

**Gloucestershire Food Vision Speech in the presence of HRH Princess Anne by Rob Rees MBE**

Your Royal Highness, distinguished guests. I stand here before you tonight as someone who only two years ago delivered a speech at this very event that called many of you into action on issues around food. I put my head above the parapet challenging many of our local decision makers to start to do something that could help to defuse the obesity time bomb, that could improve the delivery of skills in the county, that could minimise our chances of becoming part of the 5 million cases of Food Poisoning each year and that could provide all those involved in the food economy – hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers, producers, manufacturers, enforcement officers with the tools as business to continue to flourish, contribute to the economy of Gloucestershire, and to full fill their potential.

I am pleased to say that my remarks did not fall upon deaf ears. It off course sparked debate...to put it mildly. Tonight though I am delighted thanks to the support of Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire 1<sup>st</sup>, the ownership of the Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership and the “buy in” of so many of the counties public, private and voluntary sectors that I am able to celebrate with you in full the developments of Gloucestershire’s Food Vision.

The Food Vision will secure in the long term the delivery of healthier, safer and more affordable food to meet the needs of everyone living and visiting Gloucestershire. This will require better information, integration of organisations as they take decisions and spend money and the strong involvement of consumers in decision-making around food.

The Gloucestershire Food Vision is the first of its kind and is already being shared with officials across the South West, London and the EU. The Food Vision is really getting Gloucestershire noticed.

Let me stress to you though the Food Vision is NOT solely about “local food” in terms of an ingredient but Local food in terms of wider policy. Such as Corporate Decision Making, NHS Agendas, Procurement programmes, Microbiological Research and improvements, skills, environmental best practice and off course wider food education.

It places food centre stage within the County’s cultural development.

Gloucestershire Food Vision is about people valuing food within the County.

It will lead to improvements in areas of health, education, availability, production and safety.

The vision is built around some key policy aims, each with specific objectives and actions behind them. These key policy aims are:

- ✚ Establish Gloucestershire as a Food Action Zone
- ✚ Establish an informed Gloucestershire community in relation to healthier, safe and affordable food
- ✚ Expand and enhance efficiency within food buying networks and improve the standards and choice of the food available
- ✚ Reduce the incidence of food-borne disease
- ✚ Reduce the levels of food related health conditions
- ✚ Raise the profile and value of careers in the food chain

## ✚ Secure the long-term profitability of food-related business in Gloucestershire

This doesn't mean an evangelical creation of a county all eating home grown organic products overnight but a gradual sequential step towards a healthy Gloucestershire within the context of our own incomes. Every one of us could do something tomorrow that will help drive forward the Food Vision and improve Gloucestershire's position in the "league tables of health".

By eating your 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day you will reduce your chances of having diet related cancer or heart disease by at least 20 %. It doesn't have to be fresh either – frozen, tinned, dried and juice all count! Tomorrow just try one more.

The Vision is changing how we position, celebrate and value food by understanding and caring for its production, distribution and presentation. The Vision is working to change attitudes positively towards food to influence future strategic, policy and business decisions in Gloucestershire. The position and value of food can provide part of the answer for long-term improvements in health, social, environmental and economic well-being.

The Vision is the first of its kind anywhere in the UK, one of the most influential and innovative concepts ever seen. It offers leadership and accountability to all food-related issues. It promises to place people first in its policies and actions. It offers guidance, empowerment, decision-making and monitoring of delivery.

Consumers will see and be able to take part in a cultural food and lifestyle shift that will enrich themselves and the community in which they live. The Vision will work to improve our health and food safety whilst establishing better choice. It will maintain and improve our areas of work, rest and play, whilst creating a relationship of trust and understanding of food.

Gloucestershire Food Vision takes into account a wide policy framework and the changing needs and demands of consumers and society. These external issues and the needs of the people of Gloucestershire are brought together in an innovative concept taking food as the key component of the community development strategy.

Already a number of key programmes are underway to help us achieve the Vision. Gloucestershire was one of the most highly funded counties in the UK by the Food Standards Agency to develop Safer Food Better Business – something that will start to protect you better from food poisoning when you consume food outside the home. This is great partnership work with Trading Standards Officers and EHO's – perhaps still two under resourced parts of Gloucestershire's Food Economy – and yet fundamentally key at protecting us all.

The Learning and Skills Council are funding a business development course for Chefs that integrates the values of the Food Vision, Craft Skills as well as bringing together working industry and college partnerships. Chef Excellence will be coming to a restaurant near you in the New Year so watch this space.

With Camden Food Research in our county we are privileged to have access to in my view the worlds leading and cutting edge research centre on food. The Food Vision will strive to build upon our current relationship as we secure funding for work that will help our businesses develop.

The links with Food and Tourism continue to go from strength to strength. The hardworking and dedicated teams at Shire Hall Economic Development Team work endlessly to promote these two assets in harmony. The county has strong links with Visit Britain (the UK's marketing organisation for Tourism), and Food From Britain. Japan remains a large and as yet relatively untapped market for food export. Other countries such as the USA, Europe, China and Australia are all also hungry for our county brands. Products such as Bottle green, Free Miner Beer, Columbine Cakes, Kitchen Garden Foods, Cotswold Meringues, Godsell's Cheese and many more, can be found around the world. The reputations of these companies, though, are not just based on the fact that it comes from our living beautiful landscapes. That is not enough anymore in the global context. These products offer extra added value in terms of safety, quality and in many cases health – via reduced sugar, fats and salt.

Many other smaller projects and initiatives are also underway but unlike the past are now beginning to progress in a more structured, co-ordinated and guided way that moves towards the achievement of Gloucestershire's Food Vision.

I want to end on two areas that are clearly linked. Firstly I wish to update you all on National Policy on School Meals – as someone now responsible for 25,000 school kitchens serving 6 millions lunches per day and secondly I wish to make reference to corporate responsibility policies.

School Meals are changing. In September new standards come into force that will ensure the food on the plate is off a good wholesome quality. The pressure is now on to overcome parent perceptions around school food, to guarantee the new standards are met and met consistently in every one of our schools. That will mean increasing demand to make the new standards affordable, to provide school communities with skills to solve problems distinct to them and continue to lobby for the life skill of cooking to be taught within our school life. In Gloucestershire with the assistance of Food Vision we are guiding a strategy that will mean the 307 schools in Gloucestershire value better food as part of a delivery of better education.

Kraft Foods in Cheltenham in recent years have made a substantial contribution to assisting in the transformation of food and health in our school communities. As part of their Corporate Strategy they have guided over 1/3 of the counties schools in improvements around cooking food, growing food, active play and the importance of breakfast. Their support has been paramount in helping the county achieve National Public sector targets. We could argue, should that be the role of business? ... Perhaps it shouldn't.

However – each person in this room is in a position of authority – otherwise you wouldn't be here. Food Vision needs you to reflect upon your corporate responsibility in areas around food. That may mean how you look after your staff, where you may contribute funds or volunteer staff, how or what you procure – the scope is massive.

The Food Vision is a long haul. Great strides have been taken in the last two years for our county and many more lay ahead. We can't afford to ignore the threats that poor diet and lifestyles create anymore.

Thank you for your time, have a good evening and please be part of the Food Vision.