

**REPORT TO:** Environmental Services Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Mike Hill

23 February 2018

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## **Proposal to provide the Centre for Diet and Activity Research with data to monitor the South Cambridgeshire food environment**

### **Purpose**

1. To consider the proposal made by the Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR) to use data held by South Cambridgeshire District Council in order to
  - Observe how food access begins and evolves, including with respect to neighbourhood deprivation, within the emergent town of Northstowe
  - Regularly and systematically monitor the food environment across the district
2. This is not a key decision, but has been brought before the Portfolio holder because the research this will enable will allow the Council to gain a greater understanding of the food environment within the district and has the potential to influence the council's future policies, for example, constraining the number of hot food outlets establishing within the district by regulating Class A5 Hot Food Takeaways through the planning process.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Decision maker approves the regular and systematic caching and sharing of data as requested by CEDAR, with analysis of this data to be made available to support policy development and with built in review periods of 12 month intervals to allow the Council to benefit from the findings as the information is analysed and to approve continued data sharing.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. Given the evidence linking the food environment with health outcomes, the marked increase in hot food outlets in South Cambridgeshire over the last three year period warrants further monitoring and investigation.
5. CEDAR is a UKCRC Centre for Excellence in Public Health Research; sharing our data with CEDAR will enable us to benefit from world class research into our local food environment, and for other LAs to learn from our experiences and lessons learned.
6. The nature of this research requires cached data which can be used to understand both spatial and temporal trends in food access, hard to piece together retrospectively but possible with systematic collection of data held by this Council, as outlined in paragraph 12.
7. CEDAR has agreed to provide updates on data analysis at intervals of 12 months and on request to support policy making.

## Background

8. Emerging evidence suggests that there is an association between neighbourhood access to food outlets and diet, body weight, health and inequalities in these outcomes. Research published by CEDAR has shown greater neighbourhood exposure to takeaway food outlets has been linked with greater consumption of takeaway food, higher body weight and greater likelihood of obesity - based upon a large population study of Cambridgeshire adults (some residing in South Cambs)<sup>1</sup>.
9. CEDAR has created a publically available online Food environment assessment tool (Feat, <http://www.feet-tool.org.uk/>). Feat has shown that South Cambridgeshire ranks as the local authority in England that has experienced the fastest increase in takeaway outlet numbers (up 31%) and in the proportion of all food retail outlets that are takeaways, from 2014 to 2017, albeit from a low baseline. This trend warrants further exploration and consideration, given the known impact on population health and health inequalities. Using South Cambridgeshire DC data, which is more accurate than that included in Feat, will allow such exploration.
10. At present there are no studies that show whether change in neighbourhood food environments is linked to change in health outcomes. Northstowe therefore represents an opportunity to study whether the effect of residential relocation to a new environment can change these outcomes and could be used to help design neighbourhoods conducive to good health in future – of particular relevance as Northstowe is one of ten NHS funded Healthy New Town demonstrator sites.
11. In order to determine whether such an effect operates at Northstowe it will be necessary to develop a detailed monitoring and surveillance framework for the food environment within and around Northstowe.
12. The data CEDAR has requested is as follows:  
Frequency: Weekly; Area: South Cambridgeshire
  - (a) Food outlet data for all related businesses from Environmental Health records, including name, type (MAF code), street address with post code
  - (b) Linked planning use classes for above food outlets
  - (c) Trading hours for the above food outlets
  - (d) Locations of pitches for mobile food vendors and permitted trading hours
  - (e) Food hygiene ratings
  - (f) Licensed premises details, including name and location as described for food outlets above

Frequency: rolling; Area: Northstowe and surrounding area (likely to be contiguous with the footprint of the Care Hub, which will centre on Northstowe, and eventually covering a 50,000 population.

To complement the data above

- New council tax registrations and associated bands; exchanges in council tax payees and bands

Frequency: to be determined; Area: Northstowe and surrounding area

- Household size

## Considerations

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<sup>1</sup> Burgoine T, Forouhi NG, Griffin SJ, Wareham NJ, Monsivais P: Associations between exposure to takeaway food outlets, takeaway food consumption, and body weight in Cambridgeshire, UK: population based, cross sectional study. *BMJ* 2014, 348:1-10.

13. Public Health England has published extensively on the links between health and the food environment, publishing in 2014 [Obesity and the environment: regulating the growth of fast food outlets](#), which includes recommendations for action that can be taken by local authorities. Any future actions taken by this Council would require a thorough understanding of the local food environment; the interpretation of the data shared with CEDAR would provide the necessary foundation stone for future decision making in this respect. The need for this local understanding is underscored in Public Health England's toolkit published in 2017, "[Strategies for Encouraging Healthier "Out of Home" Food Provision](#)".
14. As a result of providing data to CEDAR, South Cambridgeshire would become one of the most intensively studied food environments in the country and could potentially put this Council at the forefront of evidenced based policy making.
15. Although the data requested by CEDAR is publically available, it is difficult to access for researchers on a regular basis. The routine caching and sharing with CEDAR using an agreed format would allow the ready analysis of the information held by the Council across a number of databases by CEDAR researchers – a task that this Council is itself without capacity to undertake.

### **Options**

16. The Portfolio could
  - (a) Approve, the regular and systematic caching and sharing of data as requested by CEDAR, with analysis of this data to be made available to support policy development and with built in review periods of 12 month intervals to allow the Council to benefit from the findings as the information is analysed and to approve continued data sharing,
  - (b) approve the sharing of a sub-set of data outlined in this report, and/or vary the frequency which CEDAR would be required to provide a bulletin describing trends identified in the local food environment,
  - (c) refuse the CEDAR data sharing request giving reasons.

### **Implications**

17. Since this data is already routinely collected and held on record by the Council, little additional officer time would be required in its regular dispatch to CEDAR.

### **Financial**

18. The costs associated with the creation by CIVICA of a bespoke reporting tool to capture Council Tax data of £7k and £3k maintenance fee for two years can be covered by the Northstowe Healthy New Town programme (funded by NHS England).

### **Legal**

19. The data relating to businesses is publically available. Household data made available through Council Tax records will be stripped of identifiers and amalgamated such that individuals and households will not be identifiable in published form. Appropriate steps, through a data sharing agreement with CEDAR, would be taken to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation, should either option (a) or (b) be approved.

### **Staffing**

20. No additional staff resource will be required to export the data to CEDAR.

### **Equality and Diversity**

21. It is known that greater exposure to takeaway food outlets has been linked with greater consumption of takeaway food, higher body weight and greater likelihood of obesity and these associations are stronger among those of lower socioeconomic status. Therefore the food environment has an impact on health inequality and this collaboration will place the Council in a better position to address health inequalities related to the food environment.

### **Consultation responses**

22. South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Policy team:  
Currently the data collected by the planning policy team is focussed on planning permissions and is only available annually. More frequent data from the sources listed, its analysis and resulting recommendations in relation to planning policies would be of interest, as it could be used as evidence to inform the next review of the Local Plan.
23. South Cambridgeshire District Council Licensing team:  
The Licensing Act statement of Policy is reviewed every 5 years with the next review being planned for 2018. As an authority we licence hot food outlets that are open to the public between the hours of 23:00hrs and 05:00hrs. Whilst health is not a licensing objective, health bodies are a responsible authority and may therefore comment on individual applications or contribute to our Licensing statement of policy. The data collection and analysis proposed will be of assistance to officers or responsible authorities in the development of any future policy or individual application.
24. Public Health England, East of England:  
Public Health England supports this project which aims to contribute to healthier communities by understanding the food environment at Northstowe. Increased access to healthy, affordable food for the general population is associated with improved attitudes towards healthy eating and healthier food purchasing behaviour. Access to unhealthier food retail outlets is associated with increased weight status in the general population and increased obesity and unhealthy eating behaviours among children. Reducing obesity levels will save lives as obesity doubles the risk of dying prematurely. Given nearly a third of children in England are overweight or obese, early intervention to support healthy eating and prevent adverse health outcomes in children and adults is crucial.
25. Public Health, Cambridgeshire County Council:  
Public Health as part of the Northstowe Healthy New Town steering group welcomes this initiative with CEDAR and recognises that the concentration of hot food takeaways is a continuing area of concern and extends to health issues, concerning poor diet and obesity, in addition communities raise concerns about the impact on the retail character and economic health of town centres and the adverse impacts on the amenity of residents associated with noise, fumes, parking, litter and anti-social behaviour. While achieving and maintaining calorie balance is a consequence of individual decisions about diet and activity, our environment, and particularly the availability of calorie-rich food makes it much harder for individuals to maintain healthier lifestyles.
26. Nationally a quarter of adults and one fifth of children eat food from out-of-home food outlets at least once a week. These meals tend to be associated with higher energy intake; higher levels of fat, saturated fats, sugar, and salt, and lower levels of micronutrients. School children make purchases from a variety of food outlets in the

school fringe at lunchtime if there is a no “stay on site policy”, and during their journeys to and from school. Popular purchases include confectionery, sugar sweetened drinks, and hot food takeaways. Many outlets have price promotions on these items particularly targeted at children and young people.

27. This research will help shape the policies needed to secure a healthy local food environment and therefore influence human behaviour and lifestyles.

#### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

28. **Aim 1 – Living Well** – Supporting our Communities to remain in good health whilst protecting the national and built environment  
This collaboration will allow us to take evidence based decision in formulating policy to ensure our residents are able to live well in neighbourhoods which support good health.
29. **Aim 2 – An innovative and Dynamic Organisation** – adopting a more business-like approach to ensure we can continue to deliver the best possible services at the lowest possible cost  
This collaboration will allow us, in partnering with a world-class research institute, to understand better the food environment and ultimately help us tackle at source one of the factors influencing the rise in levels of obesity. It will provide us with the evidence base to develop policy at minimal expense to the Council.

#### **Background Papers**

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

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