

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: PNS Forum

CC:

DATE: 5 February 2014

RE: Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

Purpose

UIFSM will go live in September 2014. Department for Education (DfE) have awarded capital monies to Councils for maintained schools (with voluntary aided schools monies clearly identified) and academies will receive funds through the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

This note outlines how Walsall intends to work with schools to distribute funds to meet need.

Strategy

While this policy has been discussed nationally, there has been debate about whether this should be a hot meal or not. The policy does not insist it is a hot meal but strongly recommends it.

Walsall intends to do all it can to ensure that all schools are able to serve a hot meal. Clearly there are financial and time constraints but Walsall Council will work with schools to achieve this.

Basis behind Walsall Proposal

- It is believed that some local authorities are splitting up the capital funds on a per pupil basis. Walsall has rejected this idea and is placing **need** as the central driver to allocate monies. Walsall wants all schools to have the facilities needed.
- It is schools that will need to deliver this service and therefore it is essential that schools are at the centre of division of funds.
- Walsall Council is therefore asking schools to 'bid' for resources. Once bids are received then a group which is made up of 50% headteachers will decide on allocation of the funds.
- Walsall Council would encourage all schools to speak to their own catering contractor before preparing a bid. This will enable accurate costing and identification of need.
- Walsall will ask catering contractors to rank bids in order of need. Short of someone visiting every kitchen, this seems the most appropriate way to measure need.
- Match funding will obviously help the funds go further but it is important to note that need will remain central to all bids and 'nice to haves' even if match funded will

have less chance of success. Clearly when comparing bids of equal need, match funding would be more attractive.

- Bids will either be accepted or declined. We are asking all schools to offer the best bid they can and not create a situation of 'haggling'.
- Walsall Catering Services will not be involved in the bid review process. This will ensure that award of funds can be clearly seen as being awarded on need rather than who supplies the service. Catering Services are **very** keen to work with schools they supply or could supply to make sure their bids are strong.

Proposal

- A short bid would be invited outlining what is required and a rough cost (A form will be produced as soon as possible).
- We would ask for a 'sign off' from the catering contractor so that they are endorsing any bid and ranking the need of the bid
- We would plan for a site visit for anyone who bids over **£2.5k**. This will hopefully ensure that all bids over this figure are based on real need.
- Bids should include the amount of money that the school will be able to contribute
- We will not consider areas where the school is responsible and has not fulfilled its obligations, i.e. appropriate ventilation
- We will ask for a letter signed by Chair of Governors committing to serving hot meals rather than sandwiches.
- We will also look favourably on bids for 'extreme cases'. Where schools have no kitchen and therefore may not be able to deliver the policy.

Proposed Timeline

The overall proposed timetable is:

Ask schools for bids – ASAP

Receive bids by 7 March 2014

Evaluate bids by 21 March 2014

Respond to schools asap after that date so work can commence (hopefully from Easter

Bid Review Team

The proposal would be that a review of bids would be undertaken by

Denis O'Rourke

Jane Bonner (or her nominee)

Jenny Garrett (Chair of PNS) or her nominee

Max Vlahakis (Chair of Schools Forum) or his nominee

Dan Mortiboys (or nominee) to provide finance support.

VA Schools

It is proposed that VA schools will go through a similar process with Denis O'Rourke as takes place for their annual capital entitlement.

Funding

Academies will be provided funding from the EFA.

VA Schools in Walsall have £107k to improve kitchens

Maintained none VA schools will have £591k. This funding is to support 57 schools that have infant aged pupils.

Risks

There is no one at this time who has a complete overview of what will be needed to ensure that all schools can deliver these meals. It is very important that all schools bid only for what they need to ensure that funds will be best utilised.

Summary

PNS is asked to:

1. Endorse this approach or provide alternate suggestions
2. If agreed, confirm who representatives would be from headteachers
3. Confirm in particular the timeline
4. Raise through the Chair any further particular questions

Dan Mortiboys – Senior Finance Manager

☎ 01922 652328

✉ mortiboysd@walsall.gov.uk

