

**1 September 2014**

**Delivery of Universal Key Stage 1 Free School Meals**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Community, Leisure & Culture, Cllr Khizar Hussain

**Executive Summary:**

In October 2013 the Deputy Prime Minister announced that the Government would introduce a Universal Free School Meals scheme for all Key Stage 1 pupils, historically referred to as Infants, and that this would commence in September 2014.

The Council's in-house provider, Catering Services, currently provides meals to 39 schools within the borough, of which 33 will be providing the Universal Free School Meals service to all Infant pupils. Planning and preparation has been undertaken since the announcement and arrangements are now in place for the commencement of the scheme from 1 September 2014.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

Scrutiny identified this topic as one of interest at their meeting in June 2014 and requested an update on progress.

**Recommendations:**

**That Scrutiny note that:**

1. Walsall Council fully embraces the Key Stage 1 Universal Free School Meal policy,
2. The in-house Catering Service will continue to work with all schools within the Council's contract to successfully deliver the scheme,
3. Catering Services will continue to liaise with Education Finance to ensure that equipment requirements are correctly resourced,
4. Catering Services can provide a nutritionally balanced packed lunch offer to schools who do not have the facility to prime cook a hot meal, and
5. Advice will be offered to schools outside of Catering's contract if they request it.

**Background papers:**

Guidance letters from the Department for Education

**Resource and legal considerations:**

Whilst an additional twenty members of staff have been recruited to ensure the delivery of the scheme, the costs of this are built in within the business plan. Overall, it is anticipated that the scheme will be cost-neutral to the Council.

The Key Stage 1 Universal Free School Meal scheme is a national initiative led through the Department for Education and is a mandatory obligation on all schools.

**Citizen impact:**

All pupils in Key Stage 1 will receive a nutritional, healthy meal (preferably hot prime cooked) each day of the school year. There is anecdotal evidence of improved pupil performance, attentiveness and educational attainment.

Parents will receive this service free of charge. The initiative also offers the potential to make a positive impact on addressing food poverty in Walsall.

Twenty new part-time Catering posts have been created within the borough to provide this additional service.

**Environmental impact:**

There is no recognised environmental impact arising from this scheme.

**Performance management:**

The initiative is to provide nutritional, healthy meals to all children at Key Stage 1 (Infants). As a meal is to be provided for all, it is anticipated that there will be a 100% take up.

**Equality Implications:**

The introduction of the Key Stage 1 Universal Free School Meals initiative is completely inclusive as it encompasses all Infant children without exception.

**Consultation:**

A Head teacher working group was set up by Walsall's Schools Forum to oversee the allocation of the Government's funding to the authority. Catering Services had direct input into this in particular in advising on what equipment to have and in its purchase.

Regular consultation has taken place with the Department of Education, other Local Authorities and professional bodies; the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) and also the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA).

Officers have liaised with officials from the Department of Education (DoE) in recent weeks whilst they collate information to assess the readiness of Authorities to implement the policy.

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## **1. Report**

- 1.1 In October 2013 the Deputy Prime Minister announced that the Government would introduce a Universal Free School Meals scheme for all Key Stage 1 pupils (Infants) and that this would commence in September 2014.
- 1.2 The initiative is to provide nutritional, healthy meals to all children at Key Stage 1 (Infants). As a meal is to be provided for all infants children, it is anticipated that there will be a 100% take up.
- 1.3 There is strong anecdotal evidence that where children eat a nutritional, healthy, and preferably hot meal at lunchtime, there is a marked improvement in pupil performance, attentiveness and educational attainment.
- 1.4 Parents will receive this service free of charge. Schools will be charged for the meals supplied to deliver the service and it is understood that the budget to pay for this has been included within their formula funding.
- 1.5 The benefit to parents, from not having pay for a meal, is expected to be £437 per annum (£2.30 per meal x 190 days) per child. The initiative therefore also offers the potential to make a positive impact on addressing food poverty in Walsall.
- 1.6 In the thirty-three schools that Catering Services provide an Infants service, the initiative will cater for approximately 1,400 children in Key Stage 1.
- 1.7 To assist the implementation of the scheme the Department for Education provided a capital allocation to Walsall of £591,000 plus a further £107,000 to the voluntary aided schools. This funding was to buy any new equipment (fridges, mixers), crockery, cutlery and small kitchen alterations required to undertake the scheme.
- 1.8 A Head teacher working group was set up by Walsall's Schools Forum to oversee the allocation of the Government's funding to the authority's schools. This process was managed by Education Finance although Catering Services had direct input ~ advising on what equipment to have and in its subsequent purchase, delivery and installation.
- 1.9 The Council's in-house provider, Catering Services, currently provides meals to thirty-nine schools within the borough. Thirty-three of these schools have an Infants section and will be providing the Universal Free School Meals service to all Infant pupils. Arrangements are in place for the commencement of the scheme from 1 September 2014.