

Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission Evidence gathering session, 15 December 2022

Notes

Date: 15 December 2022 at 14:00 -16:30

Venue: St Peters Centre, 31 Winstanley Rd, Battersea, London, SW11 2EZ

Objective: To capture the current state of food and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in the borough and make recommendations about what can be done to improve the situation.

Attending the meeting:

- Ian Tattum - Joint Chair
- Dorian Leatham - Joint Chair
- Councillor Kemi Akinola - Vice Chair
- Professor Alex Colas
- Toby Costin
- Lauren James
- Tylor Maria Johnson
- Professor Tim Lang
- Gillian Norton
- Cathy Warwick

Apologies

- Arshad Daud
- Beverley Corson
- Kath McDonnell
- Liz Moreton
- Youth Council

Wandsworth Council officers

- Peter Quirk: Secretariat
- Alice Addison: Secretariat
- Charlotte Cowley Project Officer
- Clare O'Connor Head of Policy, Performance, Analysis & Communications

Observer

- Charlotte Maguire LGA

1. Introduction and context:

- Joint Chair (IT) provided a summary of the proposed work on this theme, the previously agreed key lines of enquiry for the food Theme and the proposed approach to this evidence gathering session.
- Commissioners approved the note from the first Commission meeting.

- Alice Addison provided a summary and visual aid listing key points raised at a meeting of the Wandsworth Youth Council which focused on the Cost-of-Living crisis on 13 December 2022.
- Joint Chair (DL) provided an update on a Wandsworth Voluntary sector event on 7th December which was focused on responses to the COL crisis in Wandsworth, including presentations on the work of the Commission, VSC organisations and the Wandsworth Council COL programme.
- Peter Quirk provided a summary of three reports published this week looking at the impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis on food insecurity, Food Foundation Food Insecurity tracker, JRF Cost of Living tracker Winter 2022/23 and London Councils, Annual Attitudinal Survey 2022.
- Charlotte Cowley provided an update of the food workstream of the Wandsworth Council Cost of Living programme.
Charlotte Maguire LGA provided an update of FSM schemes and initiatives across the county.

2.Evidence gathering session One: The Food System in Wandsworth:

- Insights from Sophia Boothby Specialist Community Dietitian based at Queen Mary's Hospital and Suzanna Steward, Specialist Dietitian St George's University Hospital
 - Key points included increase in malnourishment in community, issues with access to food particularly hot meals, issues with ability to travel to areas of food provision
 - Sustainable transport of food, provision of meals on wheels, improving communication between VCS, availability of schemes and Dietitians.
- Insights from Ruby Barnett, Wandsworth Food Partnership Coordinator
 - Key points included feelings of burnout through VCS, focus on poverty as a whole, education and awareness of available schemes

3.Evidence gathering session Two: Impact and solutions:

- Insights from Charlotte White, Earlsfield Food bank
 - Key points included increase in both amount of guests and severity of problems, issue is lack of money, need further support with accessing and applying to support schemes.
- Insights from Sarah Chapman, Advocacy and Communications Manager at Wandsworth Food bank
 - Key points included existing guests and also new guests, frequency of use is increasing, need to look at further advocacy and campaigning, lobbying for cash first schemes
- Insights from Lillias Gillies, Wandsworth Older Peoples Forum
 - Key points included resilience to food issues, education on cooking
- Insights from Alina Sartogo Co-Founder, The Wonki Collective

- Key points included consideration of extending these models to target low-income customers, contacting food producers for 'wonky' items, food/lunch box packages.

4.Key themes from the evidence gathering session

- Key themes emerging from the statements, questions and discussions from the session included:
 - The need for better communication across the system regarding both users and providers knowing the support available
 - The need for system players to improve information sharing and better joined up working.
 - The opportunity for working with the LGA in relation to lobby & campaign positions.
 - Discussion on burnout and operational pressures for VCS organisations due to the unrelenting pressure caused by COL crisis (mental health challenges for volunteers /lack of strategic headspace planning time for managers).
 - In depth discussions on Free School Meal entitlement & take up / Meals on Wheels provision and the concept of cash first schemes
 - A recognition that further evidence and a deeper understanding of the Food System in Wandsworth is required to inform the development of longer-term systemic recommendations and options.
 - A desire to share the learning, issues and emerging ideas from the Commissions work with system players and to develop a robust interim findings report at Commission halfway point.