

Notice of Motion by Councillor Moncur

Support for National Action to tackle obesity

The Council notes that obesity is a major public health concern with the majority of adults in England being overweight or obese and a more than a third of our 10 to 11 years old being overweight or obese.

It is estimated that obesity is responsible for more than 30,000 deaths each year. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of a wide range of diseases including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and many cancers. It also negatively affects quality of life and mental wellbeing.

No one is 'immune' to obesity, but some people are more likely to become overweight or obese than others. Factors of income, social deprivation and ethnicity all have an important impact on the likelihood of person becoming obese. Data from the National Child Measurement Programme shows that obesity levels in the most deprived 10% of children is approximately double that of the least deprived 10%.

Obesity places a huge strain on health and social care as well as having a broader impact on economic development. The estimated annual cost of obesity in England is around £32.5 billion and if no action is taken these costs will increase.

We recognise that the causes of obesity are complex. Environmental, physiological and behavioural factors all interrelate and play their part in influencing the prevalence of obesity. This is why at a local level Sefton has a wide range of activities to tackle obesity. This includes signing up to a Healthy Weight Declaration, providing an integrated healthy lifestyle and wellness programme, having health promoting planning policies and through Active Sefton and our 0 to 19 service working with schools to be health promoting.

However, we feel more needs to be done by national government to support the efforts of local areas and we call upon the Government to lead on three areas of action:

Firstly Implement the Food Revolution actions.

This is a campaign led by the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation and its Australian partners at the Good Foundation. It is committed to inspiring real, meaningful, positive change in the way children access, consume and understand food.

Working with medical experts and professionals Food Revolution has created a six-point plan for action which they believe governments across the world should be working towards as a priority.

We welcome that the UK government has implemented the first action, which is the introduction of a sugary drink tax, but strongly advocate that the government also acts upon the other 5 actions. These are;

1. The introduction of sugar reformulation targets to reduce excessive sugar in all products and have penalties for non-compliance,
2. Introduce fair marketing which would include a ban on food advertising targeted at children and cutting promotion of sugary products,
3. Making clearer labelling mandatory with clear on-pack sugar information, such as traffic light labelling and having restrictions on portion sizes for confectionary and sugary drinks,
4. Improving access to healthy food at schools for all children and prioritise food education in schools and
5. Providing greater education including clear national guides on what nutritious daily meals look like. This would include practical resources for both parents and teachers and better consistency between the classroom and home.

Secondly Tackle Food Poverty

An affordable healthy diet is vital for good health. However, we know many people, due rising food prices, low wages and reductions in benefits, have an insufficient income to buy healthy food. This 'food poverty' trap results in families cutting back on fresh fruit and vegetables and buying cheap, sweet, fatty, salty, or processed foods that need little cooking.

This results in poorer people having worse diets, greater levels of obesity and poorer health. Across the Liverpool City region many families are living in poverty and there is high demand on food banks.

Whilst there is considerable work across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to tackle poverty, illustrated in the commitment set out in The LCR Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy, more needs to be done nationally. We call upon the UK government as the world's sixth largest economy to do more to end food poverty. Food banks should not become a substitute for an effective welfare system and fair work which includes earning a living wage.

Thirdly introduce a fairer and greater obesity focus of the use of sugar levy funding

We welcome the government's sugary drinks levy with the money raised to improve PE and sport for primary-aged pupils to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

The funding is to be allocated directly to primary schools, based on the number of pupils in years 1 to 6. There is no adjustment for deprivation. We believe to make the greatest impact the funding should be weighted to those with greatest health needs. The National Child Measurement Programme figures show it is the areas with greater deprivation which have a comparably higher proportion of children who are obese, compared to areas in the least deprived areas. If the funding was allocated direct to Local Authorities, rather than to individual schools, there would be greater potential to ensure resources were utilised to meet the needs across the local area.

Furthermore as obesity is influenced by both energy expended and energy consumed to tackle obesity we would like to see the criteria for this funding to also

include activities which will help children and families make healthier food and drink choices.

In conclusion we strongly believe that more needs to be done on a national level to address the public health issue of obesity.

This Council therefore calls upon Government to give healthy weight a greater priority by:

- Implementing all of the Food Revolution actions.
- Tackling Food Poverty and
- Having a fairer and greater obesity focus of the use of sugar levy funding including allocation to Local Authorities rather than to individual schools