

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education Culture and Sport</b>
DATE	<b>24 November 2009</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Annette Bruton</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Free School Meals (Lunches) - Increased Entitlement 2010</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/09/056</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report to provide the Committee with:

- (i) A report on the increase in numbers of children and young people receiving free school meals as a result of the changes to entitlement introduced in August 2009;
- (ii) Background information about the Concordat commitment to provide a free school meal to all Primary 1 - 3 pupils, whose parents request it, from August 2010;
- (iii) Information about the projected additional revenue costs associated with meeting the Concordat commitment to enable members to decide if they wish the authority to implement free school meals to all Primary 1 - 3 pupils from August 2010.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee:

- (i) Consider and, if appropriate, agree to the policy of delivering free school meals to all Primary 1-3 children, whose parents request it, from August 2010, subject to budget approval;
- (ii) If the Committee agree to implement the policy, remit this report to Finance and Resources Committee (10 December 2009) to enable them to consider and, if appropriate, approve the projected increase in costs on the basis that 58% of P1 - P3 children take up the offer of a free lunch of £1,372,000 in 2010/11 (part year) and £2,106,000 in 2011/12 (full year); and
- (iii) Request that officers monitor the uptake and if necessary advise Education, Culture and Sport Committee of any significant changes to the projected increase in revenue costs by December 2010.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The local authority submitted estimated projected capital and revenue costs to COSLA and the Scottish Government in January 2009 and more detailed costs at the end of May 2009.

- 3.2 As a result of the changes to entitlement in August 2009, at mid September figures suggest that 120 primary pupils and 146 secondary additional children and young people have registered for and have taken up the free school meals entitlement. These figures are significantly lower than originally projected. Further work will be done to ensure schools continue to advise parents of the value of the free school meal and encourage families to register. The increase in revenue costs have been absorbed in the Education, Culture and Sport budget.
- 3.3 An internal assessment of current school catering capacity, which included: examining dining hall space; current school meals uptake; packed lunch arrangements; and assessing the uptake of free school meals was completed by Facilities Management in February 2009. The catering service will be able to cater for the projected increase in uptake and where schools do not have an onsite kitchen, meals will be transported. It should be noted that the school meals will be subject to the outcome of a full review of all catering services which may contain recommendations for school catering services.
- 3.4 A sample survey of 4 primary schools undertaken to assess the implementation issues for schools suggests that some schools would struggle to support very young children to eat their two course meal in the time available if all families take up the free meal offer. In addition, some schools have indicated that they will require additional support staff to manage the lunchtime arrangements. The costs associated with the increase in catering and school support staff, have been included in the projected revenue costs.
- 3.5 The projected revenue increase to meet the Concordat P1 - P3 free meal commitment from August 2010 if all pupils take up the offer in 2010/11 is £1,560,000 (part year) and in 2011/12 £2,403,000 (full year).

**Table 1 Projected Costs if all P1/P3 pupils take up the free meal offer.**

<b>Revenue Increase</b>	<b>Part year 2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>
Equipment	10,000	10,000
Marketing	5,000	5,000
Refurbishments		
Transport	10,000	12,000
Catering Staff/Labour	100,000	150,000
PSA staff	72,000	103,000
Food	440,000	695,000
Loss of Income	918,000	1,423,000
Training/Evaluation	5,000	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,560,000</b>	<b>£2,403,000</b>

- 3.6 The national evaluation of the Free School Meals Trial for P1- P3 pupils report suggested that the increase in uptake of free school meals in this age group increased overall from 53% to 75%. Among the target group not registered for free school meals the uptake increased from 41% to 69% and amongst those previously registered uptake increased from 89.2% to 93.6%.

- 3.7 If we assume therefore for budgeting purposes that 25% of children will continue to have packed lunches or go home 17% of primary pupils are already entitled to free school meals therefore 58% of the P1-P3 pupil population may take up the free school offer. Therefore the projected increase in costs may be limited to £1,372,000 in 2010/11 (part year) and £2,106,000 in 2011/12 (full year).

**Table 2 Projected Increase in FSM Costs if 58% of P1/P3 pupils take up the free meal offer.**

<b>Revenue Increase</b>	<b>Part year 2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>
Equipment	10,000	10,000
Marketing	5,000	5,000
Refurbishments		
Transport	7,000	10,000
Catering Staff/Labour	100,000	150,000
PSA staff	72,000	103,000
Food	255,000	400,000
Loss of Income	918,000	1,423,000
Training/Evaluation	5,000	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,372,000</b>	<b>£2,106,000</b>

#### **4 SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 4.1 This report links to the two Concordat commitments to extend the provision of free school meals to a wider group of families. The commitment to extend the entitlement to all primary and secondary pupils in receipt of Working Tax Credit took effect from August 2009. Legislation to allow local authorities to extend its free school meals service to all Primary 1 - 3 pupils from August 2010 was passed in December 2008. The report also relates to the Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking policy commitment to deliver free school meals to all primary pupils.
- 4.2 The intention of extending free school meal to a wider group of children is to improve children's health, their readiness to learn and to contribute to eradicating child poverty. If Committee agree to increasing the number of P1-P3 pupils receiving a free school meal there should be a positive impact on all children and families but particularly on those who are economically disadvantaged. This report links to the Anti Poverty Strategy approved at Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

#### **5 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Implementing the increase in free school meals will have an impact on school catering accommodation and capacity therefore there will be some property issues to be resolved on a school by school basis. There may be a need to stagger lunchtimes in some schools in order to serve meals to more children and this may have an associated impact on school timetabling. The proposal will also have an impact on catering and other school staffing levels.

## **6 REPORT**

### **6.1 Background**

- 6.1.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Scotland Act 2007 to provide free school meals to all eligible in primary, secondary and special schools in the city. From August 2009 pupils became entitled to free school meals if their families received Income Support; Income-based Jobseekers Allowance; Child Tax Credit where no award of Working Tax Credit has been made and their annual income is less than £16,040; both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit with an income below the threshold for receipt of Working Tax Credit set by the UK Government currently at £6,420. Young people aged between 16 and 18, at school and receiving the above benefits, in their own right, are also able to claim free school meals. Asylum seekers who receive support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 are also eligible to apply for free school meals.
- 6.1.2 Introducing free school meals for Primary 1 - 3 pupils was included in the Concordat as part of the negotiated settlement between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities in November 2007. It is not a statutory requirement and it is for local authorities to decide if they are able to offer this additional entitlement.
- 6.1.3 The COSLA Leadership Board remains committed to the joint agreement to introduce the free school meals to Primary 1 - 3 within the terms of the Concordat. COSLA, acting on behalf of Local Authorities has continued to work with the Scottish Government to resolve the difficulties that some local authorities have identified they will have in implementing the policy as a result of the recent economic downturn and local budget pressures.

### **6.2 Current Free School Meals Take Up**

- 6.2.1 As reported in June 2009, the Council currently provides free school meals in all primary, secondary and special schools in the city. In February 2009 16.90% of primary, 10.91% of secondary and 47.39% of special school pupils were entitled to free school meals. The entitlement is highest in Torry, and Northfield Primary Schools and Northfield, St Machar and Hazlehead Academies. The 2009 census of free school meals showed a difference of 736 between those entitled to free school meals and those that are registered.
- 6.2.2 The Education (School Meals) Scotland Bill requires local authorities to promote the uptake of free school meals. In addition, it should be noted that the GAE for deprivation is measured by the numbers of children who register for free school meals therefore it is important that the local authority maximises the number of children who register for free school meals.
- 6.2.3 As agreed by Committee in June 2009 a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve the uptake of free school meals and include producing a new leaflet, advertising on the council website, Dialogue

Youth website and in the local press and schools identifying and encouraging parents they think are eligible to apply.

6.2.4 Analysis done in September 2009 suggests that 120 additional primary and 146 secondary pupils registered for free school meals as a result of the increase in entitlement. These figures are significantly lower than the 1500 projected uptake reported to Resources Committee in June 2009. The telephone research conducted with schools in preparation of this report suggests that some parents may still not be aware of the change in entitlement and further work will be required to advertise the change and improve uptake. However, based on these early indications the numbers are lower than predicted in the June report and the additional costs to meet the change in the statutory entitlement from August 2009 will be met from within the existing free school meals allocation from the Scottish Government.

### **6.3 Delivering Free School meals to all P1-P3 Pupils from August 2010 implementation implications**

6.3.1 Facilities Management completed a detailed review of current school meals provision in primary schools where the increases in entitlement will have biggest impact. The analysis suggests that the increase in entitlement and therefore demand will put pressure on the catering arrangements in some primary schools. There are also likely to be timetabling and staffing issues for the catering section and school staffing in all schools.

6.3.2 Across the city there are sixteen primary schools that have serveries rather than an onsite kitchen. These schools receive a delivery of lunchtime meals that have been prepared and cooked at another school kitchen and which are then delivered to the school.

6.3.3 The proposal to introduce free meals for Primaries 1 - 3 in August 2010 could require (dependant on uptake) up to three hundred meals being transported into certain primary serveries each school day. These current catering and transporting arrangements will be subject to the full catering service review which is expected to report to Council in 2010.

## **7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Scotland Act 2007.  
Evaluation of the Free School Meals Trial for P1 to P3 Pupils: Scottish  
Government Social Research.  
Free School Meals (Lunches) - Increased Entitlement August 2009 Resources  
Management Committee 16 June 2009