



**CABINET – 23 MARCH 2021**

**HEALTHY WEIGHT STRATEGY FOR LEICESTERSHIRE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of consultation on the Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire and seek approval of the final Strategy which is appended to the report as Appendix A.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that;
  - a) The outcome of the consultation on the draft Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire be noted;
  - b) The Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire be approved.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

3. The County Council has a statutory duty to take appropriate steps to improve the health of people living in Leicestershire. This includes creating the conditions necessary to support people to achieve a healthy weight.
4. The Leicestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapter on Obesity: Physical Activity, Healthy Weight and Nutrition was published by the County Council in September 2019. This recommended that a Strategy be developed for Leicestershire to tackle obesity and support people to maintain a healthy weight.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Strategy as part of the consultation exercise on the 11 November 2020, as did the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on the 26 November 2020. Both the Committee and Board supported the Strategy and their comments, along with those of other consultees, are set out in Part B of the report.

6. Subject to approval, the new Healthy Weight Strategy will be implemented from the 1 April 2021.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. The Healthy Weight Strategy supports the Council's Revised Strategic Plan 2020-2023 'Working Together for the Benefit of Everyone' regarding Wellbeing Opportunities.
8. It also builds on recommendations within the Leicestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018-2021 Chapter on Obesity: Physical Activity, Healthy Weight and Nutrition, and forms part of the Leicestershire Food Plan which was endorsed by the Cabinet on the 18 December 2018.
9. The aims of the Strategy are also consistent with the UK Government's policy paper published in July 2020 - "Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives" which describes the Government's intentions regarding e.g. nutritional labelling and TV advertising to children.
10. The Cabinet approved the draft Healthy Weight Strategy for consultation at its meeting on 20 October 2020. The consultation exercise took place between 2 November and 31 December, the findings of which are summarised in paragraphs 24 to 33 of the report.

### **Resource Implications**

11. There are no significant additional resource implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Delivery of actions arising from the Strategy will be met by existing budgets and actions taken by partner organisations.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

13. None.

### **Officers to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

14. Nearly two thirds (65%) of adults and a third (30%) of year 6 primary school children living in Leicestershire are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity is more common in socio-economically disadvantaged communities and is associated with many long-term conditions.
15. People who are obese are at a greater risk of developing serious medical problems such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. There is also a strong association between high body mass index and risk of developing severe Covid-19 disease.
16. The economic burden of overweight/obesity is significant across England. The NHS spends £6.1bn per year on obesity-related ill health, local government spends and estimated £0.35bn in social care costs and the cost to the wider UK economy is around £27bn.
17. Obesity is therefore one of the most important modifiable risks factors and so is an essential area to target both in improving the well-being of the population but also to help reduce the financial burden on health and care services.
18. There is considerable evidence that obesity is a complex issue that requires a complex system response, where all sectors work together, with the public, to address it. The Strategy outlines an approach that brings together responsibilities of the private and public sectors and the general public, to tackle obesity and help people maintain a healthy weight. This is Leicestershire's 'whole systems approach'.

### **Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire**

19. The Leicestershire-wide strategy is divided into three themes and 5 objectives and will run over a 5-year period from April 2021.
20. Theme 1 addresses action that tackles the obesogenic environment that residents of Leicestershire live in.

Strategic Objective 1: to improve the availability of healthy and sustainable food and drink in all sectors. For example, promoting the accreditation of food and catering business through 'Food For Life Served Here';

Strategic Objective 2: to support settings to prevent obesity and increase healthy weight across the life course. For example, through the Leicestershire Healthy Schools programme;

21. Theme 2 addresses action that focuses on providing individuals with the information and support they need to manage their own weight and that of their families.

Strategic Objective 3: to co-ordinate a healthy weight pathway including prevention, self-management and supported weight management. For example, increasing uptake of the Leicestershire Weight Management Service.

22. Theme 3 addresses leadership by partner organisations (the NHS, district councils) to ensure that the wider workforce is equipped to promote healthy weight and that policies are conducive to healthy weight.

Strategic Objective 4: develop a workforce that is confident and competent talking about and promoting healthy weight. For example training more professionals in Making Every Contact Count;

Strategic Objective 5: lead partners and stakeholders in developing healthy weight policies using for example the Leicestershire Food plan partnership work.

23. A Whole System approach means that the responsibility for supporting people to maintain a healthy weight sits with partners across local authorities, the NHS, third and independent sectors. By working together they will take action appropriate to their area of responsibility, local environment and population need and reporting to their accountable bodies. For example, implementation of weight management services cuts across local authority and NHS commissioning responsibilities and partners will work together to ensure a coherent weight management pathway is in place.

### **Consultation**

24. An eight-week countywide stakeholder consultation was carried out from 2 November 2020 to 31 December 2020 on the draft Strategy.
25. The consultation questionnaire was available via the County Council's website and paper copies were provided on request. Links to the online questionnaire were shared with key stakeholders including Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Leicestershire Partnership Trust and University Hospitals Leicester, Leicestershire Nutrition Action group, County Council workers groups and service users for the Leicestershire Weight Management Service.
26. In addition, dedicated focus groups were held as follows:
- a. Hindu Ladies group (01/12/2020) – 60 attendees
  - b. Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group (11/12/2020) – 13 attendees
  - c. Jewish Community Group (21/21/2020) – 11 attendees
  - d. Blaby, Oadby and Wigston Locality Learning Disabilities group (13/02/2020) – 4 attendees
27. Meeting presentations were given at:
- a. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11/11/20)
  - b. Leicestershire Health and Wellbeing Board (26/11/20)
  - c. Food and Drink Forum (13/01/2021)

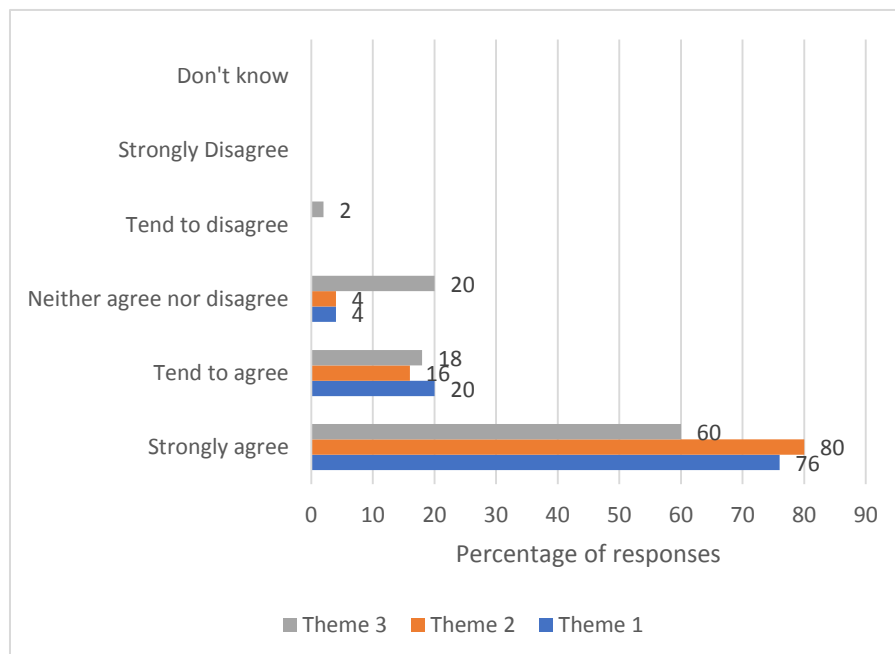
d. Nutrition and Hydration Assurance Committee (24/02/21)

28. Other digital engagement included:

- a. Confers public forum (Leicestershire Weight Management Service Users) (2/12/2020 – 17/1/2021) - 6 responses from 200 weight management service users invited to participate.
- b. Dedicated email address responses (2/11/2020 – 27/12/2020) - 4 responses.
- c. Healthy Weight Strategy Consultation page – 363 page visits with 271 strategy document downloads.

29. Key findings from the 46 people who responded to the online questionnaire were as follows:

- a. Responders were from a range of backgrounds; the largest group were interested members of the public (39%). There were also representatives from schools and local councils.
- b. 71% of responders strongly agreed that there was a need for a Healthy Weight Strategy in Leicestershire.
- c. When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the inclusion of the themes in the Strategy, the responses were as shown below for each of the three themes:



### Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30. Feedback from the County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated broad support for the variety of approaches needed to manage the issue, including working with the commercial sector to ensure people have healthy choices available to them. There was also recognition of

the important role that good mental health plays in maintaining a healthy weight. The Committee was supportive of the prevention approach proposed.

#### Health and Wellbeing Board

31. The County Council's Health and Wellbeing Board also supported the proposed approach, whilst noting that the Strategy would need to take account of the short and long term impacts arising from the coronavirus pandemic, including the difficulties faced by certain groups, particularly carers, to find time to exercise as they took on additional responsibilities. It also welcomed confirmation that a separate piece of work was being undertaken by Leicester-shire and Rutland Sport, in conjunction with local authorities, to develop a Physical Activity Strategy.
32. Feedback from focus groups and meetings with other expert committees again included broad support for the Strategy, with an emphasis on the need to address underlying causes of obesity such as poor mental health, and the need to be culturally sensitive in the provision of services, communication and information provided.
33. As a result of the feedback received, the following amendments to the draft Strategy have been made:
  - Strengthening the importance of supporting people with disabilities to access services;
  - Ensuring planned action is culturally sensitive and adapted to maximise reach and engagement;
  - Acknowledging the role that poor mental health and complex illnesses can have on weight;
  - Ensuring language is non-judgemental and empathetic to the stigma often associated with obesity;
  - Outlining governance arrangements for the strategy;
  - Strengthening the connection between weight and physical activity;
  - Celebrating the role that food plays in society and emphasising the need to focus on the root causes of overweight and obesity in particular.

#### **Conclusion**

34. It is evident that obesity and maintaining a healthy weight is a significant issue both nationally and locally. It has impacts on numerous other health conditions and there is emerging evidence that obesity can increase the risk of dying from Covid-19.

35. The consultation showed a high level of support for the Strategy and the feedback has been reflected in the final document. It is important that the Council works together with partner organisations to tackle obesity and aim for a population with a healthy weight. The appended Strategy sets out agreed priorities and an approach to creating an environment that facilitates healthy choices, supports people to be physically active, to help everyone achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

36. In the course of developing the Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire, an Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) was completed as a way to highlight any issues with equality, barriers to services and ensure protection of human rights. A copy of the assessment is attached to the report as Appendix B.
37. The EHRIA identified some unique groups who may experience barriers in accessing resources and services in relation to healthy weight.
38. This information enabled the County Council to perform a thorough consultation with diverse community groups, the findings of which led to the Strategy being amended in order to help mitigate these challenges. It is expected that the revised Strategy will have a positive impact across the population.
39. There were no adverse impacts on any articles of the Human Rights Act.

### **Background Papers**

40. Report to the Cabinet – 20 October 2020  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5998&Ver=4>
41. Report to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 11 November 2020  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1045&MId=5979&Ver=4>
- Report to the Health and Wellbeing Board – 26 November 2020  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1038&MId=6109&Ver=4>
42. Report to the County Council – 8 July 2020 - Leicestershire County Council's Revised Strategic Plan 2020-23  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MID=6040#A163661>
43. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018:21 Obesity: physical activity, healthy weight and nutrition.  
<https://www.lsr-online.org/uploads/obesity-physical-activity-healthy-weight-andnutrition.pdf?v=1568369427>
44. Leicestershire Good Food Plan and Good Food Leicestershire Charter  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s143186/LCC%20Cabinet%20report%20Leices%20tershire%20Food%20Charter.pdf>
45. Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives – UK Government Policy Paper – Published July 2020  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>

**Appendices**

Appendix A - Healthy Weight Strategy for Leicestershire

Appendix B - Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment