

CABINET	Paper No. 7(1)
Meeting date: 11 May 2010	
From: Cabinet Members for Children's Services Corporate Director – Children's Services	

FREE SCHOOL MEALS PILOT

PART A - RECOMMENDATION OF CABINET MEMBER

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper is for the final approval of the Free School Meals Pilot in primary schools in Workington and Millom, having been to Scrutiny, Task and Finish Group.

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Provision of school meals links to healthy eating indicators. Schools have a statutory duty to improve the 'well-being' of children and to provide a meal on request that meets the statutory nutritional content. Local authorities have a parallel duty to improve the well-being of children in their area. The initiative will also contribute to the Council's anti-poverty strategy.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 *That Cabinet gives approval for the Free School Meals Pilot having completed the consultation with affected schools and has been examined and challenged by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Sub Group.*

Duncan Fairbairn and Anne Burns, Cabinet members for Children's Services

PART B – ADVICE OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN'S SERVICES

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A paper was presented to Cabinet on 30 March 2010 that sought principled agreement to consult with the affected schools and for the Children and Young Persons Scrutiny Advisory Board to examine and challenge the pilot.
- 4.2 A consultation event with the primary school head teachers was held on 25 March 2010. The event was well attended. The group established practicalities that needed to be addressed, identified the learning objectives and identified other factors that would impact on ensuring effective learning from the pilot was achieved including activities pre, during and post the pilot to measure both impact and parent and children's attitudes and perceptions to both healthy living and the contribution of school meals. The indicators for the impact on learning and behaviour in school were also identified.
- 4.3 The Schools Forum Budget Working Group met on 26th April and was asked for its view on the proposal and to highlight any concerns or reservations. The Group stated that this was in principle a very good scheme, but also expressed a number of concerns about the pilot including the fact that the pilot covered only a small number of schools and that the funding would be used only for that group in a time of public spending pressures. The Group was reassured that, as the matched funding was being found from funds that are not currently allocated to schools, there would be no reductions in individual school budgets. The LA was also asked to consider whether to use this funding for small pieces of equipment and/or nutritional analysis software at other schools.
- 4.4 There was also concern about any exit strategy and the impact on parents and children when the one-year pilot ended.
- 4.5 The Working Group also expressed and reservations about what the pilot would lead to at a much wider level.
- 4.6 The role of the Forum is to "give a view" on the allocation of grants and arrangements for Free School Meals. It does not have decision-making powers and therefore the Working Group felt that it wanted to highlight its reservations rather than giving support to the proposal.
- 4.7 Should Cabinet agree to the pilot, the LA will seek to address the concerns expressed at the Forum Working Group and ensure further engagement as the process develops. It will also report on the findings of the pilot and any decisions taken by central government once the outcomes have been analysed.
- 4.8 The pilot went to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the 20 April 2010. The groups were given a brief of the pilot and the objectives Cumbria County Council want to achieve in addition to the Department of Children, Schools and Families evaluation. A constructive challenge and debate took place, concerns and observations were noted by the relevant officers.
- 4.9 A significant concern of the Task and Finish group was the County Council financial contribution and if this would have any negative impact on other

schools in the county. The financing was outlined in detail and can be found in this report under the financial implementation section 6. It was clear that the funding was not taking money away from other school but was utilising part of the grant that the local authority uses each year for projects and developments.

4.10 The recommendation of the Task and Finish Group

1. The Task and Finish Group be kept informed on a regular basis (through the Scrutiny Officer) as to the progress being made in the Free School Meals pilot.
2. The Task and Finish Group visit a number of schools when the pilot is underway to determine the impact it is having on the whole school community.

5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 Cabinet approves the Free School Meals Pilot.
- 5.2 Cabinet does not approve the Free School Meals Pilot.

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Matched funding of £490k would be required to attract the additional grant. This will be made available from within the Schools Budget and by use of the School Lunch Grant. This grant amount in 2010-11 is £722k, of which £424k has been ear marked for allocation direct to schools, leaving £298k for the Pilot. The remaining £192k would be found from within the Schools Budget. This grant has been used in the past to buy small pieces of kitchen equipment and to pay for the nutrient analysis software required to assess whether a menu meets the nutrient based school lunch standards and the expertise to operate the software. The School Lunch Grant has been allocated to local authorities to help 'manage the direct costs of providing school lunch'. A copy of the grant conditions is attached at Appendix 3.
- 6.2 Funding from the grant will not take any money currently allocated to schools across Cumbria as it is the part of the grant the local authority has spent centrally in the past for individual projects.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed pilot scheme accords with the Authority's relevant powers and duties and in particular the duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 which provided that a local education authority shall make arrangements for ensuring that functions conferred on them are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Free School Meals Pilot offers an opportunity to explore how to improve the take up of free school meals in Cumbria at the same time as impacting on wider outcomes for children. The grant available will prove substantial support to promote this and to contribute to work in the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The constructive and helpful challenges and contributions of both the school engagement and from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group will ensure even greater learning applications are secured within the pilot and after.

Moira Swann
Corporate Director Children's Services

28 April 2010

APPENDICES

No appendices

Electoral Division(s): *

** Please remove whichever option is not applicable*

Executive Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny? If so, give details below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

N.B. If an executive decision is made, then a decision cannot be implemented until the expiry of the eighth working day after the date of the meeting – unless the decision is urgent and exempt from call-in and the Head of Member Services and Scrutiny has obtained the necessary approvals.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS
[including Local Committees]

Cabinet 30 March 2010

CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Considered by Children and Young People Scrutiny Advisory Board Task and Finish Group on 30 March 2010 – see report elsewhere on this agenda.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers

RESPONSIBLE CABINET MEMBER

Anne Burns and Duncan Fairbairn

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