

Schools Forum
20th September 2016

Update on Universal Infant Free School Meals Funding

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide Schools Forum with an update on the current position regarding capital funding for the implementation of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), and request approval for the proposed process for utilising remaining funds (see paragraph 4 below).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Schools Forum note the current position regarding the UIFSM funding and approves the proposal for allocating remaining funds.

3. Background

- 3.1 Schools Forum received an update report on 10 March 2015, on the implementation of the UIFSM funding allocation.

- 3.2 A second bidding round for schools to apply for this funding took place in 2015, with a third round following in early 2016. At the time of opening the third round, there was £46,004 of the original allocation remaining. The criteria set for allocating further funds as part of the third bidding round was the same as for round two, ie in priority order:

- 1 Schools who were still unable to offer hot meals;
- 2 Schools who were now experiencing health and safety or other legislative issues in connection with operating the UIFSM offer;
- 3 Schools who were experiencing operational difficulties in connection with operating the UIFSM offer.

- 3.3 As for previous bids, the third round of the bidding process involved:

- a short bid prepared by schools, outlining what is required, and how funding will help overcome the issues being experienced in implementing the UIFSM offer. For capital build schemes, this would include a fully costed plan of the work involved and associated cost and timeline. For equipment bids, 2 clearly broken down quotes were to be submitted;

- bids being compiled with support from catering contractors and Walsall Integrated Facilities Management to inform and sign off the need for the bid;
- the amount of funding the schools themselves would contribute;
- bids for areas that were schools' responsibilities were not considered, ie appropriate ventilation;
- a letter signed by the Chair of Governors committing to serving hot meals rather than sandwiches, was to be submitted as part of the bid.

3.4 Following the announcement of the third bidding round in The Link, the timeline for bids was as follows:

- Schools submit bids – by 29th February 2016
- Evaluate bids – by end of March 2016
- Respond to schools asap after that date with outcome

3.5 Only maintained non VA primary schools were eligible to bid for this funding (Academy and VA schools received funding to support the implementation of UIFSM separately).

3.6 Two bids were received and, as previously, evaluated by a team comprising the following:

- Assistant Director Access & Achievement (or nominee)
- Head of Educational Standards and Improvement (or nominee)
- Senior Finance Manager (or nominee)
- Integrated Facilities Management representative
- Chair of Schools Forum (or nominee)
- Chair of PNS (or nominee).

3.7 The evaluation team approved one bid for £12,770. This was for new serveries for a school experiencing a greater takeup of school meals in Reception, and Years 1 and 2.

3.8 The second bid, for £9,676 was not approved. This was for the replacement of items which were broken or at the end of their life. The evaluation team determined that the wear and tear and renewal of existing equipment was a consideration for all schools and needed to be allowed for within schools' own resources.

3.9 Both schools have been notified of the outcome of the bidding process.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 £33,234 of UIFSM funding is remaining. This funding has been available since 2014, there have been three bidding rounds, and only two bids were received as part of round three. One of those was not approved as the items were to replace broken equipment or items at the end of their life, which would apply to all schools. It is felt that offering a fourth bidding round would likely result in similar bids for replacement items, rather than fresh bids to improve the infant free school meals offer.
- 4.2 It is therefore proposed that the remaining £33,234 be allocated to any forthcoming maintained non-VA primary school expansion/improvement projects which involve the enlargement, remodelling or reprovision of kitchen facilities.

5. Financial implications/Value for Money

- 5.1 All eligible bids from the three bidding rounds have been contained within the financial resources that are available to support UIFSM implementation. The remaining funds, by contributing to school expansion/improvement projects involving kitchen facilities, will ensure this funding is fully utilised to support the provision of infant free school meals.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Only maintained non-VA primary schools are eligible for this funding (Academy and VA schools received funding to support the implementation of UIFSM separately). Consequently, the remaining funds would only be used for school expansion/improvement projects involving the enlargement, remodelling or reprovision of kitchen facilities at maintained non-VA primary schools.

7. School Improvement

- 7.1 The future allocation of the remaining funds will continue to support schools in achieving Walsall's aim of doing all that it can to ensure that schools are able to serve a hot meal.

8. Members eligible to vote

- 8.1 All elected members with voting rights are eligible to vote on this matter.