

**23 April 2014****Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, TRANSPORT, PROPERTY &  
ENVIRONMENT****THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PLAN****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides information to the Committee on the recent development and introduction of the National School Food Plan and the actions required to deliver the Plan in Nottinghamshire.

**Information and Advice**

2. The Environment and Resources Department provides a school meals service to a number of primary and secondary schools and academies across the County. 94% of primary schools and academies and 56% of secondary schools and academies buy back their catering service from the County Council.
3. A number of schools and academies have chosen to either manage the catering services directly themselves (27) or procure an arrangement with a private sector catering provider (5).
4. The responsibility for the delivery of the National School Food Plan sits with schools. However, with NCC being the largest catering provider, the schools catering team will have a major role in supporting schools to support the implementation of the National School Food Plan.

**Background**

5. Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent, founders of the LEON restaurant chain, were appointed by the Secretary of State for Education in 2012 to look at the issues and concerns that had been raised nationally over a number of years in respect of school food. Their findings identified that the quality of food had improved enormously since Jamie Oliver's intervention in 2005 and there was clear and measurable improvements in the nutritional quality of most food and a reduction in the sale of "junk" food. It should be noted that the nutritional standards for school meals introduced in 2010 are based around compliance with minimum and maximums allowed across 15 nutrients balanced over a 15 day (3 week) cycle.

6. The School Food Plan by Messrs Dimbleby and Vincent also concluded that the best schools incorporate food education, such as cooking, growing vegetables and even animal husbandry, into their curriculum and also those that promote the service are able to achieve a financially viable operation.
7. The report referred to above recommends the following key actions in order to improve school meals:
  - incorporating cooking into the curriculum for Key Stages 1 to 3
  - training head teachers in food and nutrition
  - replace the existing nutritional food standards with a food based standards approach
  - Public Health England to promote policies which improve children's diets in schools
  - Ofsted inspectors to consider the way a school promotes healthy lifestyles
  - ensure small schools are fairly funded in the provision of school food
  - increase meal take up in junior and secondary schools
  - set up financially sufficient breakfast clubs
  - develop a website to share best practice
  - improve the image of school food
  - improve the skills of the school food workforce
  - introduce Universal Free School Meals to all Key Stage 1 pupils from 1 September 2014.

## **Nottinghamshire County Council Challenges**

### **Universal Free School Meals for Key Stage 1 pupils**

8. The impact of this initiative in Nottinghamshire is extremely significant. Although meal numbers served have increased over the past five years, the overall take up in primary schools is currently 45%. This includes both paid and free meal numbers measured against a total on roll figure. Currently free meals take up is approximately 80% against the entitlement. It should be noted this assumes an average for the year and that every pupil attends school every day. Based on an estimated 85% take-up by pupils in Key Stage 1, this will result in an additional 10,000 to 12,000 extra meals per day which equates to an overall take up of 75% in primary schools after the introduction of Universal Free School Meals.
9. Assessment consultations have now taken place with schools and the common concerns raised are lack of available dining space, adequacy of equipment, increased costs of lunchtime supervision, extra furniture requirements and possible changes to school timetables to allow for two sittings.
10. Installing additional equipment has an impact on the gas or electricity supply, changes in kitchen ventilation systems and potential asbestos removal, all of which is extremely costly.
11. Whilst the priority will be to increase the working hours of current staff there will be a requirement to recruit and train an additional 50 full time equivalent workforce to cater for increased take up in school meal numbers.

12. Nottinghamshire's capital funding allowance is £1.7m; this is available to support the additional infrastructure requirements and excludes funding available separately for voluntary aided and academy schools. First year revenue funding allocations have been announced by the Government at £2.30 a meal, representing the national average cost of providing a school meal. This allowance is expected to cover the average school meal prices as well as incidental expenditure such as cutlery, seating and other associated costs.
13. A number of projects have been initially identified based on existing kitchen capacity and projected increase in meal number. However, these exceed the capital available therefore detailed studies are underway to produce a priority list for those schools where no other alternatives other than to carry out building work are possible. Whilst a principle of delivering a service from self-sufficient individual kitchens is by far the long term financially and customer preferred option, this unlikely to be achievable within the timescale requirements of service delivery i.e. 1 September 2014.
14. Maintained schools with a self-managed service have been contacted to request information on their potential requirements so that these can be considered against the same criteria being developed to prioritise the capital allocation.

## **Capital Funding**

15. The Committee should note that whilst the provision of free school meals for Key Stage 1 pupils will result in a welcome increase in take up levels, a significant number of school kitchens will not be able to accommodate the increased demand due to their size. In some schools there are no school kitchens, and there is little or no room for extension. Capacity is also constrained by the size of school halls/dining areas and kitchen equipment.
16. The amount of capital funding provided by the Government for infrastructure improvements is limited and will not therefore be sufficient to create the extra capacity required in every school which has a significant increase in meal numbers. As the school meals service is delivered under the remit of the Personnel Committee, the proposed expenditure has been allocated against the 2014/15 Personnel Capital Programme; however Members of the Children and Young People's Committee should be aware of the allocation proposals as set out below.
17. It is proposed to adopt the following principles for the allocation of the funding for infrastructure improvements:
  - i. All Nottinghamshire schools (with the exception of voluntary aided schools and academies) will be eligible for funding support where it is deemed essential to meet the increased demand.
  - ii. Wherever appropriate and possible, agreement will be reached with schools for a separate dining session for Key Stage 1 pupils to accommodate increased take up.
  - iii. Extension of kitchens or school halls will only be considered when other viable options have been voted out on grounds of cost, viability and timing.

iv. Highest priority will be to allow school kitchens to remain self-sufficient in producing meals by investing in new kitchen equipment/layout subject to the project feasibility assessment.

18. Additional options being considered are equipping existing primary school kitchens currently working under capacity to provide meals for other schools and working with County Enterprise Foods to produce easily transportable bulk food items thereby reducing kitchen production requirements. The service will also be discussing requirement with suppliers to increase number of food deliveries to reduce the impact on existing storage facilities particularly in relation to fridges and freezers.

### **Other Food Plan Action Requirements**

19. The change from meeting the 15 nutrition requirements based food provision to a food based standard approach will not impact on the existing menu provision and existing food provision will comply.
20. Support is currently provided by the schools catering service to schools delivering curriculum based cooking activities to pupils as and when required.
21. Announcements are due shortly on the successful tenderers engaged in delivering the promotional initiative for increasing take-up in junior and secondary schools. Nottinghamshire has indicated an expression of interest in supporting two of the potential consortium bids currently being considered.
22. The Committee should also be aware that as all Key Stage 1 pupils will be entitled to free school meals, schools are concerned that parents of pupils entitled to a free meal will no longer register, thereby impacting on the school premium funding they receive. It will therefore be important to continue to raise awareness and support a registration process in order to safeguard existing funding streams to schools.

### **Conclusion**

23. Delivering the National School Food Plan represents a significant and unprecedented challenge to the schools catering service. Colleagues from CFCS and Property Services are engaged in the preliminary planning process and will assist in ensuring its successful delivery.

### **Other Options Considered**

24. None.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

25. With 94% of primary schools obtaining their catering service from the County Council, the service has a key role in supporting schools with the delivery of the infrastructure required by the National School Food Plan.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That the information on the recent development and introduction of the National School Food Plan and the actions required to deliver the Plan in Nottinghamshire be noted.

**Jas Hundal**

**Service Director, Transport, Property and Environment**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Kevin McKay  
Group Manager, Catering & Facilities Management  
T: 0115 977 4369  
E: kevin.mckay@nottsc.gov.uk

Helen Fifoot  
Team Manager, Schools Catering  
T: 01623 434171  
E: helen.fifoot@nottsc.gov.uk

## **Constitutional Comments**

27. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (TMR 24/02/2014)**

28. The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

The School Food Plan [www.schoolfoodplan.com](http://www.schoolfoodplan.com)

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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