



30<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Health Equalities Group  
151 Dale Street  
Liverpool, L2 2JH

(Add address)

Re: Metro-Mayoral commitments to the healthy weight agenda

Dear (candidate name)

Food Active is a programme of work commissioned by local authorities across the North West. We take an upstream approach to tackling obesity and related non-communicable diseases across the region.

The impact of food on health is well-evidenced, yet it is still not addressed seriously. Food Active is therefore working to get food and health higher up on the agenda.

In Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Food Active are calling for recognition of the key role food, nutrition and physical activity play in the health and wellbeing of communities and the region's economic capacity. Diet and adequate physical activity are key to helping individuals to achieve healthy weight and ease the burden on the NHS.

We have detailed the areas in which healthy weight fits into the planned areas of responsibility for the Metro-Mayor. We are happy to work with you to develop ideas and policies further.

#### **Health and Social Care**

- Take a population-level approach to promoting healthy weight across the region. Consider a region wide Combined Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight.
- Invest in prevention by encouraging healthier food choices through brief intervention training for front-line staff and by ensuring healthier food provision at NHS provider sites.
- Strive towards nutritious food provision for patients in social care and secondary care settings.

#### **Transport**

- Consideration for residents, especially the elderly and disabled who rely on public transport, and their ability to access affordable, healthy and fresh food.
- To prioritise active transport and promote cycling and walking routes wherever possible.

#### **Housing and Planning**

- Effective planning to ensure walking access to affordable, healthy and fresh food.
- Housing which considers an ageing population and a focus on independent living.
- Restrictions on hot food take-aways in residential areas and in close proximity to schools, including a recognition of saturation levels.
- To ensure all new housing developments have access to healthy and affordable food retailers and green space.



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### **Business Growth and Support**

- A commitment to support local initiatives that provide affordable, healthy and fresh food.
- Consider procurement and specifications for new businesses to promote healthy food and drink provision.

### **Skills, training and work**

- Tackle days lost to diet-related illness absence from work, loss of earnings and benefits attributable to excess weight.

We would welcome your thoughts on your commitment to healthy weight and would be keen to schedule a meeting to discuss how we can assist you in including them as a key theme within your agenda.

Please see accompanying document for supporting information.

Yours sincerely

Food Active

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## **Metro-Mayoral commitments to the healthy weight agenda**

### **Supporting Information**

Food and access to adequate nutrition is vital at all stages of the life course. Poor nutrition can lead to a number of serious diseases which affect quality and length of life. In the UK, the poorer people are, the worse their diet, and the more diet-related diseases they suffer from. This is very apparent in Greater Manchester City Region with some of the highest levels of deprivation across the country. Poor diet is a major contributor to a number of diseases, including cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes and dementia. However it is only in recent years this contribution has been quantified – poor diet is related to 30% of life years lost in early death and disability.

Obesity has the second-largest economic impact on the UK behind smoking, generating an annual loss equivalent to 3 per cent of GDP. The country spends about £6 billion a year on the medical costs of conditions related to being overweight or obese and a further £10 billion on diabetes. Overweight and obesity across Greater Manchester City Region is as high as 24.9% of reception age children and 40.2% of year 6 children (Manchester) and 69.7% of adults (Rochdale).

Together obesity and diabetes cost as much as the UK's combined budget for the police and fire services, law courts and prisons. If current trends are not reversed, the cost of obesity and overweight conditions could increase from between £6 billion and £8 billion in 2015 to between £10 billion and £12 billion in 2030 (McKinsey, 2014).

Experts suggest that the British diet is the “greatest threat” to the health and wellbeing of the public (Food Foundation, 2016) and the Department of Health has estimated that if diets matched national nutritional guidelines 70,000 deaths a year could be prevented with the health benefits valued at £20 billion a year.

In order to achieve government targets on reducing inequalities and priority health areas including cancer, coronary heart disease and older people and children, there must be a change in the ‘food environment’ – that is, accessibility, affordability, culture – in which people live. This is a role not just for public health professionals but for all local government departments, it is important to have food and health considered in all policies, including transport, economic regeneration, planning and environmental health.



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