

To: Council

On: 16th December 2021

Report by: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Heading: UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 30th September 2021 Council agreed for a report to be brought back to the next Council meeting setting out the planning being undertaken to ensure everything is in place to deliver a healthy and nutritious free meal to every child whose family wants them to have one.
- 1.2 In June 2021 the Scottish Government announced as part of its programme for government the Expansion of (Free) School Lunch to all P4 pupils from August 2021, P5 pupils from January 2022 and P6 and P7 and all ASN pupils from August 2022. The Scottish Government has also indicated that the roll out of free milk for all Primary and ASN School pupils will form part of the school lunch expansion programme. This report outlines the work that is being undertaken to deliver the programme of free meal expansion to all primary school and ASN pupils in Renfrewshire.
- 1.3 Implementation of the primary 4 free school lunch offering for all was undertaken at the start of the school term in August 2021 and delivered with minimum alterations to the existing school meals provision, infrastructure and resource capacity. The service is currently preparing for expanding the free school meal offering to all primary 5 pupils, with resource and infrastructure requirements in place to support this expansion.
- 1.4 The Scottish Futures Trust are on behalf of the Scottish Government reviewing the capital, one off and ongoing revenue requirements of each local authority to deliver the expanded school meal provision to all primary and ASN pupils. Renfrewshire will require a number of infrastructure investments to take place across the school estate to expand and alter kitchens and servery areas to deliver a full expansion programme.

Recruitment is underway to support the primary 5 expansion in January 2022, with a further programme of recruitment planned during 2022 to support primary 6, 7, and ASN expansion.

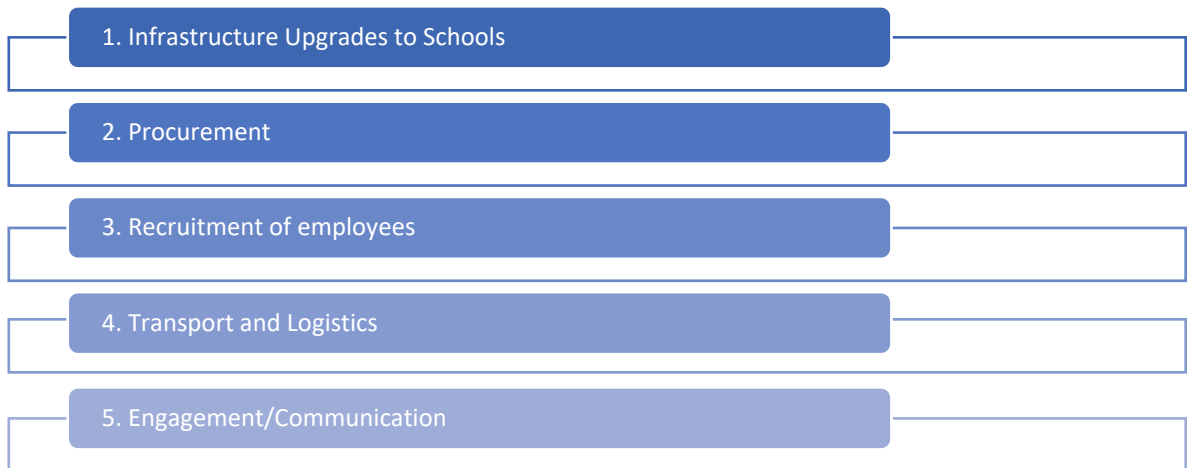
2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Notes the work undertaken to deliver the universal free school meal provision for Primary 4 & 5 pupils during this 2021/ 2022 academic school year.
- 2.2 Notes the ongoing work with Scottish Futures Trust on behalf of the Scottish Government to gather estimated capital, revenue and one-off costs to support the expansion of free school meal provision for pupils in primaries 4-7 and ASN schools with updates on progress being reported via the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board.

3. Overview

- 3.1 To meet the challenging implementation deadlines for further expansion, Renfrewshire Council has responded quickly, to ensure that delivery of the P5, P6 and P7 and ASN School Lunch can be implemented timeously across the school estate. This is a complex project involving a significant programme of building work and recruitment of Facilities Management (FM) and support staff. This is a collaborative project and is being resourced with service experts across Council services to ensure successful delivery.
- 3.2 The Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) on behalf of the Scottish Government requested information from Councils to determine both the Capital and Revenue funding required to deliver this programme. Initial information was provided to SFT at end of October 2021 and is the subject of ongoing discussion and clarification. It is expected that the information gathered from all Councils will inform the Scottish Government 2022/23 budget setting discussions.
- 3.3 The design and development activities for this project has been divided into a suite of workstreams, to which objectives, resource and timescales will be assigned. These are noted in the table below:



3.4 Infrastructure Upgrades to Schools

Plans are being developed to upgrade school kitchens and servery areas to accommodate additional pupils. This will require construction and upgrading works. Professional surveys have been undertaken to establish the capacity and capability of our primary school kitchens and to highlight building works, where required, to accommodate the increase in school lunch provision.

3.5 Procurement

A procurement strategy will support this programme to procurement contractors to undertake the building works through the normal tendering process once funding is confirmed, with construction works likely to continue through 2022. At this time the purchase of items such as ovens, fridges and crockery has commenced, in line with the Councils procurement regulations.

3.6 Recruitment of Employees

Additional staffing is required within FM to prepare and serve meals and in Children's Services to support the supervision of pupils across multiple locations. The recruitment has already started with some applicants already selected for the posts, further adverts will continue to ensure adequate staff are in place to deliver the programme.

3.7 Transport & Logistics

Work is underway with colleagues to determine the requirement for the recruitment of additional drivers and for the routing arrangements for delivery of meals, where required.

3.8 Engagement & Communication

The expansion of the free school meal programme is supported with a communication and marketing campaign that will support both universal and targeted messages for schools along with engagement with pupils, parents and teachers.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - There are large capital infrastructure and ongoing revenue costs required by the Council to deliver free school meals to all primary and ASN pupils. Initial revenue funding has been provided for the academic year 2021/22 to support the Primary 4 and 5 expansion. These costs are currently being considered and discussed with Scottish Futures Trust on behalf of the Scottish Government. Updates on the implications for the Council of this will be provided to the FARC's policy board.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – The expansion of free school meals will require employment of additional staff to support both the cooking, serving and supervision of the school meal service
3. **Community Planning** – Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all through the provision of free school meal provision to all
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – Alterations to many of the school properties to support the role of free school meals
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** -
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – As set out in the report there are procurement requirements to support the roll out of free school meals to all primary and ASN pupils.
10. **Risk** -That the timescales to undertake the required infrastructure expansions will not be possible in all schools by August 2022, with contingency arrangements in place to support the roll out of the service provision.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None
13. **Climate** – None

List of Background Papers –

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