

Council agree to examine food on their menus

✖ *Trust in the food we eat*

by Councillor Chas Booth

The council agreed yesterday to Councillor Booth's motion to examine the food being served by the council in all its establishments. The full motion is reproduced below.

Ensuring that we all have trust in the food we eat is essential. And that trust has been shaken over recent weeks with the horsemeat scandal. It is surely only right that when people expect beef to be in their meal, that is exactly what they get. Not lamb, pork or chicken. And certainly not horsemeat.

Professor Hugh Pennington, the renowned bacteriologist, has described the horsemeat scandal as one of 'food fraud'. He's right: something was labelled as something it was not. While there may not have been a significant risk to human health, it is right that people know what they are eating. Many have cultural or religious reasons for avoiding certain foods, and these should be respected. Unless we have accurate food labelling, this respect is missing.

But crucially, in Scotland we have a tremendous good news story to tell about our food. We are world renowned for the quality of our agricultural produce, as well as our drink. Our farmers and producers regularly win praise for the importance they attach to short supply chains, and to supply chain transparency so consumers know what they are eating, and can often tell which farm it was produced on.

Meanwhile the farmers market system and the proliferation of

vegetable box schemes show that there is a real market for food which is delivered straight from farm to fork. If consumers have the chance to meet the farmer or producer who nurtured the land in order to produce the food they eat, they will have more confidence in that food.

☒ So I'm delighted that Edinburgh Council yesterday agreed to support my motion for a limited inquiry to ensure that consumers at council-run institutions can have faith in the food they eat. I'm delighted also that the council will look into expanding the current Food for Life pilot which seeks to increase the use of fresh, local and organic food in partnership with NHS Lothian and the University of Edinburgh. By making that commitment today, I hope Edinburgh residents can have some of the trust they may have lost in their food restored.

The motion to council was as follows:-

1. "Council:

1. 1) *notes concerns about food sourcing and transparency of the food supply chain in light of the recent horse meat scandal;*
2. 2) *agrees that locally sourced food and short supply chains can help give consumers confidence in the food they eat;*
3. 3) *agrees to receive a report setting out:*
 1. a) *what steps the council is taking to ensure that food provided by the council or used in council establishments meets all the standards of food sourcing and food supply chain transparency that the public and service users would reasonably expect; and*
 2. b) *what measures could be taken to accelerate and expand the current Food for*

Life pilot which is seeking to increase the use of fresh, local and organic food in partnership with NHS Lothian and the University of Edinburgh."

Councillor Chas Booth is the Green councillor for Leith and Green Party spokesperson on the environment at The City of Edinburgh Council.