

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Consultation on a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Environmental Services Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	<b>Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities</b>
Outcome	Provide consultation response
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council response to the consultation.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 Food contributes to Northern Ireland's regional economic prosperity and can help to address many of its significant societal challenges. There is growing international acceptance of the interconnectedness between food, health and the environment. There is an expectation that a food system should ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability. There is also a growing interest in sustainable healthy diets.

2.2 The draft Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework recognises the interconnectedness around food and proposes an innovative strategic food systems approach. It sets out a long term vision, high level principles and areas for strategic focus to optimise cross-departmental working on food matters in Northern Ireland to deliver on an outcome based Programme for Government and departmental objectives.

2.3 The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has been leading on the development of this cross-departmental Framework with input from other Departments and a wide range of external stakeholders.

2.4 The Vision is a transformed food system that protects natural resources for future generations, is economically and environmentally sustainable and provides safe, nourishing, accessible food to people, who make informed healthy choices.

2.5 The proposed Framework highlights the following six strategic priorities to achieve the Vision:

- **Priority One:** Building connections between health /wellbeing and food
- **Priority Two:** Building Sustainable Economic Prosperity
- **Priority Three:** Building a Food Culture and Food Conscious Society
- **Priority Four:** Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Resources
- **Priority Five:** Building Healthy Lives through Food Education
- **Priority Six:** Building and maintaining appropriate Emergency Contingency plans across the supply chain.

2.6 This consultation welcomes views on the proposals for a cross-departmental Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework. In particular, views are sought on the proposed vision, principles and goals of a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.

2.7 Attached as Appendix 1 is a suggested response to the consultation. The closing date for submission of responses is 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

2.8 The full consultation paper can be found at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/northern-ireland-food-strategy-framework>

### **3.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council endorse and submit this response pending full Council approval due to submission time constraints.

## Appendix 1

### **NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK: Food at the Heart of our Society – A Prospectus for Change Public Consultation**

#### **Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Consultation response**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework as part of this consultation.

#### **QUESTION 1. Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council strongly agrees with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework.

#### **QUESTION 2. What are your views on taking a Food Systems “whole of government” approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council believes taking a taking a Food Systems “whole of government” approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework should bring efficiencies and better use of resources. It will allow better communication between the various stakeholders and enable better oversight resulting in a more cohesive approach.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is of the view that in order to deliver the aims and priorities outlined in the framework it must be a key priority for the stakeholders involved and must be sufficiently resourced. If no additional resources are made available and it is an ‘add on’ stakeholders may not fully engage due to competing resources or there may be a detrimental impact on other existing services or statutory duties.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would highlight that many well-being strategies are delivered at a local level by District Councils and as such it is essential that Councils are adequately resourced to do so and are recognised as a key delivery partner.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would welcome an indication on whether a statutory duty will be placed upon Councils to participate in the future implementation and delivery of the Framework.

#### **QUESTION 3. What are your views on the strategic context identified?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is of the view that the proposed Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework is in context and aligned with other key strategic drivers and government policies.

#### **QUESTION 4. From your perspective, are there any other NI government policy linkages which you feel are relevant?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council believes that all relevant NI government policy linkages have been included.

#### **QUESTION 5. What are your views on the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy**

## **Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is of the view that the proposed ambition is aspirational and commendable however notes there is no reference to the safety or nutritional value of food with in it. Council would suggest that inclusion of the 'highest standards of food safety and nutritional standards' should also be considered as central to the proposed ambition given that the strategy is to be all government approach.

### **QUESTION 6. What are your views on the proposed scope of the NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agrees with the scope of the framework however notes that food distribution and supply are not mentioned in the 'soil to society' approach despite being a key aspect of the food supply chain.

### **QUESTION 7. What are your views on the proposed vision of the NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agrees with the proposed vision for the strategy. From a District Council perspective our current system endeavours to provide safe, nourishing food and enable informed healthy choices and the proposed transformed system will enhance and build upon that work.

### **QUESTION 8. What are your views on the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is content with the proposed aim of the strategy.

### **QUESTION 9. Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities?**

Strongly agree

### **QUESTION 10. Are there any amendments or refinements that you would like to make to these priorities?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has no amendments or refinements to suggest for the priorities but strongly believes that District Councils should also be included as a key partner in strategic priorities One, Four, Five and Six for the reasons outlined below:

Priority One: Building connections between health/welling and food &  
Priority Five: Building Healthy Lives through Food Education

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is of the opinion that local councils should be a key partner as the above priorities are areas Councils are already very active in and will continue be so in the future. The Food & Nutrition Subgroup (a working group of the Northern Ireland Food Managers Group) focuses on food and nutrition initiatives and their delivery on the ground by Environmental Health Departments across all Council areas. Such initiatives include the Calorie Wise Award Scheme which helps food businesses display calories on their menus, enabling customers to make healthier choices; promotion of MenuCal which is a calorie and allergen management tool for business use and nutrition sampling surveys. The group also maps food poverty initiatives across councils as well as providing council representation on various multi-agency groups such as the All Island Food Poverty Network; the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group (ROPIG) and Eating Well Choosing Better Steering Group Meeting.

Councils also run a wide range of their own nutrition education and food poverty initiatives such as cook it programmers, allotment schemes etc.

Work in this area has further increased during the Covid 19 pandemic due to provision of funding by the Department for Communities for food poverty initiatives.

*Priority Four: Protecting and enhancing our natural resources.*

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council believes local councils should be a key partner under this priority as this is an area Councils are already very active in through their initiatives aimed at reducing food waste, improving levels of recycling and litter reduction. Councils have a statutory biodiversity duty and have developed Biodiversity Action Plans for their areas to protect local biodiversity and educate and raise awareness of its importance.

*Priority Six: Building and maintaining appropriate emergency contingency plans across the supply chain.*

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council believes local councils should be a key partner under this priority as Food Teams in Environmental Health Departments work to ensure the safety and integrity of food in their day to day work.

Councils also have a civil contingencies role in the event of an emergency and would therefore be a key delivery partner in this regard.

**QUESTION 11. From your perspective, are there any strategic priorities that are missing from the NI Food Strategy Framework? If 'yes', what are they and why?**

No. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is content that all relevant strategic priorities have been included in the NI Food Strategy Framework.

**QUESTION 12. What are your views on the proposed guiding principles to be used to guide the development of future policy interventions?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agrees with the proposed guiding principles.

**QUESTION 13. From your perspective, are there any guiding principles missing? If yes, what are they and why?**

No. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is content that all relevant guiding principles have been included.

**QUESTION 14. Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council strongly agrees with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework.

**QUESTION 15. Have you any other comments on the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is supportive of the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework however account has not been fully taken of the role of local government and our ability to deliver at local level. This is reflected in local councils not being included as a key partner in four of the six strategic priority areas.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would suggest that a mapping exercise be carried out of existing initiatives and the work of existing groups to establish a baseline to inform future plans, avoid duplication, combine resources and ensure a true whole of government approach.

**QUESTION 16. What are your views on the proposed approach to implementation, i.e. five year action plans will be developed and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council holds the view that five years is an appropriate timescale for the proposed action plans.

The NI Food Strategy Framework proposes an action plan under each of the six priority areas however detail is lacking on how each topic specific working group would link with each other and work collaboratively as there will be strong linkages between some priority areas. Council believes this is important to avoid duplication of efforts, make best use of resources and ensure the proposed framework fulfils its aim of being a unifying strategy.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would welcome further information on how the action plans of all six topic specific working group will be brought together by the Food Programme Board to ensure the overarching ambition, scope, vision and aim of the framework is achieved.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is in favour of the proposed strategy however effective delivery will require additional resources to avoid it being burdensome for key partners and ensure their full participation and the ultimate success of the strategy.

**QUESTION 17. What are your views on the establishment of a Food Programme Board that is embedded within the governance arrangements for Green Growth?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council believes oversight is essential to ensure delivery of the strategy and the establishment of a Food Programme Board embedded within Green Growth is an appropriate governance arrangement.

**QUESTION 18. Do you have any comments on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders about implementation and delivery of the NI Food Strategy Framework?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would suggest that initial engagement with local Councils be at Chief Executive level via SOLACE. Without further detail on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders Council has difficulty commenting further however would welcome the opportunity to do so in the future when more information is available.

**QUESTION 19. Have you any other comments on how to achieve a diverse and inclusive process for public engagement?**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council would suggest use of the following methods of engagement to help achieve a diverse and inclusive process of public engagement: workshops, public meetings and forums, consultation with trade associations, local public engagement events, webinars, public surveys and use of flyers, social media, TV and radio to publicise.

**QUESTION 20. Do you agree with the potential benefits to be derived from taking a Food Strategy Framework approach?**

Yes Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agrees.

**QUESTION 21.** Are there any rural needs comments that you wish to raise at this point about the impact of the NI Food Strategy Framework on Rural areas? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

No

**QUESTION 22.** Are there any equality comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

No

**QUESTION 23.** Are there any environmental impact comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

No

**QUESTION 24.** Are there any other comments you wish to make or any other evidence of need that you think Departments would find helpful? Please submit any evidence with your response.

No