



Free School Meals for P4 to P7 Pupils

Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place

Report for Decision

1. Recommendations

Council is recommended to;

- i. note the details in this report, and
- ii. approve the capital funding request for £323,650 as detailed in Section 3 and the Appendix 1.

2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is seek approval for an unfunded capital requirement to allow the Catering Team to implement the additional school meals provision as directed by the Scottish Government.

Date: 27 September 2021

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2 Background

Free school meals have been provided to Primary School level pupils at P1 to P3 for a few years now. In June 2021 the Scottish Government announced that this provision would be extended to all primary school pupils from August 2021.

There will be a staggered roll out of this programme; from August 2021 P4 pupils have been entitled to free meals, while in January 2022 P5 pupils will be entitled to free meals and in August 2022 P6 and P7 pupils would be entitled to free meals.

The Scottish Government have provided £594,000 to Midlothian Council to fund the revenue costs for financial year 2021/22. Allocations for later years have yet to be confirmed.

The uptake for P1 to P3 free school meals is currently 70.37% and the assumption is that as this programme is rolled out to P4 to P7 pupils the uptake would not fall below 70.37%, there may even be an increase in the percentage when fully implemented.

In order for Midlothian Council to cater for this scheme with the expected increase in pupils having lunch, there is a need to purchase additional light equipment for the kitchens such as plates, cutlery, trays etc.

There is also a need to purchase additional heavy equipment for the kitchens such as cookers, hot trolleys, fridges, freezers etc. as the current equipment in the kitchens would not be able to cope with the increased provision and anticipated demand for meals.

3 Financial

The Scottish Government have provided revenue grant funding as noted above but this does not cover the costs for the Capital spend for additional equipment required.

The estimated amount required to cover costs for additional equipment is detailed below. These costs are all subject to site surveys being carried out by the approved contractor who would be appointed to carry out the work. The costs will not be finalised until the surveys are done and there may be further costs yet to be determined associated with wiring, extractor requirements etc.

	2021/22 Additional Budget
CAPITAL COSTS	
Light Equipment Budget	£63,500
Heavy Equipment Budget	£260,150
Dining Room furniture	To be advised post consultation with Head Teachers
	£323,650

A detailed breakdown of the equipment required is shown in Appendix 1.

There will be a need for additional staffing to roll out this scheme, along with training, additional food costs, and additional maintenance costs. There will also be a reduction in meal charges income. All of these costs, detailed in the table below, should be covered by the funding provided by the Scottish Government.

	2021/22 Additional Budget	2022/23 Additional Budget	2023/24 Additional Budget	Total FYE	Notes
Staffing (manual workers)	65,409	140,811	10,351	216,571	
Food Nutritionist (Grade 7)	28,907	14,454	0	43,361	Subject to evaluation
Staff Training	7,000	0	0	7,000	
Food Costs	63,199	194,135	40,763	298,097	
Loss of Income	113,064	278,687	60,690	452,441	
Light Equipment maintenance	3,175	0	0	3,175	
Heavy Equipment maintenance				0	Awaiting estimate
Dining Room Supervision					To be advised post HT consultation
	280,754	628,087	111,804	1,020,645	

A new post of Food Nutritionist has been added. The purpose of this role is to ensure that Midlothian Council continues to meet the Scottish Government's nutritional guidelines introduced in August 2020 for menu planning, and ensuring that all allergen information is kept up to date. This is particularly important with increased numbers of pupils having special dietary needs and the introduction of Natasha's Law in October 2021. The Food Nutritionist would also be responsible for arranging Food Hygiene and Allergen training.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Additional resource and funding may also be required by Education Services, such as Dining Room Assistants and dining room tables. Further information will follow once Head Teachers have been consulted.

Due to the anticipated uptake of free meals the present dining rooms would not be large enough to meet the requirements in one sitting and consideration is being made to altering the lunch service to two sittings in possible learning settings.

4.2 Digital

Not applicable

4.3 Risk

There is a risk in that the uptake in free school meal numbers is a forecast and when this is fully implemented the uptake percentage may change.

There may also be a risk that food prices increase due to supply chain pressured and any potential further change to the nutritional guidelines.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Not applicable.

4.5 Additional Report Implications

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☐ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☐ Modern
- ☒ **Sustainable**
- ☒ **Transformational**
- ☒ **Preventative**
- ☐ Asset-based
- ☐ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☐ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ **Preventative and Sustainable**
- ☐ Efficient and Modern
- ☐ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Not Applicable

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Not Applicable

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not Applicable

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not Applicable

Background Papers: Appendix 1