

## **Deputation to Leeds City Council, By Feed Leeds**

### **Introduction**

Hello, my name is Andy Goldring, I am Chair of Feed Leeds, Chief Executive of the Permaculture Association, and a member of the Local Food Fund, which has distributed £57 million pounds to over 500 projects in the last five years. Feed Leeds was initiated by Leeds City Council and draws on the expertise of a wide range of organisations and individuals.

I am accompanied by X and Y.....

Our aim today is to encourage Leeds City Council to initiate the development of a new Food Strategy.

### **Why do we need a Food Strategy?**

Leeds is facing major challenges, now and well into the future. These include: Big reductions in public spending; the urgent need to tackle climate change; and concerns about long term food supply. Locally, there is increased food poverty, and use of food banks; social issues like isolation and loneliness; public health challenges such as rapid increases in obesity and diabetes; increasing numbers of malnutrition particularly for older people; and with deprived communities less likely to be eating a healthy balanced diet.

Leeds made a good start with its first Food Strategy in 2010. We think that taking the next step could increase the benefits greatly. Our detailed proposal, which you will be able to read in full, is the outcome of the work we have done in the last year, in partnership with UK Research Council (ESRC) funded research, over 90 individuals and businesses, discussions with council officers and our own professional experience. We want to build on the good work already underway such as the development of the Food Aid Network to address food poverty, the Feed Leeds network supporting the local food agenda and the Older People Food Matters group tackling malnutrition.

### **The benefits**

We propose the development of an integrated cross-council strategy to help achieve existing council ambitions. This will be produced in partnership with business, academia and civil society, and can have huge benefits for Leeds, for example:

**Employment:** The Leeds boundary includes a large amount of agricultural land, a council initiated report last year suggests huge potential for new jobs and enterprises; over the longer term, a strategy that promotes productive landscaping and urban agriculture can increase its food security and enhance biodiversity through the development of many new small businesses and

social enterprises, all of which contribute to the goal of creating a low carbon economy.

**Environment:** increased local food and reduced food waste can reduce carbon emissions; parks can be enhanced with community food growing initiatives; the quality of the urban environment can be increased with more community engagement in food related projects. Strategies to tackle the unhealthy food environment can be explored and the quality and safety of food prepared and sold in Leeds can be monitored.

**Housing:** examples from across the UK demonstrate how some of our most difficult housing estates could be energised with new landscaping and food projects; future housing can be planned to reduce waste, increase productivity, and ensure access to fresh food and adequate preparation facilities.

**Public health:** Research from the Local Food Fund shows clearly that involvement in food projects and cooking skills initiatives can significantly increase physical and mental health, reduce health inequalities and isolation and increase social cohesion. It is our intention to build on the objective in the previous food strategy to ensure that everyone in Leeds has choice and access to food that is right for their stage of life particularly focusing on working with the poorest to improve their health as referenced in the Joint Health and Well-Being strategy.

**Education:** School Food is now firmly on the agenda with the implementation of the School Food Plan, schools will be supported to take ownership of the plan and develop the infrastructure to deliver its ambitions locally.

## **How?**

International research has shown that Food Strategies can be developed through existing resources: a critical point for their success is inter-sectoral communication, not the availability of financial resources. We propose that Leeds City Council create a cross-council initiative, with representatives from each department, to work in partnership with civil society, local business and education bodies. The strategy would identify key principles that can guide work across the city and identify important outcomes, actions and targets that we can all work together to achieve. A new food strategy could, for example:

- Set measurable cuts to food related carbon emissions.
- Help the council to achieve its Working Well Action Plan.
- Contribute towards the implementation of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy with actions in the areas of nutrition, education, and mental/physical health.

**Conclusion**

Food touches all of our lives. Through the focus on food, we can engage many people, businesses and community groups to help Leeds achieve its goal of a 'Fair, prosperous and sustainable city'.

I hope you can support this proposal. Thank you.