

## **Right To Food – Motion to Lancaster City Council – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Proposer: Faye Penny. Seconders: Katie Whearty, Gina Dowding, Joanna Young, Jason Wood, Jean Parr, David Whittaker**

We are seeing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which have now reached a tipping point for so many in our communities. The figures are devastating for one of the richest nations in the world and highlight the inequality of the UK in 2020 and going into 2021.

The Trussell Trust reports a soaring 81% increase in emergency food parcels from food banks in its network during the last two weeks of March 2020 compared with the same period in 2019, including a 122% rise in parcels given to children as the coronavirus pandemic continued to unfold.

This council notes the consistent high rates of poverty across our district. We recognise the growing concern amongst our health and care professionals of the current situation and the likely exacerbation of poverty figures through the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and economic uncertainty as we enter 2021.

Morecambe Bay Foodbank recently reported to Councillors that they delivered a staggering 38,196 emergency 5 day food parcels in our district during 2020 [1] – higher than the combined total for the previous 8 years of foodbank activity [2]. Referrals to the foodbank have increased in every ward in our district over the past 12 months; by 368% on 2019 in total [3]. Although the totals are much higher for all areas of the district, the areas with the highest numbers of referrals - Harbour and Poulton - are still the areas of highest demand in 2020 as they were in 2019 [4]. A slightly less extreme, yet still significant picture, emerged from The Olive Branch last year; an increase of 117% in people being fed from February 2020 to the height of their distribution. The Olive Branch also note that the number of children and families that they are having to provide for, compared to vulnerable adults, is becoming a much larger part of their effort; last year saw a 104% increase in children being fed between February and June [5].

Weekly use of other food support such as food clubs is even higher than food bank use and is currently 952 households every week that we know of [6]. One of these organisations, Eggcup, has seen their food club membership grow from 40 members in February 2020 to 374 current members; an increase of 835%. That's over 2000 individuals in our district accessing food support every week which helps them to avoid the emergency situation of relying on one of the foodbanks.

Data from the DWP as reported by Lancashire County Council [7] shows that households on Universal credit in the Lancaster District has increased from 2,790 in December 2019 to 4,855 by December 2020, a 74% increase.

This Council notes that there is important work being carried out locally by Food Futures: North Lancashire's Sustainable Food Network and The Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance and thanks them for their contributions. We aim to support their work locally and raise awareness in our communities so that more residents and local workers can become involved in addressing food poverty in this district, further afield and in the food supply chain. [8]

Lancaster City Council's Cabinet has aligned its priorities with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and have proposed a Council commitment to SDG 2 of Zero Hunger. We support Zero Hunger, and will support the development of a local food system that gives equal access to good nutrition and food preparation skills.

The National Food Strategy is the first independent review of England's entire food system for 75 years. Its purpose is to set out a vision for the kind of food system we should be building for the future, and a plan for how to achieve that vision. It is headed by Henry Dimbleby and next reports to Government in early 2021.

The Right To Food campaign is arguing that the 11 million people in food poverty should be central to this strategy.

Enshrining the 'Right To Food' into law would clarify Government obligations on food poverty and would introduce legal avenues to hold Government bodies accountable for violations.

Lancaster City Council resolves:

1. To call on the Government to include the 'Right To Food' in the 'National Food Strategy'.
2. That the Chief Executive write to the Independent Lead, National Food Strategy, Mr Henry Dimbleby, to:
  - a) Provide local Lancaster District examples and information about the rise in food poverty
  - b) Call for the Right to Food to be incorporated into the National Food Strategy

[1] Chair's report, Morecambe Bay Foodbank, February 2021

[2] AGM report, Morecambe Bay Foodbank, 2021

[3] Chair's report, Morecambe Bay Foodbank, February 2021

[4] AGM report, Morecambe Bay Foodbank, 2021

[5] The Olive Branch database statistics, provided by Leslie Mann of The Olive Branch, February 2021

[6] David France, Charity Manager, Eggcup, February 2021

[7] <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/economy/income-earnings-and-benefits/claimant-count-figures/>

[8] <https://foodfutures.org.uk/>

<https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/LANCASTER-LDFPA-Action-Plan-21.pdf>

### **Officer Briefing Note:**

The motion is consistent with the Council's priority of 'Happy and Healthy Communities' and the action of 'addressing health and income inequality, food and fuel poverty....'. It creates no additional resource requirement.