

National Good Food Plan: Scottish Government consultation – APSE Response

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only to England, Northern Ireland and Wales

1 Executive summary

Scottish Government released a consultation of the National Good Food Nation Plan. They are looking for views on the six Good Food Nation Outcomes and their proposed ways of measuring progress, as well as the functions defined in secondary legislation. This is important for local authorities as the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 requires local authorities to produce their own plans, and to have regard for the content of the national plan.

The consultation closed on 22nd April 2024, [click here](#) with responses to the consultation summarised in a published statement, and any revisions to the plan taking place before laying it with Scottish Parliament for 60 days; after this, the Scottish Ministers will have 3 months to finalise the national plan before it is published.

2 APSE Response

APSE was pleased to be given the opportunity to respond to the consultation. APSE's full response is outlined below:

About APSE

APSE's (Association for Public Service Excellence) aims and values are to support and promote the delivery of excellence in frontline local government services. APSE works with over 300 local authorities throughout the UK specialising in frontline service delivery issues. All local

authorities within Scotland are members of APSE and in responding to this consultation APSE have considered the views of our member councils, including responses drawn from our discussions with our Scottish Soft FM advisory group. We have also drawn upon APSE research including our 'state of the market' surveys within the Soft FM sector alongside drawing upon data from APSE's Performance Networks service, which is the largest voluntary data benchmarking service in local government. As a representative body of our member local councils we have not endeavoured to answer every point raised in the consultation but to cover the main themes on behalf of our membership.

Our response

APSE welcomes the publication of the plan as well as its broad aims and objectives. The national and local plans are to support "social and economic wellbeing, the environment, health and economic development", providing the opportunity for local authority services to engage with public sector partners (including private, third sector and communities) to build place based local plans. However, it is important to note that consideration in terms of funding and resource requirements will be fundamental to the success as well as including other non-public bodies within the aims and objectives, ensuring key themes across plans are embedded in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

As APSE has highlighted in its call for evidence to Scottish Parliament in 2022, Good Food is a core consideration across a range of policy areas, it is connected to many other public policies including climate change, health and wellbeing, poverty, school curriculum and sustainability. As such there are a variety of services/areas which will play key roles in these policy areas including:-

- Planning, licencing, land use and local development plans
- Economic development and business growth
- Education, curriculum and skills development
- Health and social care support and healthcare settings
- Operations, procurement and contract management of food services including school-food nutrition
- Community resilience and emergency response
- Addressing poverty and inequality

The plan is very ambitious and as such there needs to be a collective response not just from across all services within local authorities but also other non-public sector bodies to achieve the outcomes. It is therefore important for Scottish Government to engage with all levels of local government and other non-public sector bodies to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the importance and the key role they play in helping to meet these outcomes. Support through resources and finance as outlined previously, will also play a vital role in this.

As part of the National Good Food Nation Plan, it is important to highlight: -

- The importance of a clear path to achieving the outcomes from the indicators which are to be used and accurate baselines to help ensure that progress can be mapped.
- The importance of Good Food in relation to other social policy issues such as poverty, health, education, environment and sustainability and therefore the importance of ensuring all stakeholders are involved and engaged to help support the delivery of these outcomes.
- Greater emphasis of the important role private sector and other non-public sector bodies play, including supermarkets and take away restaurants. All will be required to be involved to meet the aims and outcomes, this is particularly the case for example when considering eating establishments “beyond the school gates” and looking at the nutritional standards which local authorities adhere to.
- The importance of adequate investment and resources for local authorities being made available, in order to support the delivery of the plans. Councils have until 2026 to complete their plans, with a requirement to review every two years to outline progress and actions. With local authority budgets pressures continuing to intensify, funding to support local authorities in the delivery of these plans will be important in order to meet the aims and outcomes.
- Understanding that challenges such as available resources, local priorities and other competing demands which all impact on local authorities’ ability to help support and

achieve the outcomes. This includes supply chain and procurement challenges, with more support required to help local authorities to procure locally when possible. As well as the potential impact of the delayed roll out of Universal Free School Meals.

- The importance of food policies which reflect the diversity of the population of Scotland and are inclusive of both cultural and religious differences must not be underestimated. The emerging growth in climate-awareness and conscious decisions by consumers, food producers and caterers, to cater for plant-based diets or diets which actively seek to reduce reliance on meat, dairy and fish must be a firm policy consideration. This we believe would be best supported by active monitoring of data and consumer demographics to ensure that food policies and plans are meeting both current and future demands.
- Recognising the range of policies and legislation already in place for authorities and linking into these and their targets for example the upcoming Circular Economy Bill regarding food waste etc, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the recent publication of Local Food for Everyone: Our journey, which both detail food growing strategies and allotments etc.

Some of the areas outlined could also be actively supported by APSE's Performance Networks Data. These existing datasets are a rich source to both monitor and report on performance information in terms of catering services, supported by strong participation across Scottish Local Government as all councils in Scotland are members of this. Drilling down this data can also highlight areas of best practice and information sharing that have and continue to support key policy areas for example school meal uptake and sustainable procurement and the environment.

We have worked with a range of national governing and audit bodies on performance including Audit Scotland and SOLACE (Local Government Benchmarking Framework) and have actively supported national programmes through supplying robust and reliable performance data, for example working with SEPA on local government recycling measures.

In conclusion, it is important to note that local authorities are already undertaking a substantial

amount of work around good food, integrating this important issue into different local outcomes. As well as many other policy areas which are linked to the plans. However, in order to ensure the successful delivery of the National and Local Plans adequate resources, finances and support are required as well as providing baseline information in order for progress to be mapped. Consideration is also needed in terms of competing demands and challenges which are not covered by local authority responsibilities.

APSE would be pleased to provide further detailed evidence of the matters raised herein to the Scottish Government or its advisors. In the first instance please contact Louise Melville on lmelville@apse.org.uk who is our lead advisor for APSE Scotland and she will be pleased to answer any questions on my behalf.

3 APSE Comment

As outlined within the consultation response above, it is important to note that local authorities are already undertaking a substantial amount of work around good food, integrating this important issue into different local outcomes. As well as many other policy areas which are linked to the plans. However, in order to ensure the successful delivery of the National and Local Plans adequate resources, finances and support are required as well as baseline information in order for progress to be mapped. Consideration is also needed in terms of competing demands and challenges which are not covered by local authority responsibilities.

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- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
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