**Developing a Good Food Economy Plan in Barking and Dagenham**

**1. Background**

**1.1 Introduction**

Barking and Dagenham is one of London’s most deprived boroughs, with higher-than-average levels of unemployment, inactivity and low pay. This situation is rooted in the legacy of de-industrialisation, but the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. The borough currently has the highest unemployment rate in the country, and one of the highest rates of Universal Credit claimants who are in work.

These issues underpin high levels of both food insecurity and obesity – issues which are interrelated, as buying and preparing healthy food often requires more time and money than cheaper, processed food with high fat and sugar content. There are nearly 20 food banks operating in the borough. At the same time over 65% of adults are overweight or obese and the child obesity rate is one of the highest in the country. Less than half of adults and 15-year-olds in the borough get their 5-a-day.

Barking and Dagenham Council is committed to building a more inclusive economy that offers more and better jobs for residents, underpinned by long term targets to reduce unemployment and low pay, alongside a preventative approach to services that seeks to increase the resilience, wellbeing and independence of local communities. The Council’s ambition is to support a shift away from the ‘dirty’ industries of the 20th century towards the ‘clean’ industries of the 21st, by working to attract, invest in and facilitate the arrival of new sectors and organisations offering better paid, better skilled jobs, as well as supporting growth and improvement in the ‘everyday economy’ where most people work.

In the coming years, the development of the borough’s food sector will be a key focus – catalysed by efforts to ensure the planned relocation of the City of London’s historic wholesale meat, fish, and fruit and vegetable markets (Smithfield, Billingsgate and New Spitalfields) to Dagenham Dock lead to wider social and economic benefits. The arrival of this major new anchor institution to the borough represents an investment of £775m, bringing nearly 800 jobs and a pipeline of new apprenticeships and community outreach sessions. As a distributor of fresh produce and major player in London’s wider food system, the markets also offer an opportunity to shift the borough’s relationship with food, contributing to efforts to tackle issues of food insecurity, poor nutrition and obesity.

To help realise these goals, the City of London and Barking and Dagenham Council are supporting the development of a Good Food Economy Plan. This set of interventions, developed in partnership with local people and organisations, will seek to shape the local food sector and improve access to affordable, nutritious food in the borough. The plan will also aim to build a more sustainable local food system, reducing emissions and environmental impact through support for local production and action to reduce food transport, waste and packaging. It will build on a fantastic existing set of local initiatives and partners in the community and voluntary sector working on food-related issues in the borough.

Finally, the Plan will also tie together and draw on resources provided by a planned Borough Food School and food ‘hub’ in Barking Town Centre linked to the wholesale markets. Together these initiatives seek to create new quality training and employment pathways into good jobs in the food sector and to incubate and shape a more sustainable, nutritious and affordable local food offer that supports a positive food culture and celebrates the borough’s rich heritage and diversity, while also meeting the skills and business needs of the traders.

We are seeking to commission a piece of research to inform the vision, goals and activities in the Good Food Economy Plan, helping us to map the borough’s existing food partners, initiatives and resources, learn from innovative approaches elsewhere, and build a plan and approach that is driven by the priorities and ideas of the diverse communities in the borough.

**2 Objectives, deliverables and methodology**

**2.1 Objectives and research questions**

The objectives of the research are to:

* Understand key local issues, challenges and priorities relating to food in the borough and how these can be addressed;
* Understand the diversity of food cultures in the borough, and identify opportunities to work with specific local groups/demographics in developing a positive food culture that celebrates this diversity;
* Map and engage the existing partners, resources and initiatives working to improve access to nutritious, affordable and sustainable food in the borough;
* Involve these community stakeholders and resident groups engaged in food issues in decisions about the vision, goals and activities of a Good Food Economy Plan in Barking and Dagenham;
* Explore what we can learn from good practice standards and approaches elsewhere, including place-based approaches to creating a more affordable, nutritious and sustainable local food system.

Key questions include:

* How do local residents and communities understand and experience food-related issues in the borough? What role does food play in their lives?
* What are their priorities, and what are the barriers to addressing the issues they face?
* What would a vision for building a more inclusive, healthy, and sustainable local food system look like?
* How can we build the capacity and impact of existing community-led networks and initiatives to support this vision?
* What role can this play in tackling high levels of obesity and food insecurity, and how can we support more people to access quality jobs and careers in the food sector?
* What action can we take to support more sustainable food supply chains and reduce food waste, transport and packaging?
* How can we use the arrival of the wholesale markets as a new local anchor institution to catalyse these wider economic, social and health benefits?
* How can the planned food school, food hub and community outreach sessions support this vision and plan?

**2.2 Deliverables and methodology**

We would like the review to provide:

1. An understanding of the key existing organisations, partners and initiatives operating with an interest in food-related issues in the borough with information about their resources and areas of focus.
2. Insights about the diversity of food cultures in the borough, the role food plays in people’s lives, and their views of food-related challenges and priorities.
3. An overview of the good practice standards, resources and innovative and successful approaches in comparable economic and geographic contexts that we could learn from to support a more nutritious, sustainable and affordable local food system.
4. A set of recommendations to LBBD on possible options to develop the local food sector over the next 5 years, providing insights to inform:
   1. A vision, key priorities and approach for the Good Food Economy Plan that is rooted in the community context and priorities
   2. How we can work with key local partners and residents to further develop and deliver the Good Food Economy Plan – including the make up and remit of a Good Food Economy Partnership
   3. Our approach to tackling food insecurity, poor nutrition and obesity
   4. How we can work to improve the sustainability of the local food sector
   5. Interventions to shape and improve new and existing businesses in the local food retail and hospitality sector – both in terms of their food offer and their ability to provide high quality jobs for local people
   6. Interventions to improve access to quality jobs in the food sector for residents.

We would welcome proposals for the methodology as part of the tender but suggest that it includes:

* Interviews with key officers and partners to understand and map local food-related projects, resources and initiatives;
* Desk-based research to identify the good practice standards, resources and innovative and successful approaches in comparable economic and geographic contexts that we could learn from;
* Co-design workshops with representative community stakeholders and residents to better understand the diversity of food cultures in the borough and inform the local vision, priorities and approach for the Good Food Economy Plan – with the potential to incorporate a visit to the existing City of London markets.

We would like the recommendations to be presented to LBBD and the City of London in the form of a workshop to discuss the implications and identify next steps. Following this, we would like a final written report which reflects the discussion of the options and sets out a clear set of questions and considerations we will need to work through to progress strategic development of the selected priority areas for development.

Deliverables will include:

* A high-level audit of existing initiatives and organisations working on food-related issues in the borough
* An overview of the diversity of the different food cultures in the borough, including any opportunities to work with specific local groups/demographics
* Analysis of the community’s perceptions of the priorities and challenges for the local food system, including any tensions and differences
* Analysis of local opportunities to improve access to affordable, nutritious and sustainable food in the borough
* A set of recommendations in light of this analysis, to inform both the content and approach to the Good Food Economy Plan
* Presentation and Workshop
* Written report

**2.3 Provider characteristics**

We are looking for a research partner or partners with:

* Demonstrable understanding of the context in Barking and Dagenham or a convincing plan for how to develop this through the research;
* Demonstrable expertise and knowledge of the successful place-based approaches and standards we can draw on to build a healthier, more sustainable and affordable local food system;
* An ability to deliver engaging, participatory research that involves diverse community and stakeholder groups in recommendations to inform policy and practice;
* A clear plan to work collaboratively with the Council in order to ensure the project delivers the desired outputs and information within the project timescale.

**3 Budget and timescales**

The budget for this project is approximately £20,000 excluding VAT. We are looking for a quality (80%) and value for money (20%) proposal.

Please provide a method statement that clearly responds to the assessment questions below, referencing the ‘provider characteristics set out above, along with a breakdown of the budget and submit these to [tess.lanning@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:tess.lanning@lbbd.gov.uk) by **no later than the close of play on Friday 1st April 2022.**

From the tenders submitted, the three with the highest marks will be selected and undergo an interview process, in which the appropriate provider will be selected.

We will select the highest scoring tenderers based on the method statement no later than 15th April 2022 and will hold presentations/interviews on the afternoons of Thursday 21st and Tuesday 26th April 2022. We aim to hold the project kick off meeting on w/b 09/05/2022 and start by w/b 23/05/2022.

We estimate the project will last around four months, allowing for the holiday period over August, with a periodical reporting system in place to ensure goals are being met.

**Assessment Questions**

As part of the process in choosing the right provider to work with, the Council would like interested parties to provide a method statement that includes responses to the following questions, with reference to the ‘provider characteristics’ above where relevant:

1. Describe your understanding of the research context, goals, and desired outcomes – highlighting any key challenges and opportunities.
2. Describe how you will approach the work, including a detailed methodology that meets the research objectives and explains how you will engage diverse community and stakeholder groups to develop the recommended approach, priorities and activities.
3. Describe any expertise, knowledge and experience that will enable you/your organisation to identify effective recommendations about how Barking and Dagenham can build a more sustainable, affordable and nutritious local food system, including examples of relevant work or projects in this area and details of the main researcher(s) that will work on the project if successful.
4. Describe how you will work with the council to ensure the project meets its objectives, including the support and information you would need from the council to best enable you to carry out this work and a proposed timescale for delivery.

The response should also include your quote for the complete provision of this work, with a breakdown of your costs, before and after VAT and the required signed declarations set out in the accompanying document ‘Evaluation criteria – food strategy research’, using the templates provided.

**Further Information, Queries and Clarification**

For further information, queries or clarifications relating to this bid, please contact [tess.lanning@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:tess.lanning@lbbd.gov.uk) by Friday 25th March 2022.