

Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership Agreement

1. Background

1.1 Many different organisations and groups are involved in food-related projects and services in Stoke-on-Trent.

1.2 These range from: food banks and pantries addressing food poverty and insecurity, provision of meals to alleviate poverty and social isolation, the development of cooking skills, promotion of healthy eating, community food growing, improvements in procurement and catering, and tackling food waste. Good food is vital to the quality of people's lives.

1.3 Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership believes that every person in the city should have access to healthy, tasty, affordable food and that this food should be good for the environment and our local economy. We recognise that food is at the heart of some of our city's most pressing social, economic and environmental problems; however, we also see good food as a part of the solution to the challenges our communities face.

1.4 The Food Partnership has been established to support strategy, policy and advocacy, and to provide a platform that enables collaboration across sectors in relation to food.

2. Membership

2.1 The Food Partnership is a cross-sector partnership, with members and steering group including representatives from the statutory, VCSE and private sectors. It aims to ensure representation and welcomes influence from a range of geography, expertise and specialisms, including (but not limited to): anti-poverty, diversity, education, environment, foodbanks, health, housing, sustainability, VCSE development / infrastructure and youth.

3. Support

3.1 Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership depends on the support of its members while seeking to obtain funding for its overall operation and specific workstreams as appropriate.

4. Agreement

4.1 This document sets out the agreement underpinning Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership. This is a guide for the working arrangements of the group and lays out the purpose, aims, membership and operation of the group.

5. Basis

5.1 In 2023 an initial group convened to explore a Food Partnership approach for Stoke-on-Trent, with this work at first focusing on the Cost-of-Living crisis. Facilitated by YMCA North Staffordshire, the group began to embrace the support of the public, VCSE and academic sectors, with additional private sector representation.

5.2 A strong consensus began to emerge throughout the course of meetings early in 2024. There was broad agreement that a Food Partnership approach would be beneficial for Stoke-on-Trent. Early sessions focused on aims, governance and Theory of Change (ToC) for the future of any resulting group, informed by learning from the Sustainable Food Cities Network.

6. Priorities and Aims

6.1 Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership have agreed upon the following vision for our impact:

Stoke on Trent has an equitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable food network that supports the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our communities

6.2 The Food Partnership's work is focused on the following themes:

- Food Availability
- Food Affordability
- Food Sustainability

6.3 The outcomes of our future activities have been agreed as follows:

There is a reduction in people reporting being hungry

- People are less reliant on foodbanks

There is a reduction in health inequalities

- Improved life chances
- Access to nourishing food
- People are making healthier lifestyle choices

We promote equitable access to food and options to reflect our diverse communities

- The Food Partnership has embedded, strong and formed partnerships
- The partnerships influences policy and decision making
- Partners have access to shared and abundant resources

Improved cooking skills / knowledge

- People have increased knowledge of healthy sustainable meals
- People report a change in perception around food and emergency food
- Food sold in shops that would otherwise go to waste / reduce food waste
- CO2 savings Benefit to the natural environment

Improved Mental wellbeing

- People feel more empowered across the city

7. Values

The following values have been adopted by the food partnership:

1. Shared leadership
2. Collaborative
3. Inclusive
4. Courageous
5. Innovative
6. Empowering

8. Membership of Partnership

8.1 Attendance at the Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership is open to all. Any interested organisation may apply for membership, which confers voting rights.

8.2 All members have the right to stand for the Steering Group by completing an online form confirming agreement and compliance with this MoU.

8.3 The steering group reserves the right to remove organisations from membership if, following a thorough review process, they are deemed to have breached the terms of the MoU.

9. Steering Group Composition, Meetings and Processes

9.1 Steering Group meetings will take place bi-monthly (or at any other interval as determined by the Steering Group members). The Steering Group will be made up of a minimum of four and maximum of eight members, who will be elected by members of the wider Partnership, with one vote per agency, organisation or service. The Steering Group will reserve the right to settle disputes about the voting rights of member organisations.

9.2 Nominations for membership of the Steering Group will be invited in writing by the Chair at least by the end of every third year, and three months before the end of the current terms of office are due to expire. Nominees will be able to make a submission in writing no later than 7 days prior to the next meeting.

9.3 Partnership members cannot be compelled to stand, but the overall membership will - when standing nominating or voting - be reminded to consider a full range of skills and sector expertise, including representation of thematic priorities, EDI, and the range of organisation size and power.

9.4 The Steering Group will operate under a Terms of Reference which will be defined by the Steering group and reviewed annually.

9.5 Meeting agendas and papers will be sent out whenever possible at least 7 days in advance of each meeting. Minutes and Action Points will be sent out to the wider Partnership within 14 days of meetings.

9.6 As per 13.5 The Partnership will, at all times, seek to work via consensus but if there is a fundamental difference that requires to be resolved by a vote then this will be resolved by a vote of the Steering Group.

9.7 A quorum for a Steering Group vote will be over 50% of the voting members.

10. Chairperson

10.1 The Steering Group may either:

- Elect a Chair from its membership for a maximum of three years at a time, or;
- Operate a Rotating Chair system, with Steering Group members opting to share responsibilities

11. Hosting and Funding

11.1 The Partnership is not a legal entity, does not have a bank account, and cannot at present hold funding.

11.2 For administrative purposes the Steering Group may appoint a member organisation to provide support and facilitation for the partnership. This organisation may manage any funding secured for administration and facilitation purposes.

11.3 The Food Partnership is seen as a conduit to the formation of collaborative partnerships and workstreams eligible for funding in their own right. For a project identified to be progressed by the partnership, it must be approved by the Steering Group, and a lead organisation identified to host the project, staff, and hold the financial management and legal responsibilities.

11.4 Such projects would be subject to a separate Partnership Agreement (or alternative) between the relevant partners. The Steering Group or partnership would have no liability in respect of any such projects or funding, but if carried out under the banner of the Food Partnership the lead organisation would have a responsibility to report progress and impact regularly to the Steering Group.

12. Partnership Meeting Arrangements and Attendance

12.1 Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership will meet a minimum of 4 times per year, on a quarterly basis, using any appropriate venue within the city. The Chair will take executive responsibility for convening the network, though the facilitation of meetings and delivery of sessions may be delegated in line with members' expertise and interest

12.2 Meeting agendas and papers will be sent out whenever possible at least 7 days in advance of each meeting. Summaries, follow up information and Action Points will be sent out within 14 days of meetings.

12.3 Members who have not attended four consecutive meetings may be assumed to have resigned as voting members from the group, unless, on

the basis of information received, the Steering Group decides otherwise.

12.4 The Partnership will, at all times, seek to work via consensus but if there is a fundamental difference that requires resolution by a vote then this will be resolved by a vote of the Steering Group. A quorum for a Steering Group vote will be over 50% of voting members.

13. Working / Task and Finish Groups

13.1 In order to ensure that the Steering Group remains a high-level, strategic forum, it is agreed that both thematic and partnership management work is delegated to working / sub-groups, as identified by the Steering Group and wider Partnership members.

14.2 Each of these groups will be open to participation of the wider membership. Each will nominate a lead member who will be responsible for providing progress updates to the Steering Group and to the wider network.

15. Review

15.1 This document was adopted by consensus on 26th September 2024, and will be reviewed annually by the Chair and Steering Group.