



Cabinet

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Item

Public



Healthier Weight Strategy for Shropshire

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Communities		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks cabinet approval for the Healthier Weight Strategy for Shropshire which was recently endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Reducing obesity is a key health improvement priority, managing health and care demand and as such, essential to achievement of the Healthy People priority of the Shropshire Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report seeks cabinet approval of the Healthier Weight Strategy (“the Strategy”) for Shropshire 2023 to 2028, attached as appendix 1, which was endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board (“H&WBB”) at its meeting on 16th November 2023. Reducing the prevalence of excess weight across the population is essential to the physical and mental health of Shropshire residents and as such it is a key health improvement priority for both the H&WBB and the Integrated Care System.
- 2.2. Cabinet approval of the Strategy is required because the actions necessary to meet the strategic objectives go beyond the H&WBB’s remit, requiring changes over time in the way in which a wide range council services and functions are delivered.
- 2.3. The Strategy builds on a comprehensive needs assessment that describes the scale of excess weight across Shropshire and its consequences on health. It reviews the best practice evidence base. It also includes the findings of public and stakeholder consultations that document the perceptions, values, challenges, and

opportunities to improve the weight profile of the population from the perspective of those who live and work in Shropshire. The draft Strategy was subject to 10 weeks public and stakeholder consultation which has informed the final strategy, which includes a high level plan outlining the initial priorities for action.

- 2.4. Successful delivery of the Strategy would positively support achievement of each of the Shropshire Plan's key strategic aims, taking a preventative approach to positively impact on the health of the population, the economy, the environment and the health of the organisation and its staff. It is a sustainable approach providing well evidenced high return on investment. Excess body weight – in particular obesity – is associated with significantly increased risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer culminating in reduced life expectancy. It also has a detrimental impact on mental health in part because of the stigma and discrimination associated with obesity. As such, a Healthy Population is unachievable without measures to support Shropshire residents in adopting the lifestyle behaviours required to support achievement of a healthy weight.
- 2.5. Obesity levels have increased exponentially over recent decades because of changes to the environment within in which we live, work and play. Changes to the food environment in particular have exposed the human pre-disposition to weight gain. Without improving access to healthier food choices and opportunities for individuals to be physically active in their day to day lives obesity levels are predicted to further increase with ever more detrimental consequences for the health of future populations.
- 2.6. Given its strong association with poverty obesity impacts disproportionately on more deprived communities, in particular affecting children. Shropshire has both a lower income per capita and a higher prevalence of obesity than the England average. Thus, improving the economic prospects of the population, including through improving access to benefit entitlements, such as free school meals, could impact positively on levels of excess weight across the population. There are other significant inequalities associated with excess weight whereby those with a learning disability, mental illness or a special educational need or disability are at increased risk of obesity and as such required targeted support.
- 2.7. Treating obesity once it has developed has only limited success and as such prevention of excess weight from infancy is essential. Identifying infants and children at risk will enable targeted interventions to be delivered reducing the future disease burden and the significant costs this incurs for both health, social care and the wider economy.
- 2.8. In context of the above the Healthier Weight key strategic priorities are to:
 - Improve the health of Shropshire's population by reducing the scale of excess weight and reducing inequalities in excess weight
 - Improve the environment in which Shropshire residents live so they enjoy a healthier lifestyle
 - Increase actions aimed at preventing excess weight across the life course - focusing on infants, early years, children, and families
 - Increase awareness of and uptake of universal support, available services, and resources - targeting the most vulnerable, including those with learning disabilities, special educational needs and disabilities, and those living with severe mental illness

- Enable Shropshire’s community, voluntary and public sector workforce to confidently and capably support Shropshire residents living with excess weight in a way which reduces stigma and discrimination

2.9. Public Health, Social Care, wider council departments and the NHS need to work together with communities, town and parish councils, voluntary and community groups, schools, employers and other partners to achieve the above priorities through adopting a ‘whole-system approach’. This will include providing individuals with the necessary information and resources to enable them to take responsibility for decisions that affect their health.

2.10. The agreed actions are incorporated into a provisional high-level plan structured under the following delivery themes:

- Delivery theme 1: Healthy environment
- Delivery theme 2: Prevention in early years
- Delivery theme 3: Empowering system partners

2.11. Delivery of the provisional action plan and its impact on population health will be monitored through both the Shropshire Integrated Place Partnership (ShIPP) board and through the H&WBB.

2.12. As the action plan is finalised a more inclusive evaluation framework will be developed that will include both qualitative and quantitative measures. Progress on delivery of the strategy and its impact on population health will be regularly reported to both ShIPP and the H&WBB

3. Recommendations

3.1. Cabinet is asked to:

- Approve adoption and implementation of the Healthier Weight Strategy for Shropshire 2023 to 2028 (Appendix A)

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. There is a risk that, given competing priorities, both for the council and partner organisations, it may be challenging to prioritise all of the actions required to deliver the Healthier Weight Strategy. This can to an extent be offset by a number of opportunities that exist to align delivery of the strategic objectives with other system-wide work programmes.

4.2. Reducing excess weight and addressing inequalities in excess weight are inextricably linked to poverty. Whilst there are local levers to reduce the impacts of poverty on communities, central government policies will have the most significant impact. Government policies may not sufficiently alleviate poverty over the lifetime of this strategy.

- 4.3. Central government hold a number of levers with regard to healthier food and how it is marketed. As such some changes to the food environment are out with local control but they are key to preventing weight gain for future

4.4. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Given competing priorities, both the council and partner organisations may not be able to prioritise healthier weight related actions.	Regular reporting on progress will be made to the H&WBB and to SHiPP; this will note both areas of good performance and areas of challenge, enabling corrective action to be taken. Alignment of key strategic healthier weight objectives with other system-wide programmes will also enable delivery.
Government policies may not alleviate poverty over the lifetime of this Strategy reducing the scope to prevent excess weight and reduce inequalities in excess weight.	Key strategic leaders should use all opportunities and avenues to advocate for the policy changes that will reduce poverty for the population.
Government policies impact on the food environment and as such required changes may not be legislated for over the lifetime of the strategy.	Key strategic leaders should use all opportunities and avenues to advocate for the policies that will support development of a healthier food environment.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. In the long term, preventing obesity and reducing the scale of excess weight in the population will provide significant spending reductions associated with the health and care of people living with obesity-related health conditions, as well as by mitigating the wider socioeconomic impact of unhealthy weight in the population. Collectively this work will help us to reduce demand for costlier health and care services, and support delivery of the MTFs.
- 5.2. In adopting this Strategy, the Council does not commit itself to additional expenditure above those levels already agreed. The strategy will allow further discussions to take place concerning the best use of the scarce resources that this council and its partners have.
- 5.3. Alongside this, opportunities to bid for external funding to support delivery of the Strategy will be considered and appropriate funding bids made during the lifetime of the Strategy.

6.

Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are a number of climate change and carbon reduction co-benefits of interventions which are intended to reduce overweight and obesity in the

population. For example, active travel will help to reduce vehicle-associated carbon emissions and locally produced less processed foods are likely to be both healthier, have a lower carbon footprint and be more resilient to disruption from extreme weather associated with climate change. The strategy is not expected to generate any direct implications for renewable energy generation or carbon offsetting and mitigation.

7. Background

- 7.1. Supporting our population to achieve a healthier weight is a priority for Shropshire as documented in both the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27 and the Integrated Care Strategy for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Achieving a healthier weight profile for the population is central to achieving the 'Healthy People' priority within the Shropshire Plan through reducing the future burden of disease, tackling inequalities, focusing on early intervention, promoting partnership working and through supporting individuals - enabling them to take responsibility for their own and their families health. Beyond this the Healthier Weight strategy also has considerable potential to support achievement of a 'Healthy Economy, a 'Healthy Environment and a 'Healthy Organisation'.
- 7.2. Our basic biology and genetics, whilst contributing to our weight status, have not changed significantly over the last fifty years. However, the environment in which we live has undergone transformational change whereby we are now exposed to an "obesogenic environment" from before birth. This is characterised by calorie-dense and often nutritionally deplete, ultra-processed, cheap, abundantly available convenience food which generally promotes weight gain. Alongside changes to the food environment there are now decreased options for physical activity because of more sedentary work and with built environments less conducive to active travel and active living/recreation.
- 7.3. Excess weight is the normal response to this abnormal environment. Most importantly, when economic stressors are increased, a significant proportion of the population are less able to afford – or afford to cook -fresh and nutritious food. Working in unstable or low-paid jobs compounded by an increase in living costs, presents further challenge to those struggling to maintain a healthy weight.
- 7.4. When excess weight occurs during childhood, it mostly persists into adolescence and adulthood. Excess weight and in particular obesity – is associated with significantly increased risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer culminating in reduced life expectancy for those affected. It also has a detrimental impact on mental health in part because of the stigma and discrimination associated with obesity. The treatment of obesity has limited effectiveness in the longer term at population level and as such, preventing the occurrence of overweight and obesity in the first place is critical. For this reason, the *Healthier Weight Strategy for Shropshire* focuses on preventing unhealthy weight for people of all ages, tackling the broader factors that impact people's health and wellbeing.
- 7.5. The Strategy builds on a comprehensive needs assessment that describes the scale of excess weight across Shropshire and its consequences on health. The findings highlight that unhealthy weight is a significant concern for Shropshire residents. There is evidence that the most socioeconomically deprived groups are disproportionately affected. This is compounded by evidence that the drivers of unhealthy weight in Shropshire include higher than average vulnerability to the

cost-of-living crisis and food insecurity. Engagement feedback highlighted that the abundance of unhealthy food as well as a lack of affordable or easily accessible options for eating healthily or physical activity are serious barriers to healthy living. This is intensified by a general increase in sedentary living and living in a rural county where active travel can be more challenging.

7.6. The draft strategy was developed through detailed discussion with council colleagues and system partners. This was then subject to 10 weeks public and stakeholder consultation with feedback helpfully informing the final strategy, which now includes a high level action plan outlining the initial priorities for action.

7.7. In context of the above the key strategic priorities of the Healthier Weight Strategy are to:

- Improve the health of Shropshire's population by reducing the scale of excess weight and reducing inequalities in excess weight
- Improve the environment in which Shropshire residents live so they enjoy a healthier lifestyle
- Increase actions aimed at preventing excess weight across the life course - focusing on infants, early years, children, and families
- Increase awareness of and uptake of universal support, available services, and resources - targeting the most vulnerable, including those with learning disabilities, special educational needs and disabilities, and those living with severe mental illness
- Enable Shropshire's community, voluntary and public sector workforce to confidently and capably support Shropshire residents living with excess weight in a way which reduces stigma and discrimination

7.8. Public Health, Social Care, wider council departments and the NHS need to work together with communities, town and parish councils, voluntary and community groups, schools, employers and other partners to achieve the above priorities through adopting a 'whole-system approach'. This will include providing individuals with the necessary information and resources to enable them to take responsibility for decisions that affect their health.

7.9. The agreed actions are incorporated into a plan structured under the following delivery themes and objectives:

- **Delivery theme 1: Healthy environment**
 - Enable a food environment for Shropshire which promotes and provides access to healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food for all
 - Support development of a physical environment that allows Shropshire residents to enjoy the benefits of active living
- **Delivery theme 2: Prevention in early years**
 - Ensure there is opportunity for all pregnancies to be healthy
 - Support parents and families to provide infants with the best start in life
- **Delivery theme 3: Empowering system partners**
 - Ensure staff have the knowledge and skills to be confident and competent in promoting healthy weight and in supporting those living with obesity
 - Enable organisations across the system to prioritise healthy eating and active living in their specific settings

- Ensure the system is working together in a co-ordinated way to maximise existing assets, resources, and best practice

7.10. Progress with delivery of the strategy and its impact on population health will be monitored through both the Shropshire Integrated Place Partnership (ShIPP) board and through the H&WBB. The provisional action plan includes a number of metrics such as those routinely reported through the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) that are relevant to excess weight (such as fruit and vegetable consumption or physical activity levels) as well as data reflecting annual estimates of the number of adults and children with excess weight across Shropshire

7.11. As the action plan is finalised a more inclusive evaluation framework will be developed that will include both qualitative and quantitative measures.

8. Commitments for the Council

8.1. Whilst successful delivery of the strategy and action plan will depend on a whole system commitment to action there are particular implications for council commissioned or provided services and wider council functions including the following:

- Planning for both a healthier food and physical environment
- Promoting active travel
- Anti-poverty/economic regeneration activities
- Early years support and services (including promoting healthy early years settings such as nurseries)
- Schools as 'healthy settings' and delivery of the curriculum consistent with promoting healthy lifestyles. Promoting access to free school meals for those eligible
- Social care – early intervention and services/support provided to children and young people, adults (especially those with disabilities) and older people
- Services and support provided to vulnerable groups such as those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, Learning Disability physical disability or mental illness
- Working with partners to improve the local food environment
- Work with employers to create healthy workplaces
- Promoting access to leisure and community services
- The creation of 'healthy settings' through offering healthy eating options and physical activity opportunities in public places/spaces

8.2.1 The development of appropriate plans across the council to meet the objectives of the Healthier Weight Strategy will, in some instances, take time to develop. It is anticipated that it will take ongoing commitment across the council over the 5-year timespan of the strategy to support development of an environment that will enable healthier weight and that prevention efforts can be strengthened in a way that will reduce inequalities in excess weight. Workforce training and development will also be necessary to meet the aims of the strategy especially with regard to maximising the potential for prevention across our more vulnerable communities and reducing weight related stigma and discrimination.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Successful delivery of the Healthier Weight Strategy is essential to achieving the 'Healthier People' priority of the Shropshire Plan. Obesity is a health challenge that particularly affects more deprived communities and disadvantaged groups. It requires early intervention and partnership working to reduce its impact and requires that individuals be enabled to take responsibility for decisions that positively impact on their health. Beyond this reducing obesity will also impact positively in achieving a healthy economy, environment and organisation.
- 9.2. The Healthier Weight Strategy and high-level action plan has been co-produced with council colleagues and wider system partners and requires a whole system approach to delivery. Cabinet approval of the Strategy is required because the actions necessary to meet the strategic objectives go beyond the H&WBB's remit, requiring changes over time in the way in which a wide range of council services and functions are delivered.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Consultation with Local Member – Please consider the Local Member Protocol (see page E60 onwards of part 5 of the Constitution) and determine whether it is necessary to consult with the local member over the proposal set out in this report. This may not always be applicable (eg where the proposal affects all of Shropshire) but it should always be a consideration and in some cases a necessity so as to comply with the spirit of the Protocol.

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix A – Healthier Weight Strategy for Shropshire 2023 – 2028
Appendix B - Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment