

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21ST MARCH 2018

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Leicestershire Food Plan

Healthy foods are fundamental to good health and community vitality. The food system - from agricultural production and processing, to transportation and marketing, to shop purchases and waste disposal, influences our ability to buy healthy foods and affects our society in profound ways. But food is not just about obesity. Food also has widespread economic implications. The food and drink manufacturing sector in Leicester and Leicestershire's economy is worth £600m – the second most important economic contributor after non-food manufacturing. Food is also important for tourism in Leicestershire, with Melton Mowbray designating itself as “the Rural Capital of Food “.

It is important that we take a strategic approach to managing the food system and I am delighted to advise the Council that we are developing a Food Plan for Leicestershire. The Plan will provide a focus for our work to address the rising health, care and productivity costs of ill-health due to overweight/obesity, to reduce food waste costs/environmental impacts and to strengthen our very important local food manufacturing sector. It will also mean that Leicestershire can become a member of the national “Sustainable Food Cities” (SFC) network which in turn would open up funding opportunities and support from national experts in this field. We will be taking a two-strand approach to Leicestershire's food plan, with a county-level strategy developed in tandem with community-level plans at district, or equivalent level.

A county-wide food plan also fits well strategically with the development of the Council's single outcomes framework, given its cross-departmental nature, and will contribute to outcomes around A Strong Economy, Wellbeing and Opportunity, Great Communities and Keeping People Safe. It will also contribute to our waste reduction set out in the Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

Pensions for women born in the 1950's

As part of my previous role, I met with a delegation from the campaign group WASPI to listen to their concerns about the impact of the decision taken by the Coalition Government to bring forward the date for the equalisation of the retirement age for men and women.

Whilst it was accepted that the retirement age for both men and women should be the same the WASPI concerns centred on the timing of and information provided to

women born in the 1950's who already made retirement plans and would now face a significant reduction in the pension or would have to wait longer for their pensions.

One of the main concerns was in relation to the notification of the changes and the Work and Pensions Committee of the House of Commons concluded that 'more could and should have been done' to communicate the changes. The responsibility for communicating these changes rests with the Department of Works and Pensions and any women who feel that the DWP have failed in their responsibility to do so can and should take the matter up, firstly with the DWP, and failing which raise the matter with the Ombudsman.

The Government's position is that the changes proposed by the Coalition Government were debated extensively in Parliament and a concession was made prior to the passing of the Act which reduced the delay that anyone would experience in claiming their State Pension, relative to the previous 1995 timetable, to 18 months. This concession will cost approximately £1.1billion. To meet the demands of WASPI would cost an estimated £30billion - a cost which would have to be borne by working age people.

I have considerable sympathy for the WASPI campaign and for those women whose retirement plans have been adversely affected. An all-Party Parliamentary Group has been set up and I am pleased it has taken up the campaign on behalf of WASPI. That is the right forum for such action as this is a matter for central government.

At the meeting with WASPI it was clear that there was a need for more information on pensions generally and following that meeting Ian Howe, the Pensions Manager, offered to speak to the local WASPI group about pension taxation to expand their knowledge and understanding on the clear understanding that he;

- a) cannot offer any financial advice
- b) is there totally by invite and not to influence or support WASPI in any way.

Ian has also offered to speak to those in the Local Government Pension Scheme who are also affected by the changes. I think this is a practical way in which we can help such women.

Pam Posnett