

PLANT-BASED CATERING OPTIONS FOR CIVIC EVENTS REPORT

To:

Councillor Alex Collis, Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Food Justice and Community Development
Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee 19/01/2023

Report by:

Catherine Stewart, Climate Change Officer
Tel: 01223 457086 Email: catherine.stewart@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

The plant-based food motion passed at full Council in May 2022, required officers to:

- Explore a wide variety of catering options for civic events (including consideration of social enterprises) and bring a costed report of fully plant-based catering options for civic events to a future Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee.
- Investigate the practicalities of using civic events to promote and showcase plant-based food options, alongside displayed information about the climate benefits and relative cost of different protein/food sources

Following the motion, this report provides a detailed, costed assessment of fully plant-based catering options and part plant-based options which could be served at future civic events. As part of this, the report includes:

- A review of caterers who can provide fully plant-based catering to the City Council's civic events
- An assessment of the plant-based catering pilot at the Remembrance Sunday civic event

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve the following:

- All future civic events will promote plant-based food by always providing some plant-based food options and plant-based milks as standard (where reasonably possible).
- Catering at Annual Full Council meeting in 2023 will consist of 50% plant-based options. This will increase to 75% plant-based in 2024, and 100% plant-based in 2025, providing that the majority of plant-based choices are consumed at events and that suppliers can fulfill this requirement and at the same cost as non-plant based foods.
- Catering at all other civic events in 2023 (apart from the Annual Full Council meeting) will consist of 25% plant-based options with the remaining 75% made up of vegetarian and meat and dairy options. This will increase to 50% plant-based options in 2024, 75% in 2025, and 100% in 2026, providing that the majority of plant-based choices are consumed at events and that suppliers can fulfill this requirement and at the same cost as non-plant based foods.
- The Council will no longer procure and serve beef and lamb at civic events due to their impact on greenhouse gas emissions and will reduce the amount of pork procured for civic events.
- The Council will endeavour to procure services from social enterprises for civic events, providing that they are available and can offer the services required.
- The Council will use the Plant-Based Foods Association definition of plant-based food: *foods made from plants that contain no animal derived ingredients.*

3. Background

The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2021-26 shares a vision for Cambridge to be net zero carbon by 2030. The Council's strategy sets out six key objectives for how we will address the causes and consequences of climate change, including *Promoting sustainable food* and *Reducing consumption of resources, reducing waste, and increasing recycling in Cambridge*.

The Council plays a community leadership role on climate change issues by taking action to reduce its own emissions and by reducing carbon emissions from procured goods and services, such as food. Through this community leadership role, the Council aims to promote sustainable food in Cambridge and reduce food waste as part of efforts to address climate change.

Food systems have a significant impact on global greenhouse gas emissions, with the livestock sector accounting for 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions (the same as the emissions from all transport combined including all cars, lorries, airplanes and ships) and 8-10% of emissions are related to food waste¹. For context, if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter, after the USA and China.

Research has found that beef and lamb generally have the biggest climate footprint of all food products in terms of greenhouse gas emissions per kg of product, whilst plant-based foods such as lentils and pulses tend to have the lowest footprint².

The UK National Food Strategy has recommended that meat consumption should be reduced by 30% to help food security for future generations.

For the purposes of this report, and going forward, the Council will use the Plant-Based Foods Association definition when referring to plant-based foods: *foods made from plants that contain no animal derived ingredients*. This is more commonly known as vegan food.

Plant-based food provision in Council venues

The Council is already serving plant-based food in a number of venues owned and/or controlled by the Council and sustainability is already a consideration in the vast majority of catering procured by Cambridge City Council. As a result of the plant-based food motion passed in May 2022, officers have taken steps to increase the provision of plant-based foods.

¹ Energy Saving Trust 2022 (<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/love-food-hate-waste>)

² Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2020), Environmental impacts of food production

For example, vegan and vegetarian caterers were already strongly encouraged to apply to procurement tenders run by the City Council Events team and since May, all outdoor events run by City Council events which involve catering have provided a plant-based option and this will continue in the future. The Cambridge Folk Festival was awarded an ‘Outstanding’ award at the Greener Festival Awards 2022, due to its sustainability credentials to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions it generates.

Similarly, the Community Services team had embedded sustainability requirements when seeking out a new caterer including a requirement for the food offer to contain a good mix of plant-based products and that focus must be given to reduce the volume of meat products sold.

Officers who organise events on city council open spaces undertake a review of the Council’s hire conditions on an annual basis and as a result of the plant-based food motion, will review clauses as appropriate to reflect the action points in the motion to increase plant-based provision at these events.

Plant-based catering quotations for civic events

Plant-based options are already provided on request at civic events. Officers explored a wide-variety of catering options by inviting 20 companies in total to quote for plant-based and non-plant based options for a civic event.

Given the timescales, 11 were invited to quote for the Remembrance Service (November 2022) as this was the next civic event scheduled in the calendar. From the 11 caterers that officers tried to engage with, 2 caterers declined the opportunity to provide a quote, 5 did not respond and 4 provided a quote:

Remembrance Service quotations

Fully plant-based food quotations (vegan only):

Organisation	Food provided	Price
Supplier 1	sandwiches/cakes	£17pp
Supplier 2	sandwiches/cakes	£24.95pp
Supplier 3		£8.50pp

Part plant-based food quotations (vegan and non-vegan):

Organisation	Food provided	Price
Supplier 4	sandwiches/cakes	£16pp
Supplier 3		£8.50pp

Delivery & Serving

Social enterprise 1	Teas/coffee/service	£4.50pp
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Additional quotations

Officers also reached out to 9 specific plant-based food suppliers for a quotation for future events. For the purposes of this research, officers requested a quote for an event of 50-100 people. Of these 9 contacted, 7 provided an approximate quotation, 1 required more detailed information and 1 did not respond.

Fully plant-based food quotations (vegan only):

Organisation	Food provided	Price
Supplier 5	Buffet	£10 pp approximately
Supplier 6	Sandwiches	£7 pp approximately
Supplier 7	Buffet service	£11.50 - £13.50 pp approximately

Part plant-based food quotations (vegan, vegetarian and non-vegan):

Organisation	Food provided	Price
Supplier 8	Main (tofish or battered veggie sausage), chips and a hot side (mushy peas, curry sauce or gravy)	£10 pp approximately
Supplier 9	Different falafel wraps (vegan) and a halloumi wrap	£7/£8 per wrap
Supplier 10	Sandwiches and cake	£13.50 pp approximately
Supplier 11	Hot and cold mezze or Hotbox consisting of spicy potatoes, garnished daal and a pitta pocket stuffed with vegan or vegetarian options	£11+VAT pp approximately

It is important to note that these quotations are only estimates and more accurate quotes can only be provided once all the details of an event are known. This is because quotes are very dependent on a number of variables including: type of event, number of people attending, number of choices provided, type of food required, length of service, type of venue, whether crockery and cutlery is provided or hired as an extra, supplier travel costs, minimum spend requirement.

To provide some context to the quotations, a number of these companies are food suppliers rather than a catering company. Generally, the higher quotes, for example from Supplier 1, Supplier 2 and Supplier 4 are from catering companies who provide the food, equipment and service. The lower costs, for example from Supplier 3, are from food suppliers who will solely supply and deliver food, they do not provide the equipment (such as crockery, napkins etc.) or personnel to serve food which would need to be purchased in addition.

Officers found that when suppliers issued quotations for civic events, there was usually no difference in cost between plant-based foods and non-plant based foods.

However, it is more challenging to provide a variety of options using natural plant-based products, rather than processed products.

Officers engaged with a social enterprise founded to help young women who are at risk of being unemployed due to lack of experience or confidence. The social enterprise employs young women to serve food and drink at events and functions, to help build their confidence, develop skills and give them work experience.

Officers were unable to find a social enterprise to quote for providing the catering.

Plant-based catering pilot

To investigate the practicalities of using civic events to promote and showcase plant-based food options, officers piloted providing plant-based catering at the Remembrance Service civic event on Sunday 13th November 2022. The food provided (by Supplier 3) consisted of 50% plant-based food and 50% non-plant-based food. Social Enterprise 1 were hired to serve the food and drink at the event.

Officers chose to provide a 50/50 split firstly, to ensure that a good proportion of food served was plant-based and secondly, to explore the uptake of plant-based food compared to non-plant based food amongst (mainly) residents attending the event.

During the event, posters were displayed near to the food to raise awareness of why the Council was taking this approach and the climate benefits of eating more plant-based food and less meat and dairy (see Appendix 1).

Results and evaluation of plant-based catering pilot

Approximately 80 people attended the Remembrance civic event and catering provided consisted of sandwiches, cakes and hot drinks for both plant-based and non-plant based options.

Those who attended the event were from range of ages: teenagers and young people, adults, and elderly people.

The approach used at the event of procuring a food supplier to provide food and a social enterprise to serve food, was very successful. The food provided was very fresh, good quality and visually appealing, and the social enterprise provided fantastic service during the event.

The overall financial cost of this approach was cheaper than using a traditional caterer who provides both the food and the staff to serve. Furthermore, employing a local social enterprise to serve the catering provides an opportunity for local young people to gain skills, confidence and work experience whilst also bringing benefits to the local economy too.

This approach does require additional officer time and resource to deliver successfully as officers are required to make arrangements with two organisations rather than just one.

However, there was extremely low uptake of plant-based food options: under 10% of people tried these options whilst the vegetarian options and meat/dairy options were all eaten.

The general feedback from attendees was that plant-based options should be available as a part of the buffet for those that would like this choice, but most people preferred the non-plant-based options. Some people felt under pressure to eat what they wouldn't usually choose.

Almost all of the plant-based food provided remained uneaten. The low uptake of the plant-based options resulted in an insufficient amount of food available at the event that people wanted to eat. Unfortunately the leftover plant-based food had to be disposed of, as the Council is required, by law, to throw away any perishable food that has been out at room temperature, after two hours. This resulted in significant food waste from the event.

Recommendations

As a result of the above research and the results from the Remembrance Service civic event pilot, officers recommend, providing that plant-based food continues to be the same or similar price to other non-plant-based foods, all future civic events will promote and showcase plant-based food by always providing some plant-based food options and plant-based milks, plant-based foods will no longer need to be requested as a dietary requirement anymore.

However, the pilot suggested that members of the public in Cambridge (on this sample, at least) strongly prefer to have vegetarian and non-plant-based options to choose as well so officers recommended that these options continue to be available at civic events.

Therefore, officers recommend that catering at the Annual Full Council meeting should consist of 50% plant-based options in 2023, with a view to increasing the percentage of plant-based options to 75% in 2024, and 100% plant-based in 2025, providing that the majority of plant-based options are consumed at each Annual Full Council meeting and that suppliers can fulfill this requirement and at the same cost as non-plant based foods.

Catering at all other future civic events should consist of 25% plant-based options. It would be imprudent to provide a higher percentage than this at present as it would be likely to contribute to the national food waste issue, it could bring reputational risk to the Council by not providing the options that residents prefer, and procuring food options that are unlikely to be consumed would be a waste of Council budgets. Officers will continually review and evaluate the uptake of plant-based options after each event, with a view to increasing the percentage of plant-based options in increments year on year, providing that uptake increases and does not lead to food waste. If possible to: 50% plant-based in 2024, 75% in 2025, and 100% plant-based by 2026.

To further our commitment to sustainable food, the Council will reduce the amount of meat procured for all civic events, by no longer serving beef and lamb at civic events, as these animal products have the highest impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the Council will reduce the amount of pork available at civic events so that catering is predominately made up of chicken, fish and vegetarian options which are sustainably sourced, as well as some plant-based options, all of which have a much lower impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Officers will also procure services for civic events from social enterprises, due to the societal benefit this brings, providing that social enterprises are available and can offer the services required.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

Funding to procure catering for civic events comes from the Corporate Strategy budget for delivering civic events. This research has found that plant-based options can be purchased for civic events at the same, or similar, price to other food options thus there are no financial implications to be aware of at this time.

b) Staffing Implications

The Executive Assistant Officer to the Mayor coordinates the overall delivery of civic events, this includes liaising with and procuring catering services.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on the recommendations within this report. The recommendations may have a potential positive impact for those with a weight-related disability due to the health benefits of following a diet with more vegetarian and plant-based options. There is also a potential positive impact for those following a certain religion due to the increased availability of vegetarian and plant-based options at civic events.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The recommendations of this report will have a medium positive impact on climate change as they will reduce the amount of meat purchased and increase the amount of plant-based food purchased, thus reducing the Council's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and helping to promote and normalise plant-based food.

e) Procurement Implications

The recommendations have minimal impact on Council procurement.

f) Community Safety Implications

The recommendations have low to no impact on Community safety.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The recommendations have been informed and developed by people's comments and choices at the Remembrance Service civic event which was attended by approximately 80 people from a range of ages.

The content of this report, and in particular the recommendations, will be communicated to residents through the media using a news release and made available on the council's website.

6. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Poster displayed at civic event

WE ARE SERVING PLANT-BASED FOOD



You may notice that the food at this year's Remembrance civic reception is slightly different... that's because we are serving some plant-based food as well as the usual food



WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Our food choices have a big impact on climate change.

Purchasing and serving more plant-based food is just one of the ways the Council is reducing carbon emissions in Cambridge and addressing climate change.

DID YOU KNOW?

Recent research recommends meat consumption should be reduced by 30% to **help food security for future generations**

In general **beef and lamb have the biggest climate footprint** while plant-based foods tend to have the smallest impact

Livestock accounts for **14% of global greenhouse gas emissions**, that's the same as all transport combined (including cars, lorries, planes and ships!)

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service	
Plant-Based Catering Options for Civic Events Committee Report	
2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)	
N/A	
3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?	
To reduce the amount of meat provided and to slowly increase the amount of plant-based food provided, at civic events	
4. Responsible service	
Corporate Strategy	
5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick all that apply)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residents <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visitors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff
<p>Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):</p> <p>People who attend Civic events. The key Civic events each year are Remembrance Service, Mayors Reception and the Annual full Council meeting. Additional events include events for twinned cities and one-off events if so required. From the events listed, this means a range of people could be affected by the recommendations in the Committee report, generally these would be residents, visitors (from twinned cities), Councillors and staff.</p>	

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?

- New
- Major change
- Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes' please provide details below:

8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?

Committee Report will go to Environment & Community Committee in January 2023

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Desk-based research using internet to research vegan and vegetarian diets

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

No impact

(b) Disability

Potential positive health benefits for people with a weight related disability by following a diet with more vegetarian and plant-based options

(c) Gender reassignment

No impact

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No impact

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

No impact

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

No impact

(g) Religion or belief

Positive impact for those who follow certain religions that eat less/no meat, due to increased vegetarian and plant-based options at civic events

(h) Sex

No impact

(i) Sexual orientation

No impact

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:

- Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty
- Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_159kt25q).

No impact

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqIA accordingly.)

Monitor impacts and review after each Civic event during the transitional period. If negative impacts are identified, the appropriate Corporate Strategy officers will review and agree how to resolve these

12. Do you have any additional comments?

N/A

13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment:

Catherine Stewart, Climate Change Officer

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted: Kate Yerbury, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer

Date of EqIA sign off: 14 December 2022

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: Spring 2023

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: January 2023

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Catherine Stewart, Climate Change Officer, tel: 01223 457086, email: catherine.stewart@cambridge.gov.uk