

Warwickshire Food Together

Delivering the Warwickshire Food Plan
2026 - 2028





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Foreword

by Cllr Mike Bannister (Portfolio Holder for
Resources and Internal Affairs)

Food security is fundamental to people's health, wellbeing, and life chances. When people can reliably access affordable, nutritious food, they are better able to live healthy lives, support their families and participate fully in their communities. When access to food is uncertain, the consequences can be far reaching – affecting physical and mental health, educational outcomes, household resilience, and long term inequality.

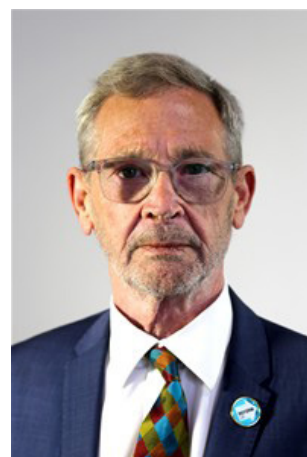
Over recent years, Warwickshire – like the rest of the country – has faced significant pressures driven by rising living costs, changing economic conditions and wider global challenges affecting food systems. These pressures have highlighted both the scale of food insecurity and the importance of a strong, coordinated local response. I am proud of the work already undertaken through the Warwickshire Food Strategy 2023–2026, which has strengthened partnerships, supported communities and helped mitigate the worst impacts for many residents.

This Warwickshire Food Plan 2026–2028 builds on that foundation. It sets out a clear commitment by Warwickshire County Council and its partners to take forward ambitious, practical action to prevent and reduce food insecurity, improve access to healthy and sustainable diets, strengthen local food resilience, and create better food environments across the county. Central to this Plan is a strong focus on prevention, dignity, and equity,

recognising the close links between food, health, and wider social determinants.

Community engagement sits at the heart of this work. Our voluntary, community and faith sector partners, local organisations, food projects, and residents themselves bring knowledge, creativity and lived experience that are essential to delivering meaningful change. This Plan reflects that collective effort and our determination to continue collaborating with communities to design, deliver and evaluate solutions that meet local needs.

As Portfolio Holder for Resources and Internal Affairs, and Chair of the Warwickshire Food Forum, I welcome this Plan and fully support its ambitions. I will remain actively involved in overseeing its delivery and am keen to see strong progress against the priorities and outcomes set out within it. Through continued partnership working, transparency and shared learning, I am confident that together we can make a positive and lasting difference to food security, health, and wellbeing in Warwickshire.



**Councillor Mike
Bannister**

Portfolio Holder
for Resources and
Internal Affairs

Chair of the
Warwickshire Food
Forum



1. Introduction

This Warwickshire Food Plan sets out a clear and ambitious framework for how Warwickshire County Council, alongside statutory, voluntary, community and faith partners, will work together to prevent and reduce food insecurity and improve access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food across the county. The Plan builds on the momentum, achievements and learning from the Warwickshire Food Strategy 2023–2026. Over the past three years, strong partnership working and community-led action have helped deepen our understanding of food insecurity in Warwickshire and how it affects people's health, wellbeing, and opportunities. This Plan draws on that insight, incorporating evidence, lived experience and the voices of residents, community groups, food organisations, and delivery partners who have shaped both the challenges we face and the solutions we need.

Access to healthy food is fundamental to enabling residents to live healthy, fulfilling lives. The sustained availability, affordability and accessibility of nutritious food support child development, family wellbeing, independence in later life and wider population health. This Food Plan places residents at its heart, recognising the importance

of prevention, dignity, choice and food skills, and the role that communities themselves play in shaping resilient and inclusive food systems.

The Plan aligns with Warwickshire's wider strategic ambitions for health and wellbeing, including the Warwickshire Council Plan-Recalibrating Warwickshire 2026-2030, the Warwickshire Health, and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–2031 and the Health in All Policies approach. It is informed by a convincing evidence base, drawing on local and national data, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, the Director of Public Health Annual Reports, and intelligence from partners collaborating directly with residents experiencing food insecurity and the impacts of the cost of living.

The Plan also reflects national guidance on healthy eating and aligns with the ten priority outcomes of the UK Government Food Strategy for England (DEFRA, July 2025). The Plan will maintain strong alignment with the Warwickshire Child Poverty Reduction Strategy throughout its implementation. Many of the factors which contribute to food insecurity, including household income, educational attainment, employment opportunities and health inequalities, are shared priorities across both programmes. Delivery arrangements will therefore seek to maximise opportunities for joint planning, shared learning and coordinated action.



The implementation period for this Plan coincides with a significant period of public service transformation through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Plan has therefore been designed to support continuity of partnership working, community engagement and evidence-led delivery during transition. It provides a shared framework capable of supporting the emerging priorities of both North and South Warwickshire authorities, particularly in relation to prevention, reducing inequalities, strengthening communities, improving health outcomes and supporting inclusive local economic growth.

A defining feature of this Plan is its commitment to community voice and lived experience. At every stage – design, delivery, and review – we will seek to involve residents and stakeholders with direct experience of food insecurity, ensuring that actions are rooted in real needs, culturally appropriate and responsive to the diverse communities across Warwickshire.

Section 2 of this Plan summarises the nature and scale of food insecurity in Warwickshire, set against the wider national context. Section 3 sets out the overall vision, the five strategic priorities, key objectives and supporting actions that together provide a coherent framework for achievement. Section 4 – Making it Happen - describes the role of the Warwickshire Food Forum in overseeing delivery, learning, and accountability.

The Plan recognises that the challenges and opportunities affecting food security are not uniform across Warwickshire. Urban communities may experience higher levels of deprivation and emergency food need, whilst rural communities often face issues relating to access, transport and service availability. The flexible partnership approach set out in this Plan will allow future North and South Warwickshire authorities to respond to local circumstances whilst retaining a shared commitment to food security, healthier diets and community resilience.

The Plan also contributes to Warwickshire's Creating Opportunities agenda by using food as a catalyst for volunteering, skills development, education, social connection and community participation. Food-related activity can help strengthen community resilience whilst creating opportunities for residents to engage more fully in community life.

Together, these elements form a practical, partnership-led Plan that seeks not only to respond to immediate need but to drive long-term, sustainable change – supporting healthier diets, stronger communities, and a more resilient food system for everyone in Warwickshire.



2. The Challenge of Securing Affordable, Nutritional Food

Food Insecurity – the National and Local Context

Food insecurity remains a significant and persistent challenge across the UK. National data and research show that food insecurity is intricately linked to wider structural factors such as income insecurity, housing tenure, employment status, disability, and the cumulative impacts of disadvantage. Households experiencing food insecurity are more likely to skip meals, reduce portion sizes or compromise diet quality, with well evidenced negative consequences for physical and mental health, particularly for children.

Nationally, food prices have risen faster than general inflation in recent years, placing additional pressure on household budgets at a time when many families are already experiencing rising housing, energy, and transport costs. The UK's food system is also shaped by global factors, including international trade arrangements, climate shocks, and geopolitical conflict, which can disrupt supply chains and place further upward pressure on food costs. These national trends set the context within which local authorities must respond, often with limited levers to influence the underlying drivers of food insecurity.

Warwickshire is not immune to these national pressures. As part of a globally and nationally connected food system, the county is affected by the same economic, policy and supply chain challenges seen elsewhere. Local food insecurity in Warwickshire is influenced by factors including income stability, employment, disability, housing

security, educational attainment, and the cost of living. Evidence shared through the Warwickshire Food Forum and academic partners highlights that food insecurity in the county is unevenly distributed. Certain households and communities experience multiple, compounding pressures, while rurality and transport barriers can further exacerbate access challenges. Although strong community and voluntary sector provision has helped to mitigate immediate need, this local response cannot fully offset the scale of national economic pressures influencing access to food.

Food Availability

Food availability in Warwickshire is shaped by reliance on national and global supply chains, combined with local distribution, transport, and retail patterns. Rising food costs, supply disruption, and market pressures can reduce the availability of affordable, more nutritious options, particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods and rural areas. Fluctuations in coordination across food policy domains at national level, does affect how food, health, planning, education, and economic policy interact locally. This can limit the ability of councils and partners to take a whole system approach to food availability. While Warwickshire benefits from a range of community led food projects and emerging opportunities to strengthen local food supply and resilience, these opportunities need to be scaled and better connected to have a meaningful impact on availability at population level.



Food Insecurity and Health

The relationship between food insecurity and health is well established and was strongly reinforced through the evidence presented to partners in Warwickshire. Food insecurity can be both a cause and a consequence of poor health, contributing to dietary inadequacy, long term health conditions, mental ill health and reduced overall wellbeing. It also intersects with wider experiences of insecurity, including unstable housing, insecure employment, exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Research and lived experience insight show that food insecurity rarely exists in isolation. For many households, it is part of a wider pattern of disadvantage that shapes life chances, resilience, and health outcomes. This reinforces the importance of prevention, early intervention, and non food responses alongside food support, including income maximisation, skills development, financial empowerment, and trauma informed approaches.

In Summary

Food insecurity in Warwickshire reflects a complex interplay of national economic pressures, local inequalities, and systemic challenges within the food system. While strong community action and partnership working have helped to reduce harm and improve access, affordability and resilience remain constrained by factors beyond local control. Tackling food insecurity therefore requires a coordinated, whole system response – one that combines immediate support with long term prevention; strengthens local food resilience; embeds health and equity considerations; and places lived experience at the centre of decision making. This Food Plan responds to that challenge by setting out a clear, evidence informed framework for collective action over the period 2026–2028.





3. What We Will Do – Our Vision, Strategic Priorities and Actions

The Vision

Everyone in Warwickshire can reliably access affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food; communities are supported with dignity; and our local food economy is strong, resilient, and sustainable contributing to thriving places and healthier lives.

Our vision aligns with the Government Strategy's core aim for a 'healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient food system,' and reflects the Warwickshire Council Plan's ambition for Warwickshire to be 'safer, healthier and able to thrive' – with a strong emphasis on value for money and prevention. To achieve the vision, we have created five strategic priorities, which are each supported by key objectives and delivery actions.

Strategic Priorities and Supporting Objectives

Strategic Priority 1.

To Prevent and Reduce Food Insecurity in Warwickshire.

Key Objective 1 - To strengthen and increase food insecurity prevention measures leading to a reduction in repeat emergency food access among households engaged in preventative support.

Key Objective - To expand the availability of affordable nutritional food through local projects, pilots, and food schemes.

Actions

- Integrating healthy food support into all Best Start Family Hubs.
- Promote NHS Healthy Start take up by those who are eligible.
- Evaluate and expand local food schemes that increase access to affordable food.
- Introduce rural access pilots – exploring ways to make it easier for people to access affordable food in rural areas where transport is an issue.
- Deliver a two-year programme of Warwickshire Food Together events in communities.
- Set up a new pilot scheme for supporting a cohort of families at substantial risk of food insecurity.



Strategic Priority 2. Healthy and Sustainable Diets for All.

Key Objective 1 - To aim for healthier and more sustainable diets for all, by increasing access to affordable nutritious food, enhancing food skills, and cooking confidence – with a focus on families, young people, older adults, and disabled residents.

Key Objective 2 – To pilot healthy and sustainable food standards in a number of school and early years settings, council venues, and community spaces, normalising more nutritious choices from early life.

Key Objective 3 - To empower communities, including young people, to shape culturally appropriate, inclusive, and sustainable food practices through co production, leadership, and peer influence.

Actions

- Involve and work with social prescribers to build more links with activities and courses that improve food skills and nutrition support - that people can be referred to.
- Explore the options for setting up a countywide food skills capability programme and deliver this.
- Promote schemes and campaigns which increase adult '5-a-day' participation.
- Widen Food for Life Bronze certification take up in schools.
- In addition to Food for Life – consider promoting other school schemes, including Edible Playgrounds
- Expand the Warwickshire Food Champions Scheme – forming local teams of food champions.
- Introduce a pilot Warwickshire Young Food Champions Scheme



Strategic Priority 3.

Improving the local food economy and supply resilience.

Key Objective - Strengthening Warwickshire's local food system, so it is more resilient, sustainable, and better connected, supporting communities through economic uncertainty and supply disruption.

Actions

- Strengthen partnerships with local growers and producers.
- Support community growing, food sharing networks and local food mapping.
- Help to promote food waste reduction across community and organisational settings.
- Review and strengthen the Warwickshire's local food supply system's preparedness for disruption to food supply chains.
- Set up a grant fund to support community – led food projects that increase local resilience.





Strategic Priority 4 .

Establishing improved Good Food Environments (Planning, Procurement and Places)

Key Objective 1 - To strengthen local planning policy and decision-making so that healthier food environments are protected and promoted across all Warwickshire districts/boroughs, including effective management of takeaway density and clustering.

Key Objective 2 – Improving opportunities for residents to easily access consistent, stigma-free food and financial support navigation in everyday community places (libraries, Best Start family hubs and rural/parish settings) helping to improve local access and reducing avoidable escalation to crisis support.

Actions

- Review the process and effectiveness of Healthy Food Environment Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) in all areas.
- Develop a consistent Food & Finances offer for piloting and adoption at libraries and Best Start family hubs.
- Provide a grants process for transport, refrigeration, and storage of food in rural areas.
- Provide free cooking kits to community venues that do not have their own kitchen to stimulate community based local food provision and cooking classes.
- Explore opportunities to embed healthier choices of available food in council venues and at events.

Delivery of this priority will include engagement with Planning, Environmental Health and Trading Standards services to explore opportunities for promoting healthier food environments, supporting responsible food businesses and strengthening consumer confidence in local food systems.



Strategic Priority 5.

Understanding and sharing our progress and learning (data, insight, evaluation, and accountability)

Key Objective 1 - To establish a robust, transparent, and shared evidence base on food insecurity, food outlets and food environments and food systems in Warwickshire, enabling informed decision making, accountability and effective targeting of action.

Key Objective 2 - To embed learning, lived experience and partnership insight into food system decision making, and to ensure continuity of knowledge, relationships and progress through organisational change and reform.

Actions

- Publish a public annual report summarising progress regarding the implementation of the Food Plan.
- Conduct public/community equity impact reviews.
- Strengthen academic partnerships to work on innovative approaches to tackling food insecurity.
- Convene resident voice panels to provide insight based on lived experience and gather feedback on progress of the Food Plan.
- Produce a Food Plan handover pack to support Warwickshire's Local Government Reform (LGR) programme, containing a re-organisation-ready evidence pack (KPIs, case studies, asset maps, partnerships) ahead of restructuring in 2027/2028.
- Explore options, design, build and launch a food security dashboard.



4. Making it happen – The Warwickshire Food Forum and Food Plan Delivery Group

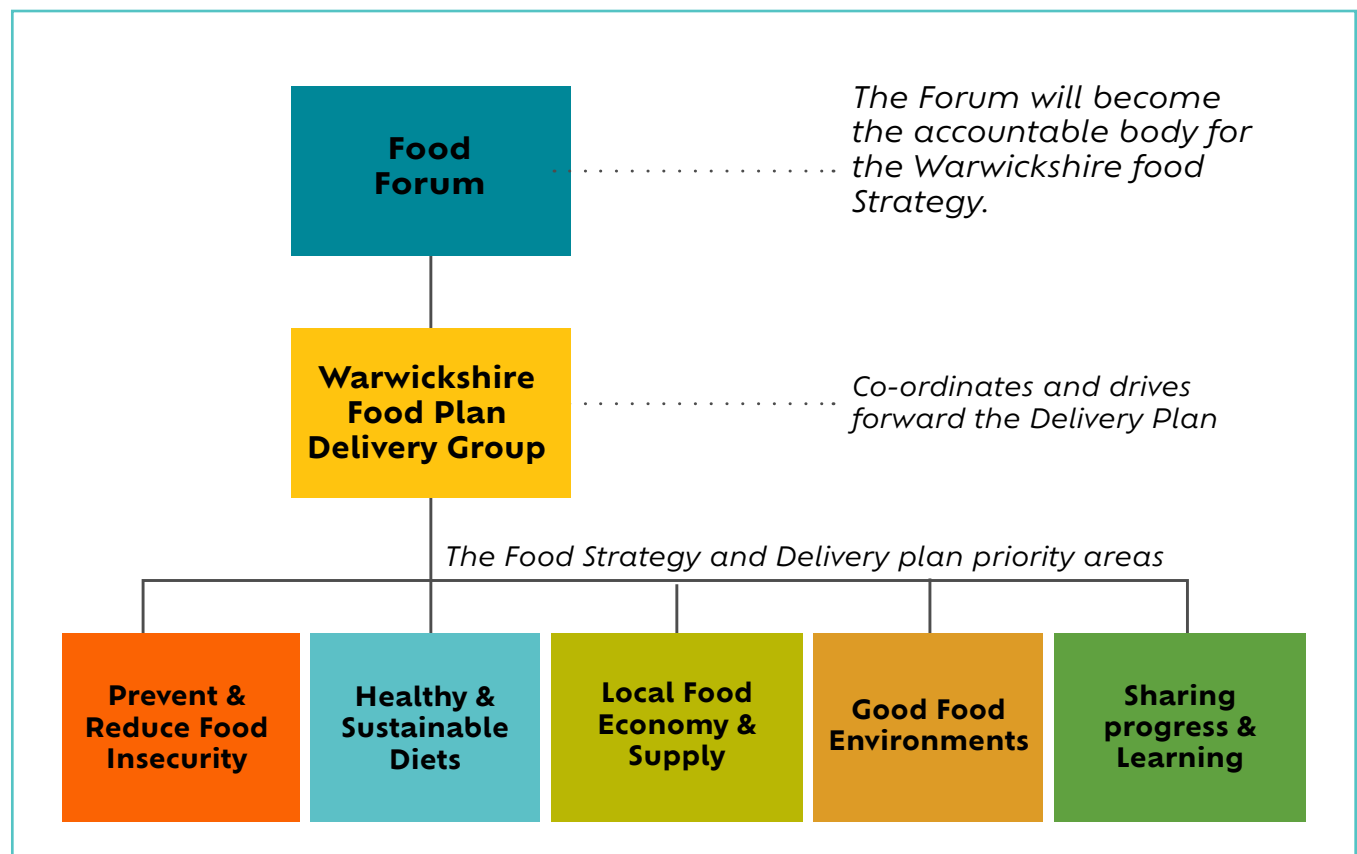
The Warwickshire Food Plan sets the direction for the next two years, but this plan will be constantly reviewed with partners on at least a quarterly basis to ensure it remains relevant and focused. To ensure the vision can be delivered, the plan has identified supporting key objectives and core actions.

These actions will be subject of detailed planning, including the identification of deliverables, milestones and outcome measures which will be monitored, reviewed, and delivered through the Warwickshire Food Plan Delivery Group. This partnership group has been formed to support the development and co-ordination of a

delivery plan across multiple teams and organisations and ensure a dynamic and joined up approach during the two-year period. This approach will strengthen accountability, support partnership ownership and help ensure continuity during Local Government Reorganisation.

Importantly, the Group will include members of the community to help foster continuing co-production and use of lived experience in shaping and delivering our work.

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Importantly, the Group will include members of the community to help foster continuing co-production and use of lived experience in shaping and delivering our work.

We will introduce increased data and intelligence gathering early in the Plan delivery stages to better target and inform our work. The Warwickshire Food Forum will play an essential role and be responsible for the overall monitoring of the delivery of the Food Plan at its quarterly meetings – where it will receive formal reports on progress and provide advice and support.

An annual report will be published to demonstrate progress and share both the learning and good practice that will arise from the delivery of the Food Plan.

Throughout the lifetime of the Plan, the Warwickshire Food Forum and Food Plan Delivery Group will work with emerging successor authorities to ensure that food insecurity, healthy diets and food resilience remain embedded within future strategic priorities and delivery arrangements.
