 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that things like community supermarkets and food co-ops are being considered, and as the council's response moves out of the emergency/ reactive phase, this work will continue.

5.122 Cllr Conway expressed concern of members of the partnership network returning to their original functions and whether the cash-first offer could offset the loss of those organisation's contributions.

5.123 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that a more enhanced way of working between the council, CCG (Clinical Commissioning Groups) and colleagues in Health will work as a collaborative effort and offset any changes to the activities of the organisations within the food network.

5.124 Strategic Lead added that there was a focus on partnership work, even before the pandemic, and the enthusiasm and transformational qualities of that work means it is unlikely to stop at the end of the pandemic.

5.125 Strategic Delivery Manager advised that their team has started speaking to the Hackney Business Partnership & the manager leading on Inclusive Economy is getting more involved with food poverty work. This work will allow social enterprises and micro-organisations to continue their work, and there is also work looking at galvanising other types of support from local businesses from funding to logistical support. It was also advised that one of the directorate's management trainees will be looking at culturally appropriate food offers over the 6 months specifically.

5.126 Joe Walker stated that the next 2 years will likely be more challenging than the last year due to small organisations surviving on emergency funding that may shortly cease. Joe added that the conversations the council is having will be crucial to resetting partnership working to ensure the work happening is sustainable.

5.127 Cllr Sharman expressed concern over unmet needs across the borough and called for the food network to gather intelligence as much as respond to need. Further, Cllr Sharman observed that this issue is broader than the traditional intradepartmental approaches, and there needs to be work on identifying the size of the problems to ensure that funding understanding is realistic and accurate.

5.128 Chair observed that Hackney's food strategy has to be closely embedded with other council services and thanked Joe for his well-put point.

5.129 Head of Policy & Strategic Development stated to the members present that her team can return to talk about poverty reduction work and added that another £500k has been added to the budget for poverty reduction which demonstrates corporate commitment to collaborative working around the issue.

5.130 Chair closed the item, thanking all participants.

6 Work Programme 2020/2021

6.1 Chair stated that the work programme is in development for the new municipal year, but echoed Sonia's suggestion that poverty reduction should feature.

7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

7.1 Chair advised that, from matters arising, the chief executive is going to confirm the date to launch the new bullying and harassment strategy, and the head of scrutiny ward forums will set up a session with comms officers and scrutiny panel to progress social media training.

7.2 Chair asked members to agree to the previous minutes.

RESOLVED:	That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2021 be agreed as a correct record and that the matters arising be noted.
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8 Any Other Business

8.1 There was none.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00-9.36 pm