



Growing Healthy Communities

A Community Agriculture Strategy for Sandwell
2008 - 2012

Contents	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Foreword	3
1. Introduction	4
2. What is community agriculture?	4
3. Background to community agriculture in Sandwell	7
4. Why do we need an expanded and co-ordinated community agriculture initiative?	14
5. Vision and values	17
6. Links to other strategies	21
7. Our ambitions for community agriculture	22
8. Implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and reviewing the Strategy	26
9. Making the resources available	28
10. Summary	31
References	32
Appendix 1	33
Appendix 2	34

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In particular, we wish to thank staff at Sandwell Council, Sandwell Primary Care Trust, and Ideal for All for their input and guidance during the development process.

The level of activity and dedication to addressing food and health issues in Sandwell is high in the public and voluntary sectors, often in challenging settings and with limited resources. The timing of this Strategy has provided an opportunity to capture some of the rich learning and experiences of existing initiatives, involving a wide range of participants, and to consider the successes, challenges, gaps and ways forward. We hope this Strategy can make a helpful contribution to realising Sandwell's unique, people-centred vision for community agriculture in the city.

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Foreword

Sandwell has long had a dream to create a greener, more productive environment for its citizens. As long ago as 1990 our Charter for Healthy Sandwell 2000 talked about developing community gardens for productive physical activity, mental reflection, building social links, and growing healthy food.

In 1996, flushed with the success of our food cooperative and the Tipton City Challenge, we commissioned a feasibility study that led to our first community agriculture initiative. After an extended and difficult search for a suitable site – given Sandwell’s heritage from its heavy, polluting industry and over 200 years of unsustainable development – Salop Drive was chosen for a market garden and allotments initiative. A long and enduring partnership between community agriculture experts, a local voluntary organisation Ideal for All, and the health and local authorities ensued.

Salop Drive has become a beacon for what can be achieved in the inner city. By reclaiming derelict land, growing healthy food on a modest scale, local disabled and non-disabled people have a chance to play a full part in rewarding and constructive community activity. This, in turn, contributes to individual and community health and well being. Salop Drive is now recognised as the hub for an expanding network of community growing sites in Sandwell. There is now a great opportunity to expand and better co-ordinate food growing in Sandwell.

This Strategy will help to drive forward and secure the future of community agriculture in Sandwell for the longer-term. It will help ensure better co-ordination to avoid a ‘scattergun’ of initiatives and competition for scarce resources Borough-wide. It will address gaps in current provision, identify, assess and secure suitable new sites, bring in new delivery partners, involve more people from a wider range of Sandwell’s diverse communities, support existing and new initiatives, and help deliver progress towards key indicators and actions – such as those set out in the 2008-11 Local Area Agreement.

With the prospect of a global food shortage there is now an urgent need for urban areas to devote more of their land to food growing and food skills to create sustainable settlements on a human scale – to create the ‘hunger proof city’. We are pleased to celebrate all the hard work of Ideal for All, members of the community and the Sandwell food team, They have shown us all what is possible for a greener, healthier future.

John Garrett



Executive Director, Adult and
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Dr John Middleton



Director of Public Health,
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1. Introduction

1.1. Growing Healthy Communities: A Community Agriculture Strategy for Sandwell 2008 – 2012 was commissioned by Sandwell Primary Care Trust (PCT) on behalf of Sandwell Partnership and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council). Implementation of the Strategy will contribute to delivering against the strategic goals of the Sandwell Food Policy, the Sandwell Plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA), and other key area-based strategies.

1.2. It sets out the case for an expanded and co-ordinated community agriculture programme for Sandwell which takes account of sustainable development, public health nutrition, social, community and educational benefits, resilience and food security.

1.3. The Strategy has developed from learning from Sandwell's existing community agriculture activities across the Borough, and through consultations with a wide range of interested statutory and civil society organisations, user groups, and people involved in strategy and service delivery (see Appendix 1). These consultations informed the unique people-centred vision and values for community agriculture in Sandwell, and our ambitions for its future.

1.4. Section 2 addresses the question 'what is community agriculture?' by exploring its history and current practice of around the world. Section 3 sets out the local background and context, and the development of community agriculture in Sandwell, including case studies of local initiatives, summarising successes (what we do well) and challenges (what we need to improve). Section 4 considers the evidence, and sets out why Sandwell needs an expanded, co-ordinated community agriculture initiative.

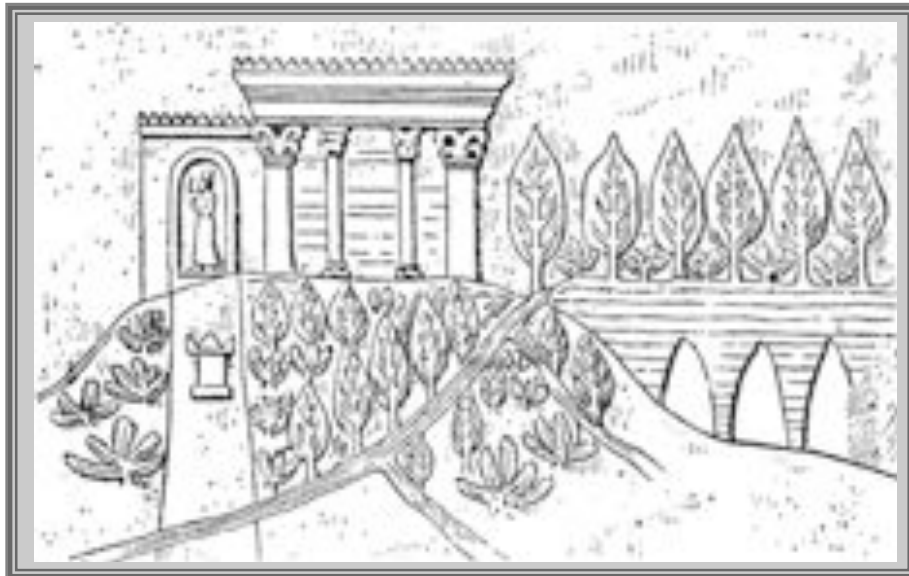
1.5. Section 5 sets out the vision and values for the Growing Healthy Communities Strategy, as expressed by people in Sandwell, and identifies key themes and possible outcomes for local people and communities. Section 6 examines the links with other key Sandwell strategies.

1.6. Section 7 sets out the ambitions for community agriculture in Sandwell as aims and objectives, which will inform and guide implementation. Section 8 focuses on how we will implement, monitor and evaluate, and review the Strategy, and Section 9 how we will work to make the necessary resources available. A summary forms Section 10. Additional information is contained in Appendices 1 and 2.

2. What is Community Agriculture?

2.1. Community agriculture is the art and science of growing food and other crops by and for local people, and is as old as towns and cities themselves, having been practiced for thousands of years. One of the earliest known examples is the 'Hanging Gardens of Babylon', reportedly built by

Nebuchadnezzar in 600 BCE, which was documented by Greek historians. The gardens were part of the fabric of the city, and included irrigated roof gardens and terraces, producing a wide range of crops, which were an important part of people's nutritional security and culinary culture.



An ancient artist's sketch of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon

2.2. Today community agriculture (also referred to as urban or peri-urban agriculture) is practiced in and on the edges of cities around the world. It is often essential for food and nutritional security for low-income communities in both the poorer and middle-income countries. It is supported and promoted by agencies such as the World Bank and many national and local government and non-government organisations (NGOs).

2.3. In some countries, such as Cuba, a fuel crisis which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union led to near starvation in the cities. Urban organic farms (called organoponicos) were started by concerned citizens out of necessity and later backed by the Ministry of Agriculture and international NGOs. These provide vital supplies of fruit, vegetables and medicinal plants, as well as employment, to urban populations. In other places, such as China, agriculture in and around urban settlements has been practised for generations, and continues to provide essential supplies of fresh produce to this day. Populations in many African and Asian cities rely on the products of urban and peri-urban agriculture. These form a significant part of the local economy, providing livelihoods and nutritious produce for many thousands of people.

2.4. Even in Britain, until relatively recently, urban settlements were surrounded by farms and market gardens, supplying fresh produce of all kinds into local markets, creating employment and cycling resources and wealth within the local economy.

2.5. There is now a new growing community agriculture movement in the wealthier countries such as America, Canada, and the UK. Community agriculture is practiced by individuals and community groups, on allotments,

vacant plots, and other specially allocated sites. It is valued not only for its contribution to people's nutritional security, but also for its social, cultural and environmental contribution to the life of the city and the health and well being of its citizens. In several cities, community agriculture is seen as an essential part of emerging 'food security coalitions'. It has contributed to the development of wider food policies as municipal authorities have recognised the important role of access to healthy, nutritious food; gardening as a form of health-promoting physical activity; and regenerated green spaces as sites for production, recreation, inclusion, learning and community development.



Organoponico 'Vivera Alamar' in Havana

2.6. An active international community agriculture movement contributes to developing ideas and practice and provides information and guidance for the production of food and other garden crops by community organisations in cities. Examples include those hosted by universities and organisations such as the American Community Gardening Association, Toronto Food Policy Council and FoodShare (see www.foodshare.net).

2.7. This international debate, in addition to examples of good practice in the UK organic farming and growing community, inspired and informed the development of Sandwell's unique approach to its own community agriculture initiative. The seeds from these germinated and grew into the development of its first working urban market garden and food project. It also contributed to the project's key role in supporting much of Sandwell's locality and community based food policy and actions, in an often challenging urban setting.



A community gardener in Toronto

3. Background to community agriculture in Sandwell

“Sandwell as the garden of England is a bit far fetched, but it is not impossible for Sandwell to increase the food we can supply to ourselves.”

Dr John Middleton, in *Regenerating Health: a challenge or a lottery?* The 8th Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 1996.

3.1. The idea for what has become Sandwell’s community agriculture initiative was suggested in a single paragraph in the first report of the current Director of Public Health (1989), which said that the Health Promotion Unit would:

“...work closely with voluntary organisations and community groups to examine the possibility of establishing local food co-operatives and community gardens/allotments producing vegetables, etc.”

3.2. It was not until 1996 that the initiative began to take shape, with the commissioning of a feasibility study by the Sandwell Regeneration Partnership. This was followed by the creation in 1998 of a small organisational hub to realise some of the key recommendations of the report (1996). Ultimately, this led to the development of the successful Growing Opportunities programme of Ideal for All, which included the regeneration of two formerly derelict sites for fully accessible community and therapeutic gardening and food growing, and the development of a wide range of associated ‘healthy living’ services and activities. Ideal for All’s Salop Drive Market Garden became a flagship project of the Sandwell Healthy Living Network. It continues to provide a range of opportunities for participation and services to people of all ages and backgrounds from across Sandwell, and to build upon its original vision:

‘To create a viable and productive market garden and allotment project that produces, adds value to, distributes and markets fresh fruit and vegetables to

the local community. By involving people in a community-led process of development, the project will provide opportunities for health-enhancing work, education, recreation and social activities for local people.'



Salop Drive: the beginnings

3.3. Salop Drive Market Garden is a unique example of a working 'local food scheme'. Located in a three acre reclaimed allotment site, the market garden produces and sells seasonal fruits and vegetables to neighbouring households. Developed involving local and disabled people in a participative process, it was designed and led, and is now managed, within a 'user led' framework. The project represents a significant investment in local level regeneration and service delivery, and has won several awards including the 2004 Health Service Journal Award in the 'sustainable development' category.



Salop Drive: the established site in full production

3.4. The project receives mainstream funding from Sandwell PCT through a service level agreement, as well as raising funds from charitable sources and trading goods and services into the community.

3.5. The Market Garden supplies seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables through the 'Bag Your Share' scheme, working with the local greengrocer Warley Fruits who supplies additional bulky items such as onions and potatoes, and exotic fruits. Up to 80 bags per week are delivered by wheelbarrow or collected by volunteers on foot, which means a reduction in food delivery of between 160 to 240 food miles per week, based on previous points of access to fresh produce. By this calculation the average saving is 6,400 to 9,600 miles per year. If consideration is given to the substitution of locally grown produce for produce grown internationally and nationally then the reduction is greater still in terms of reducing the carbon footprint and air pollution.



Local food for local people – by wheelbarrow or on foot!

3.6. At Salop Drive Market Garden, disabled and non-disabled people from different backgrounds work together in a supportive environment. The project has worked with a range of adult care service providers. In so doing, the project promotes independence and social inclusion. The project works with a range of statutory and other adult care service providers in supporting referral of individuals to take part in the gardens. For many individuals, involvement in the garden has been an opportunity to actively contribute to the local community, whilst developing strong social networks, through working together in a valued activity. The effect of feeling valued and included through participation in accessible activities as part of a social group has for some been transformational and life changing.

3.7. Local schoolchildren, pre and after school groups, and their teachers, are also benefiting from a range of sessional activities, such as site visits to see, touch and taste seasonal vegetables, sow seeds, and learn about where food comes from, and an after-school club. Staff are also supporting schools to

develop their own gardens, using the Market Garden to demonstrate good practice.

3.8. Salop Drive Market Garden has continued to thrive and play an important role in the ongoing and successful 'Eatwell in Sandwell' healthy eating initiative. Eatwell comprises a range of activities designed to address both supply and demand side issues in the local food economy. It includes Borough-wide Food Interest Groups, Slimwell clubs; Cookwell; Shopwell (which provides training and advice to local shops to support them in stocking fresh produce sourced from local suppliers/growers where possible, improving access to fresh produce locally); and has supported steps towards more sustainable food procurement for schools and adult services by the Council's public purchasing team.



Shopwell supports local retailers to sell fresh fruit and vegetables

3.9. Eatwell is innovative because its purpose is to create a healthier food economy, a healthier food environment and a healthier food culture. The Eatwell intervention aims to ensure that work undertaken to improve food access and the diets of Sandwell residents is underpinned by a framework of public, private and voluntary sector partnership working, and community involvement. It aims to build community and organisational capacity for food and health work. It seeks to ensure that appropriate responses and actions to improve food access and encourage consumption of 'healthier' foods are made in Sandwell.

3.10. Several other community gardening and growing initiatives have also been developed in a 'patchwork' across Sandwell, for example schemes at Caroline St, Friar Park, Black Horse and other allotment sites, and the Options for Life project. These example projects involve a diverse range of community and user groups such as Sure Starts, schools, disabled people, ethnic minority and women's groups, and has developed its own unique identity and approach in response to local need and capacity.

At **Friar Park Allotments**, children from one high school, four primary schools and the local Sure Start Nursery make weekly visits to their dedicated plots to nurture and harvest their own fruit and vegetables under the expert guidance of the Allotment Association. Pupils take the produce they have grown home to share with their families, or in the case of the High School, sell it to their teaching staff.



Even the youngest children can enjoy growing food

The aims of the project are to enhance the confidence and social skills of participants and to support the healthy eating ethic in schools. It is supported through the FRESCO partnership and Wednesbury Learning Community. All partners are committed to the success of this outdoor educational experience.

3.11. In 2008 the Sandwell Food Network website was created by Ideal for All to promote activities available for adults, children and schools in food, farming, gardening and healthy eating across Sandwell (see www.sandwellfoodnetwork.org). This website provides:

- An overview of what is available within Sandwell if you are interested in growing food and farming;
- Specific projects and events that schools can use to make links to food and farming in Sandwell;
- Links available in your local area;

- Useful contact links within the Borough to get you started and give you more support in the areas of food growing, healthy eating, sustainable and healthy schools and other food related topics.

Options for Life works to make sure participants are valued and enabled to live their lives to the full, ensuring they enjoy the same rights and opportunities as non-disabled people. They operate a horticulture project on their own allotments and gardens that offers participants opportunities that may lead to paid or voluntary work in horticulture and nationally recognised qualifications, as well as a pleasurable, creative and healthy hobby; and a community café which holds the Level 3 'Five for Life' award, recognising its commitment to healthy food choices.



Women gardeners at 'Options for Life'

The organisation won the Health and Social Care Awards 2006 in the 'social care' category, presented by the Department of Health. The award recognised their outstanding contribution to social care through the development, delivery and improvement of services to users or carers, engagement of carers, and commitment to devising creative ways of ensuring access to services to all users/potential users, which are sensitive to their needs.

3.12. The Network is a much-needed step towards a first point of contact and better co-ordination of the various community agriculture and gardening and healthy eating initiatives across Sandwell.

3.13. The achievements of the community agriculture and gardening initiatives in Sandwell have demonstrated that there is a healthy demand for the products and services provided. For example, 2007-8 service uptake figures for Growing Opportunities were:

- General enquiries - 3,874
- Garden club - 12 meetings (202 people)
- Practical sessions - 287 (1,474 people)
- Volunteer sessions - 99 (221 people)
- School groups (0-12 years) - 645 children

- Veg bags delivered - 1000 approx. (this was lower than usual due to a wet and difficult season)

3.14. Demand for allotment plots and uptake of allotment gardening in Sandwell has also increased significantly. In 2007-8, 28 of 41 sites were at 100% occupancy (average occupancy for all sites 92%); 1,465 out of 1,587 plots were let, with 201 people on the waiting list. Several sites have benefited from funding for infrastructure improvements, for example for better access, fencing and facilities such as toilets, especially those with more active Associations. Others however remain in need of improvements, and as more women, children and disabled people take up plots, more facilities are needed even on improved sites, especially better access and security, and toilet facilities.

3.15. Much has been learned about successes and challenges for community agriculture in Sandwell. Lessons learned include:

Successes (what we have done well):

- The success of Salop Drive Market Garden has demonstrated that it is possible to increase the amount of food that we grow and supply to ourselves;
- Formerly underused and derelict sites have been regenerated and made accessible to Sandwell's diverse communities;
- Levels of individual and community engagement and participation in gardening, food growing and related healthy eating and physical activities have been high;
- Food growing skills and local knowledge have been retained, developed and enhanced among adults and children;
- Local initiatives have been recognised locally, nationally and internationally, winning several prestigious awards and attracting research programmes;
- Positive working partnerships between statutory, voluntary and community organisations have and continue to be developed; especially with Sandwell Food Team, placing community agriculture at the heart of food policy and activities for Sandwell;
- Resources and funding have been secured from various local and national sources, representing a significant level of investment into local sites and services;
- High quality local sites, activities and services have been and continue to be developed for Sandwell's diverse communities and individuals of all ages and abilities;
- As well as providing an example of how the lives of individuals and communities can be enhanced through growing and eating healthy food and access to better green spaces, initiatives have contributed to tackling issues around mental health, stress, and depression by offering alternative opportunities to mainstream provision and providing diversity of choice;
- Monitoring and feedback from users and professionals shows that projects and initiatives are well received, and in many cases bring about dramatic improvements in people's sense of health and well being, life skills, independence and inclusion, and contribute to a greater sense of community cohesion.



Growing food reduces stress and encourages better mental health

Challenges (what we need to improve):

- Finding better, more systematic ways of identifying suitable sites for community agriculture and gardening activities;
- Better integrating opportunities for community agriculture into plans for regeneration and new builds, rather than relying on underused, low value and difficult sites;
- Extending opportunities for involvement to underserved areas and communities;
- Better strategic and day-to-day co-ordination of the patchwork of existing activities and initiatives; sharing lessons learned with diverse groups, rather than 'reinventing';
- Acting to secure and share resources and funding from a variety of sources for medium and longer term development, to help ensure sustainability, underpin the process of development and user involvement; and avoid the pitfalls of short-term funding and competition for scarce resources;
- Carrying out systematic evaluation of the processes, impacts and outcomes of initiatives using suitable measures;
- Communicating learning and sharing knowledge with a wider audience within Sandwell and beyond.

4. Why do we need an expanded and co-ordinated community agriculture initiative?

Findings from two separate studies in Sandwell found that: many people in Sandwell do not have access to reasonably priced fresh fruit and vegetables within reasonable walking distance; children's eating behaviour does not reflect healthy eating messages, with many primary school children being overweight or obese; and,

despite national initiatives to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, little effect is observed in the diets of people in Sandwell.

Eatwell...in Sandwell

4.1. There is a large and growing literature on the impact of inequalities in income, and of social deprivation, on food and nutrition and opportunities for health promoting physical activity. Essentially, people on low income and/or living in deprived circumstances, when compared to those who are richer:

- Eat a less nutrient dense, less diverse diet;
- Have lower nutrient intakes and body stores;
- Often have to pay more for basic food items;
- Have to spend a greater proportion of their income on food and an even greater percentage if they want to eat healthily;
- Often have worse geographic access to healthy food;
- Often eat a worse quality/range of foodstuffs;
- Often receive a worse diet through workplace or school canteens;
- Often go without food or eat a worse diet to pay bills or debts;
- Suffer more food and lifestyle related ill health such as obesity; diabetes, cancers and coronary heart disease (Caraher 2002, Dowler et al 2002).

4.2. These experiences apply to adults and children and cluster in deprived neighbourhoods and communities. Figures on ill health and death from preventable lifestyle related illnesses such certain types of cancers and cardiovascular disease (CVD) in Sandwell remain high in relation to other areas, despite recent improvements. Tackling such health inequalities, alongside other well-documented social and economic inequalities, is high on the agenda for Sandwell.

4.3. But without active support and intervention, people in Sandwell are likely to face even greater challenges in accessing and affording a healthy diet in the future, due to food price rises driven by global change and restructuring in food and energy markets. Key points from Food for Thought: How global prices will hit UK inflation and employment (2008) include:

- World food prices are soaring in response to rapid global population growth, increasing real incomes, the expansion of biofuels and drought-like conditions in the major cereal-producing nations;
- These pressures are set to escalate: the world's population is projected to climb from 6.6 billion today to 8.3 billion by 2030; rising living standards are increasing demand for protein in the form of meat and livestock products in emerging markets; many countries are looking to expand biofuel production as they seek to reduce their reliance on imported oil; and climate change is threatening to cut agricultural production by 20% in emerging markets by 2020 and by 6% in developed countries;
- Rising food prices are having devastating impacts on the living standards of the poor in many countries, where food accounts for 40-60% of household spending. This has led to instances of public unrest in some countries. In response, some countries, including Russia, have imposed price freezes on basic consumer goods, such as bread;
- In the UK, while food and non-alcoholic beverages account for only around 11% of the consumer price index basket, the sharp acceleration in food price inflation to 6.6% in 2007-8 is adding to the recessionary forces threatening

the economy. Food prices are set to rise further, oil prices are at over US\$125 a barrel and threatening to rise to US\$150, and household energy bills possibly set to rise by as much as 40% by the end of 2008;

- The UK is more exposed to rising world food prices than its peers – it runs a trade deficit in food equal to 1% of GDP. The UK's deficit in food, beverages and other products has deteriorated by 14% over the last year, and sterling weakness and further rises in world prices will add to the deterioration in the terms of trade, thereby dragging down growth.

4.4. Community agriculture in Sandwell alone cannot be expected to address the local impacts of such intense global pressures. But as in other parts of the world it may play an important role, alongside other initiatives, in encouraging local 'resilience' at household and community level by increasing access to healthy, reasonably priced fresh produce, and acting as an incubator for the development of knowledge, skills and capacity for food growing, healthy eating and food budgeting among both professionals and lay people.

4.5. The experiences of Salop Drive Market Garden and other Sandwell initiatives have confirmed the findings of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report 'Food projects and how they work' (1999):

"Food projects are about more than just food. They raise awareness and provide means of tackling many other issues...because food projects provide a common ground on which to address problems of social isolation, confidence building, lack of skills, provision of support and advice which people would find it difficult to obtain."

4.6. The continuing importance of Salop Drive Market Garden supporting the wider educational and sustainable development strands of Eatwell in Sandwell has demonstrated how community agriculture can help deliver against a wide range of goals. It has developed a 'fresh produce' module to support the training of fifty Community Food Advisors, ten of whom are now employed to run Eatwell activities Borough-wide, hosted visits from School Councils as part of the Sustainable Food Procurement Project, focused on learning about where food comes from and how more sustainable procurement practices can be developed by the Council.

4.7. The potential of community agriculture to contribute to achieving multiple benefits is recognised in the Sandwell Food Policy (see Section 6 below). The Food Policy explicitly recognises the need for an expanded and co-ordinated programme that can build on the successes, and address the challenges, set out in Section 2 above. Goal 8 of the Food Policy is:

'To integrate into mainstream services the social, health, educational and therapeutic benefits of food growing in Sandwell. Share existing good practice from Salop Drive Market Garden and extend opportunities through other community agriculture projects, allotments, school and household gardens.'

4.8. But the expanding level of demand for the facilities and services of Salop Drive Market Garden, given its existing resource and staffing levels, had reached its limit by early 2008. Action for an expanded programme became

more urgent – to meet this demand and enable more people to benefit from community agriculture sites and activities.

4.9. The first Action Plan of the Sandwell Food Policy set out a specific target to 'Bring forward a Strategy for the expansion of Sandwell's community agriculture and food growing programme'. This Strategy is the response to the requirements of the Food Policy and Action Plan to share the benefits and extend the opportunities that community agriculture can bring more widely to local people and communities, based on the vision and values expressed by local lay people and professionals during the consultation process.

5. Vision and values

5.1. The consultations for this Strategy showed that local people's vision for, and understanding of, what is community agriculture is overwhelmingly people-centred. It is not narrowly defined as the production and distribution of food crops, but embraces all aspects of what a community garden or growing space can offer. This includes shared and individual approaches to:

- Growing, distributing, preparing and enjoying food and other products;
- Improving access to and well-managed collective green spaces and individual plots;
- Improving local physical and social environments;
- Creating places in which people can learn about, recover, or improve their physical and mental health;
- Supporting people to gain skills necessary for independence;
- Encouraging social inclusion and community cohesion.



Lay people and professionals discuss their vision for the future

5.2. They spoke about the potential of community farms and gardens to contribute to better health through improved food and nutritional security and physical activity, and to improve the quality of life of local people by linking the regeneration of health with environmental regeneration and sustainable development, creating high quality, productive green spaces for all:

“I feel a lot of health benefits. I feel fitter in myself through gardening and Slimwell combined.”

“It’s all helpful in different ways. With gardening it’s physical exercise, healthy eating, looking after myself.”

“I had heart surgery...I was quite bad at first, but got better through doing the gardening – it helped with my recovery.”

“[Salop Drive] is a tremendous example of sustainable development in practice...of small changes at a local level. We need more examples of what can be achieved.”

5.3. People stressed the value of community agriculture sites and activities for people of all ages and abilities, particularly for families, children and young people, recognising the importance of intergenerational/transferable skills and positive things for young people to do in an urban setting:

“Involving the next generation, involving schools in projects is essential.”

“There is an opportunity to involve schools in the outdoor classroom within re-formed urban structures.”

“There are opportunities to link [community agriculture] to looked-after children...to healthy schools, extended schools and to family and adult learning.”



An example of transformation in the inner city

5.4. The success of the user-led model developed by Ideal for All was emphasised:

“It has to be user-led, involving the wider community. The reason for the success of Salop is that local people have a personal pride in the site. They care for it.”

“We have a user-led committee. It is essential. You have to have someone watching and managing...it is about getting the community involved, community spirit and to show a good example.”

5.5. The example of Salop Drive Market Garden as a model of good practice was acknowledged:

“Salop Drive is an important example of enabling people to inspire and show what can be achieved – it gives people in Sandwell the vision. Yes, it ‘buzzes’. You can hear people enjoying themselves.”

5.6. A key point that emerged from consultation sessions and interviews was that an expanded community agriculture initiative should be based on principles, on a clear vision of what it is that we value:

“It is important to be clear about what we are after...what it is we hope to achieve and the outcomes for local people.”

“The Strategy should be based on principles...such as inclusivity, opportunity for all, and new routes to health and well being – physical, mental, social – improving and creating something for the future.”

“We need to allow a period to develop a model based on things people say they value...what is the value of engagement, of participation? What is the value of better health, social inclusion, sustainable communities? They are difficult to value, but everyone aspires to these.”

5.7. The vision for Sandwell’s expanded community agriculture initiative, drawn from the consultations, is:

The Vision

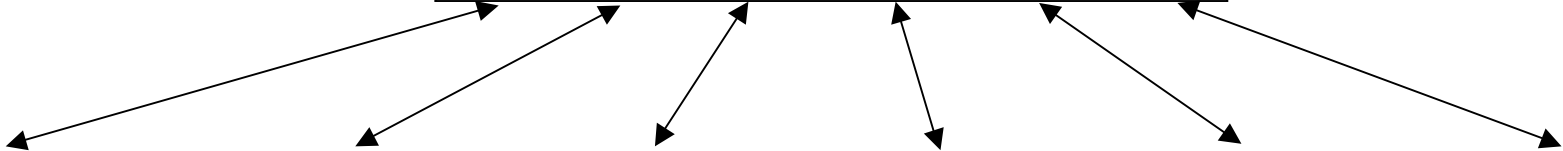
Sandwell’s local authorities will work in partnership with voluntary and community organisations to enable more people in Sandwell to access and benefit from an expanded, co-ordinated community agriculture initiative, thereby increasing the amount of food and other products we can supply to ourselves.

The initiative will make a positive contribution to improving people’s well being and quality of life; including physical and mental health, citizen inclusion and participation, encouraging independence and community cohesion; to the development of individual and community capacity and skills; and to the regeneration of the environment by transforming new and underused sites into accessible, well-managed, productive and safe green spaces, providing activities and services that people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy.

Linking the goals of public health, social inclusion, regeneration and sustainable development through food and gardening will help to develop a ‘whole life approach’ to public health, developing innovative activities and services which contribute to tackling inequalities in health and social disadvantage, through the engagement of the public and professionals in a shared endeavour.

5.8. The anticipated outcomes, based on the values expressed by professionals and lay people will guide and underpin the work, and against which progress can be evaluated, include:

Vision:
Improving well being and quality of life for people in Sandwell through an expanded and co-ordinated community agriculture initiative, increasing the amount of food we supply to ourselves



Improving individual and public Health	Increasing citizen inclusion and participation	Encouraging and supporting Independence	Increasing capacity and skills	Developing cohesive communities	Improving the environment and urban form
Tackling inequalities in health (e.g. lifestyle and diet related illnesses such as some cancers, CVD, diabetes etc) through food gardening	Ensuring all food growing/gardening sites and activities are fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities	Encouraging and supporting people to live independent lives through food growing, preparation and budgeting activities	Encouraging and supporting increased food and gardening capacity and skills for individuals, communities and schools	Encouraging cohesive communities through active engagement of local people through food and gardening, providing much needed community resources	Identifying, securing and regenerating new and underused land areas for community use as sites for food growing and gardening
Tackling rising levels of childhood and adult obesity through healthy diet and physical activity, food growing, active gardening, and cooking	Further developing user-led community-led models of citizen participation and partnership working	Signposting people to other services for independent living according to need e.g. direct payments	Developing and delivering formal (accredited) and informal educational and skills development programmes for food growing/gardening	Ensuring sites and activities encourage a sense of community safety through active engagement of people and authorities	Creating accessible, diverse and productive green spaces for people of all ages and abilities to produce food and other products
Encouraging and supporting better experiences of physical and mental health and supporting recovery from ill health	Tackling social exclusion and encouraging a sense of equality, worth and 'belonging'	Respecting the rights and choices of individuals, encouraging informed choices e.g. about food and healthy diet	Signposting people to other learning and skills services according to need and ability	Engaging with and respecting the rights of Sandwell's diverse communities e.g. through food cultures	Ensuring new sites meet the needs of the communities in which they are situated through participative planning and design

6. Links to other strategies

6.1. This Strategy has been developed to support and complement other local authority strategies, to ensure consistent approaches and to encourage leadership and partnership working both within and between Sandwell's local authorities, and with local voluntary and community organisations. This will help encourage a common understanding and approach, and support the effective use of shared resources.

6.2. The key Council and PCT strategies are listed below:

6.2.1. PCT strategies:

- *Sandwell Food Policy* – provides an overall direction for food and health work. The policy aims to protect and enhance the health of the population and contribute to tackling health inequalities (adopted by Sandwell Partnership).
- *Sandwell Childhood Obesity Prevention and Treatment Strategy* – includes 3 key elements:
 1. A local childhood obesity prevention and treatment care pathway which includes population wide prevention strategies on breast and infant feeding, healthy school initiatives and promotion of healthy lunch box, as well as targeted interventions such as providing dietary advice and physical activity programmes in the community, schools, primary and secondary care settings;
 2. A behaviour change training programme that is tailored for obesity training for NHS staff in primary and community settings;
 3. A three-year action plan that includes local actions on baseline data collection and monitoring, prevention, weight management and specialised services.
- *Health Inequality Strategy* – draws together wide-ranging measures both to reduce inequality and improve the quality of life for all.
- *The Local Compact* – developed in partnership with Sandwell MBC and the voluntary and community sector in Sandwell. It provides a valuable tool for both the voluntary and community sectors and NHS organisations to involve local people in improving the delivery of the health services at a local level.

6.2.2. Council Strategies

The key strategies are:

- *The Sandwell Plan* – the local community strategy, which sets out a vision for the ongoing transformation of Sandwell, focused on outcomes for local people.
- *Local Area Agreement* – sets out the priorities for the future with a focus on 'narrowing the deprivation gap' and is underpinned by the value of community cohesion (see below).
- *Sandwell Environmental Policy* and *Sandwell Declaration on Climate Change* – this Declaration commits the Council to working with its partners and local

communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change.

Other strategies include:

- *Strategy for Engagement of Children and Young People* – outlines why we want children and young people to participate and the benefits to themselves, to organisations and to the wider community, and ways of working.
- *Strategy for the Modernisation of Day Services for People with Learning Disabilities and Physical Disabilities in Sandwell* – outlines step change in the way that in-house services are delivered and how the voluntary and independent sectors can contribute towards new service models.
- *Community Engagement Strategy* - sets out how people will be able to influence the way services are delivered and managed.
- *Allotments and Community Agriculture Strategy* – which aims to protect the provision of allotments in Sandwell in accordance with the statutory requirement placed upon the Council, and encourage allotment gardening and community agriculture as a benefit to healthy living.

6.3. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) identifies nine priorities:

1. More and better homes
2. Improving health
3. Supporting independence
4. Reducing high volume crime
5. Children have a good start in life
6. Successful young people
7. Cleaner, safer active communities
8. More people in employment
9. Educational attainment

6.4. The LAA includes core and supporting indicators for measuring progress against each priority, and sets out key actions. Appendix 2 sets out which of these indicators and actions Sandwell's expanded community agriculture initiative can make a positive contribution to achieving. Additional suggested actions for community agriculture (for example by contributing to the wider urban infrastructure as part of new housing developments) are identified.

7. Our ambitions for community agriculture in Sandwell

7.1. The aims of this Strategy set out the direction for the expansion and co-ordination of community agriculture in Sandwell, in ways that will help achieve the people-centred vision and values expressed during the consultations, focusing on improving individual and community well being and quality of life. The aims will guide how we will implement and manage the process, and know if we are making progress.

7.2. We will 'grow' healthy people and communities through community agriculture through the following aims:

7.2.1. Aim 1: To improve individual and public health

Sandwell's community agriculture activities have demonstrated the potential of food growing and gardening activities to contribute to improving physical and mental health. The vision is that through partnership working, more people and communities will be able benefit from health promoting activities and 'co-produced' services that encourage healthy eating and physical activity, and help to tackle health inequalities and rising obesity among children and adults.

Key objectives:

- Further strengthen existing and develop new health-promoting community agriculture services and activities, based on a 'whole life approach' to public health;
- Increase the amount of, and people's access to, healthy fresh fruit and vegetables and other health-promoting garden products that we supply and consume within the Borough; from window boxes and private/public gardens to larger community farms;
- Support the development of community agriculture through strategic and service level commissioning, and fundraising with partners;
- To further develop and implement non-threatening 'health assessments' for participants to develop an evidence base of the health and social benefits of community agriculture for disabled and non-disabled people;
- To promote recognition of and support for community agriculture in Sandwell at every level in Sandwell and beyond.

7.2.2. Aim 2: To increase citizen inclusion and participation

The success of Salop Drive Market Garden and other community growing initiatives has been grounded in the high levels of citizen inclusion and participation. The vision is to build upon this success, widening opportunities for inclusion to people of all ages and abilities.

Key objectives:

- Further strengthen and develop partnerships, user-led and other ways of engaging and including people and their organisations through community agriculture activities, empowering people to maximise their involvement;
- Ensure all community agriculture sites and activities are fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities;
- Increase the numbers of people with access to, and participating in, planning and delivering community agriculture activities and services;
- Contribute to an improved sense of social inclusion, equality, self-worth and belonging for Sandwell's diverse people and communities involved in community agriculture.

7.2.3. Aim 3: Encouraging and supporting independence

Community agriculture in Sandwell has shown that it can help people to maintain independence or improve their ability to live independently. The vision is to make a real difference by extending positive support to more

disadvantaged and disabled people and communities through an expanded community agriculture initiative.

Key objectives:

- Increase the numbers of people who are supported to maintain independent living through community agriculture activities and services;
- Work with other providers to further develop services for people with a long-term condition which help support them to be independent and in control of their condition;
- Signpost people to other services supporting independent living;
- Respect people's rights and choices, contributing to people's ability to make informed choices, particularly those related to food, activity and health.

7.2.4. Aim 4: To increase capacity and skills

Community agriculture can help people of all ages and abilities to reach their full potential through activities that are designed to directly or indirectly to increase capacity and skills. The vision is to continue to build on existing good practice in providing opportunities for both informal and formal capacity building and skills development for more people, and their organisations.

Key objectives:

- Enhance and extend opportunities for informal capacity building and skills development through strengthening existing and developing new community agriculture services and activities;
- Enhance and extend opportunities for adults to gain recognised, accredited qualifications at a pace and level suited to their needs and abilities, e.g. through the Open College Network and other providers as appropriate;
- Extend and develop opportunities for children, young people and their parents to learn and develop skills through curricular and extra-curricular activities and services, for example by working with 'healthy schools' and through extended schools, and with looked after children and young people;
- Support, develop and promote virtual information and learning activities and links, for example via the Sandwell Food Network, Council and PCT websites;
- Develop a team of 'expert' community agriculture practitioners;
- Support individuals and communities to develop food capacity and skills, thereby encouraging 'resilience' in a time of global climate change and rising food and fuel prices, for example through food growing, preparation and budgeting skills.

7.2.5. Aim 5: To contribute to developing cohesive communities

Community agriculture, in particular Salop Drive Market Garden, has demonstrated its potential to contribute to a sense of pride in place and create active communities and local networks in which Sandwell's diverse communities can come together, and to developing active communities of interest. The vision is to extend this contribution to other communities and to underserved areas of Sandwell.

Key objectives:

- Further develop and extend opportunities for Sandwell's diverse communities, and those who are 'hard to engage', to come together and share the development and delivery of community agriculture activities and services;
- Contribute to increasing the number of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their locality;
- Contribute to increasing the number of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality;
- Work in partnerships between people and authorities to address community safety concerns, and to help prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on existing and new community farms and gardens;
- Provide positive things for young people to do through engagement with community agriculture activities;
- Respect the rights and celebrate the cultures of Sandwell's diverse communities, for example food and farming cultures.

7.2.6. Aim 6: To contribute to improving the environment and urban form

The development of working relationships with Sandwell's Planning and Environmental Departments, and a participative approach to project design involving people and professionals, was key to the success of developing a robust infrastructure that underpinned the sustainable environmental improvements and productivity at Salop Drive Market Garden. The vision is to build on these beginnings, and to develop a more powerful strategic and operational approach to planning, designing, and delivering high quality environmental improvements through new community agriculture sites as part of Sandwell's changing urban form.

Key objectives:

- The Council's Corporate Strategy, Environment and Planning Departments, and Sustainable Development and Legal Services teams, will work with local providers to:
 - Undertake a review of potential green and brown space sites for community agriculture, taking account of existing knowledge and information, for example the Green Space Audit and the Local Development Plan and the need to reach underserved areas
 - Develop and apply a method of evaluating the suitability of sites for what kind of productive use
 - Investigate the potential of Sandwell Valley for a major initiative
 - Act to secure up to three of the most promising sites for community agriculture
 - Contribute to developing site infrastructure to ensure fitness for purpose and readiness for productive use
 - Act to secure a provider to take the project through its community engagement and participative planning process, and to take the project to implementation and production;
- Embed the environmental, economic, and social principles of sustainable development in all aspects of project design and implementation;
- Contribute to adaptation to climate change by improving Sandwell's green space network to support biodiversity, reduce the heat island effect and assist sustainable urban drainage;

- Ensure new sites meet the needs of the communities in which they are situated through a shared approach to planning and design.

7.2.7. Aim 7: To contribute to and support the development of a sustainably resourced community agriculture initiative, which gathers meaningful evidence of progress and shares learning widely

Existing community agriculture initiatives have often had to struggle and sometimes compete with one another for resources from multiple sources. The emphasis on monitoring (rather than meaningful evaluation) by different and multiple funders, and the struggle to survive short-term funding cycles, has meant that local organisations often have been unable to carry out evaluative research and develop a coherent evidence base. Communicating and sharing learning between organisations in the Borough and beyond has sometimes been fragmented and ad hoc. The vision is to create a sustainably funded, self-evaluating organisational hub and network which shares the evidence and learning that it generates both within Sandwell and beyond.

Key objectives:

We will:

- Work in partnership with local providers and community groups to secure and allocate resources from public, charitable and private sources as appropriate to increase local capacity and implement the Growing Healthy Communities Strategy;
- Develop and implement a coherent approach to process and impact evaluation over the lifetime of the Strategy, and explore ways of using validated quality of life and other measures to capture learning and assess progress against our aims and objectives and key local indicators;
- Network and publish in order to disseminate and communicate our learning and findings to lay, professional and academic communities within Sandwell and more widely both nationally and internationally.

8. Implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and reviewing the Strategy

8.1. Implementing the Growing Healthy Communities Strategy and making progress against the aims and objectives will require leadership and a programme of work through two key interconnected strands of carefully managed activity: people and places. By focusing on these two strands, the vision and values of local people can be realised, and progress towards achieving positive outcomes for people and the environment can be made.

8.2. The **people** strand will focus on aims one to five, each of which relates to health, social and cultural elements of sustainable development for individuals and the communities of which they are a part. These aims and objectives will guide implementation and contribute to realising Sandwell's unique people-centred vision for community agriculture, focusing on individual and community well being and quality of life through improved health, inclusion and participation, independence, capacity and skills.

8.3. The **places** strand will focus on aim six: on identifying, assessing, securing, regenerating and bringing into productive use key new sites for community agriculture. The pilot phase of Sandwell's community agriculture has focused mainly on sites in Oldbury and Smethwick. New sites, which better serve local communities in Tipton and Rowley Regis, and Wednesbury and West Bromwich, will be considered. Sandwell Valley will be considered for a major community agriculture and local food scheme, which may be based on a social enterprise model and offer greater opportunities for training and preparation for work.

8.4. Aim seven focuses on securing resources for developing organisational and learning capacity, without which aims one to six cannot be realised, and we will not know if we are travelling in the right direction.

8.5. Political and organisational leadership and robust partnership working between Sandwell's local authorities and voluntary and community organisations will be essential in achieving the aims of the Strategy. This will be a shared endeavour but responsibilities for key steps will be clearly identified. Strategic and service level commissioning which values shared outcomes such as improved public health, social inclusion, and community cohesion will be required.

8.6. **Monitoring and evaluating** implementation of the Strategy will require a collective effort by local authorities and voluntary and community sector providers, with clearly allocated responsibilities as to who is responsible for gathering and analysing what data, and who is responsible for communicating the learning, to whom, and for what purpose.

8.7. Statutory sector funders and the larger grant-giving organisations (for instance the Lottery) have always required various forms of monitoring and evaluation. In practice these monitoring and evaluation requirements have tended to be prescriptive and focused heavily on monitoring financial management, and quantitative measures. More recently the role of *evaluation* in publicly funded food and nutrition initiatives has been emphasised, allowing for more mixed approaches, which value qualitative methods alongside the 'bean counting'.

8.8. There is a considerable literature on evaluating health promotion and development initiatives (see World Health Organisation (Europe) 1998), including those in food and nutrition. However, most evaluation in the field to date focuses on impact (and to a lesser extent process), with little attention to wider concerns such as quality of life, food cultures and sustainable development. The purpose and practice of monitoring and evaluation has often been conflated, and confused, with very little accessible or effective guidance for practitioners or researchers.

8.9. One of the key challenges for evaluative research in healthy food and physical activity interventions is that although the linkage between diet, activity and health is an inescapable fact of life, this linkage can be a subtle

and complex one; clear causal pathways can be very difficult to establish. In human society, there appear to be many variations in the way in which this link is conceptualised and the ways in which such conceptualisations are translated into actual beliefs and practice (Beardsworth and Keil 1997). In terms of policy, practice and places, food and health improvement issues are interventions in what Blackman describes as ‘wicked problems’; issues that are hard to treat not because they are complicated but because they are *complex* (Blackman 2006).

8.10. The design, delivery and evaluation of intervention programmes needs to embrace the whole system in which the issues are embedded. This calls for a multidisciplinary understanding and approach, and indicates that an ongoing re-working of concepts and materials, in an iterative, deductive process of enquiry (which does *not* mean theory is absent), is likely to be most productive. Methodological strategies may be variable, and variously used, depending on the nature of the problem, the inclinations of the commissioners and researcher, and where the emphasis lies. Approaches may focus on data, insight or emancipation driven research (Alvesson and Sklodberg 2000).

8.11. The development of a process and impact/outcome evaluation plan, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative measures (such as the use of validated ‘quality of life’ measures over time), will be an important task in the early stages of Strategy implementation.

8.12. **Reviewing** the Strategy will require stakeholders to come together to share data on process and impact/outcomes, both against the aims and objectives set out in the Strategy, and to consider unexpected insights and learning. Annual reviews will be carried out which will inform the development of yearly action plans. A full review of the Strategy will be carried out in the final six months of Strategy implementation, with a view to informing future developments.

8.13. The Strategy will be accompanied by yearly action plans, which set out the priorities for implementation in a structured and systematic way, to ensure sustainable growth and avoid the pitfalls of ‘putting carts before horses’. Initial actions will focus on developing organisational and community capacity and identifying sites for the delivery of an expanded and co-ordinated community agriculture initiative; while subsequent actions will focus on actions that will deliver the initiative on the ground in ways that ensure people and communities, and their organisations, have maximum opportunities for participation and benefit. The action plans will identify who is responsible for leading and contributing to meeting our aims and objectives.

9. Making the resources available

9.1. This section focuses on ways of securing cash and in-kind contributions, which will underpin the development of material, organisational and human capacity. Over the ten years since the inception of Sandwell’s community agriculture initiative, significant financial and in-kind contributions have been secured and invested locally, from various sources both within and beyond

the Borough. A high level of skills has developed locally in preparing and submitting bids and managing funds to implement various initiatives, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors, often working in partnerships. This has to some degree been ad hoc, which is unavoidable in a wider climate of shifting policy and funding priorities.

9.2. Additional resources will need to be identified to ensure the successful implementation of the Growing Healthy Communities Strategy 2008-2012. Sandwell PCT already commits a significant resource to Salop Drive Market Garden, which in turn translates into a great deal of expertise and knowledge. However, what we need to do is to strengthen the core community agriculture resource to enable us to use what we have more effectively, to add value and secure additional resources.

9.3. The Strategy will not be effectively implemented without sufficient material, organisational, human and financial resources. Material resources will include land and site infrastructure (drainage, services, buildings, etc); organisational resources will include capable providers with robust and accountable management structures; human resources will include competent and suitably qualified managers and other professional staff, sessional workers, and volunteers; and financial resources will include both cash and in-kind contributions.



How can we value social inclusion and community cohesion?

9.4. Implementation of the Strategy will require a more systematic approach to securing financial and in-kind contributions. The development of a fundraising plan will be an important early task in implementation. The fundraising plan will focus on building on and strengthening what has been achieved to date, particularly in terms of fundraising from European and UK statutory sources (such as area-based and other regeneration and social development funds, and service level commissioning), Lottery funds, funds from charitable

foundations, and in-kind contributions from the public and private sectors. But it will also develop new approaches to securing financial support, for example through strategic level commissioning and corporate fundraising and public/private partnerships.

9.5. Strategic commissioning is the activity that ensures the vision and strategic objectives of the organisation are aligned and assessed against customer needs for the short and long term. It is the process of translating local people's aspirations and needs through specifying and procuring services that deliver the best possible outcomes and makes best use of available resources. Strategic commissioning is the driver and initiator of service delivery and ensures that the voice of the customers is at the heart of defining and designing services.

9.6. Strategic level commissioning is required to realise the vision, aims and objectives, and desired outcomes of a Borough-wide community agriculture initiative, valuing hard to quantify outcomes. For example, community agriculture initiatives have demonstrated high levels of public engagement, which comes at a cost and means that community food projects in urban settings are not always financially viable in a narrow business sense. While there is considerable scope for developing entrepreneurship and social enterprise, some core values such as public engagement, participation, better health, social inclusion and more sustainable communities are shared goals at strategic level, which cannot be realised without strategic investment.

9.7. Corporate fundraising and public/private partnerships are new territory for community agriculture in Sandwell. Corporate fundraising requires a very different approach. Companies support voluntary and community groups and social enterprises in a variety of ways. While money from companies only makes up a relatively small percentage of voluntary sector income, there is a wealth of ways national and local firms can lend valuable support. These include staff expertise, donated equipment and excess stock, or providing goods. However, companies rarely donate money out of simple altruism. We must consider the ethics of taking money, goods or help in kind from businesses. A simple search can reveal that a targeted company may use business practices that could damage the image of our organisation. Corporate sponsorship is a business transaction and it forms a contract. Unlike a donation it counts as taxable and VATable income (Finance Hub 2008).

9.8. A period of research and preparation will be required to introduce a corporate fundraising element into a community agriculture fundraising plan, in order to:

Strategically:

- Increase our knowledge of the pros and cons of corporate support before entering into any agreements and access expert advice;
- Clarify what we may be committing to;
- Clarifying what the gains are for us and for the commercial company - are they reasonable to both parties?;

- Clarify whether that both partners ‘match’ in terms of ethics, values and principles.

Operationally:

- Research target companies and identify named contacts;
- Ensure initial contacts are brief, stating what we want and why the company should support our organisation;
- Plan ahead and allow sufficient time, e.g. some companies may need to get permission from head office, or we may wish to start at head office level;

9.9. Entering into any public/private partnership will require considerable and painstaking research. Although a local precedent has been set for example by the partnership between the Council and BT/Liberata, and forms of agreement have been developed, such relationships have yet to be fully tested in practice.

10. Summary

10.1. The *Growing Healthy Communities Strategy* is the first of its kind in the UK. While we have examples of a successful pilot at Salop Drive Market Garden and other voluntary and community sector led initiatives, we recognise that implementation of an ambitious strategy for expansion and co-ordination of an extended community agriculture initiative will take time, commitment and resources, and will be a continuing process of listening, learning and improving.

10.2. We will be leaders in the field of community agriculture at a Borough-wide level, and will have a good deal to learn, but the learning that will take place will be valuable to other urban authorities that will follow.

10.3. We are confident that by adopting a structured approach to community agriculture, and by involving local people and their organisations in the development of this approach, we will ensure that putting our people-centred vision at the heart of everything we do becomes integral rather than incidental to the work of an expanded, co-ordinated community agriculture initiative which brings real benefits to individuals and communities in Sandwell.

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Initial consultation participants:

Sandwell Primary Care Trust

Director of Public Health
Chair of PCT, Health and Well Being Group and PCT 'Food Champion'
Strategy Lead for Food Policy Advisor and Obesity
Food Access Manager

Sandwell MBC

Officers from:

Corporate Strategy
Community and Living
Education and Learning
Environment and Planning
Leisure and Culture
Social Care and Health
Town Teams

Voluntary and Community Organisations

Ideal for All Ltd
Options for Life
Wednesbury Learning Community
Sandwell Allotments Association

Lay people and project users

Growing Opportunities garden workers and volunteers

LAA 2008/09-2010/11 indicators and actions to which community agriculture in Sandwell can make a positive contribution

Priority 1: More and Better Homes

Suggested Key Action: Contribute to development of wider housing infrastructure by providing well-managed and accessible green spaces such as community farms, food schemes, and gardens alongside more traditional provision e.g. allotments and play areas.

Priority 2: Improving Health

Core indicator: NI 121 Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75

Short-term actions – public information, health of mentally ill people, carers and occupational health

Long-term actions – anti-poverty, food access, fitness and activity

Supporting indicators: NI 8 Adult participation in sport and recreation

Key actions:

- Targeting priority wards – Closing the gap (in CVD and cancer)
- Work with Children and Young People Partnership to reduce childhood obesity
- Increase and promote child and adult physical activity in Sandwell
- Promotion of primary intervention schemes

Priority 3: Supporting Independence

Core indicator: NI 142 Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living

Supporting indicators: NI 124 People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition; N130 Social care patients receiving Self Directed Support (Direct Payments and Individual Budgets)

Key actions:

- Driving forward personalisation agenda in relation to direct payments and individualised budgets, underpinned by work on advocacy, self-directed care and public information
- Placing greater emphasis on rehabilitation and developing a wider range of preventative services
- Encourage unemployed people back to work through increased training, increasing support offered to vulnerable groups, such as older people and those with learning difficulties
- Develop a joint approach that will enable those with complex needs achieve greater stability

Priority 4: Reducing High Volume Crime

Key actions:

- Provision of positive activities for young people

Priority 5: Children Having a Good Start in Life

Core indicator: NI 56: Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6

Key Actions:

- Finalise and deliver the obesity strategy
- Delivery of Child Care guarantee

Priority 6: Successful Young People

Key Actions:

- Increasing young people's participation and engagement in education and training, and positive activities
- Deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy

Priority 7: Cleaner Safer Active Communities

Core indicator: NI 5 Overall/general satisfaction with the local area; Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live (existing stretch indicator)

Supporting indicators – Community Cohesion: NI 1 Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area; NI 4 Percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality.

Supporting indicators – Cleaner Safer Greener: N186 Per capita CO2 emissions in the LA area (depending on measures); NI 188 Planning to adapt to climate change.

Key actions:

- Neighbourhood Tasking – cross-theme/sector actions
 - Clean up grot spots/fly tipping
 - Flag and address problems with the maintenance of green spaces
- Positive activities for young people
- Community cohesion action plan
- Neighbourhood forums/walkabouts/community engagement activity

Priority 8: More People in Employment

Supporting indicator: NI 170 Previously developed land vacant and derelict for more than five years

Priority 9: Educational Attainment

Suggested key action:

- Development of 'outdoor classroom' and other 'healthy' and 'extended' schools activities to support the curriculum and attainment levels