

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
REPORT ON: PROPOSAL TO DELIVER FREE SCHOOL MEAL ENTITLEMENT
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
REPORT NO: 113-2020

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline Dundee City Council plans to continue to meet Free School Meals entitlement by an alternative cash/voucher scheme until the end of term on Friday, 26th June 2020 or earlier should current social distancing rules relax.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) A direct payment system is established to enable payments of £11.25 per week directly in to the bank accounts of the eligible families/carers from the 23rd March until the end of term on the 26th June or earlier should the situation alter;
- (ii) A voucher system is established as a safety net for those parents and carers for whom we do not currently have bank account details for;
- (iii) The P1 – P3 free school meal entitlement is paid only to those families in receipt of the School Clothing Grant which is in line with recent national guidance; and
- (iv) Remit the Executive Director of Corporate Services to make payments of £11.25 per week for any new FSM applications which are made during this period up to Friday, 26th June 2020 or earlier should current social distancing rules relax and to implement a process for obtaining bank details in a safe and secure manner which are not currently held by the Council.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 If the eligibility for P1 – P3 reflects those in receipt of School Clothing Grant the following number apply.

Pilot early years centres	1209
P2 Nursery	118
P1 – P3 (eligible for School Clothing Grant)	1702
P4 – S6 (eligible for free school meals)	3863
Total	6892

3.2 The school meal charges, as agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 5th March, 2020 (Item 2(iii), Report 110-2020 refers) are: Primary £2.15 and Secondary £2.25. It is therefore recommended that a flat rate payment of £11.25 per week is made for all eligible children and young people.

3.3 Based on the current estimate of 6892 eligible children, the total costs for is therefore **£1,085,490.00** (6892 children x £11.25 x 14 weeks) for the maximum period 23rd March – 26th June 2020.

3.4 Funding for the payments/vouchers will be met from the Council's share of the £30m Scottish Government Food Fund which in total £1.152m along with support from the Council's General Revenue Budget including the potential use of Pupil Equity Funding.

3.5 The exact allocation of funding will be finalised once the Council has more information on the external costs of food supply to support local communities.

3.6 The £1.152m Scottish Government Food Fund has been released to support those most in need including families with children who are eligible for free school meals, older people, those with long-term health conditions and pregnant women.

3.7 The Council has flexibility to use this additional resource in ways that best meet emerging local needs and circumstances, working with community groups and businesses to support home delivery, provide financial help and meet dietary requirements.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The current social distancing requirements in response to COVID-19 has meant that the normal school meal programme has not been fully operational since the week beginning 23rd March.

4.2 Eight Community Support Centres have been operating across the City since 30th March to support the children of vulnerable families and those of key workers. During the Easter Holiday period, cold food has been available to the children attending these centres and Dundee Bairns, in partnership with community based organisations and Council staff, have been providing a limited outreach and delivery service.

4.3 Discussions are currently underway with Tayside Contracts in relation to providing hot food at the Council's Community Support Centres or delivering directly to the homes of our most vulnerable families. An agreed process has been established with Children & Families Service to ensure we fully capture this demand.

5. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

5.1 Payments will be made directly to the families where we have their bank details starting on Tuesday 14th April (Monday 13th April is a bank holiday) and every Monday thereafter until the end of term or earlier should restrictions end. These payments will be backdated until the 23rd March. This is the date from when we were unable to provide the normal free school meal entitlement.

5.2 A system for contacting the families for whom we do not have bank details is currently being implemented. This is being developed based on advice from Corporate Finance and Fraud colleagues to make this process as secure as possible. For those families where bank details are not obtained within the timescales as outlined above for payment a voucher will be considered or alternatively a backdated payment.

5.3 A voucher system will be established for those parents and carers for whom we are unable to identify bank account details for. This will be a mix of e-vouchers for those with a confirmed current telephone number or vouchers sent to homes for those we have been unable to confirm phone numbers for.

5.4 Information will also be hosted on One Dundee to direct people to provide information to a secure email and the newly established Helpline team will also receive the required form to capture information.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The Council Management team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

GREGORY COLGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

6TH APRIL 2020

PAUL CLANCY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

6TH APRIL 2020

In view of the timescales involved this report was approved by the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Children and Families Service in consultation with the Convener of the Policy and Resources Committee, Labour Group Spokesperson, Conservative Group Spokesperson, Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson, the Independent Member and the Lord Provost.

Gregory Colgan

Executive Director of Corporate Services

Date 7th April 2020

Paul Clancy

Executive Director of Children and Families Service

Date 7th April 2020

John Alexander

Convener of Policy and Resources Committee

Date 7th April 2020

Kevin Keenan

Labour Group Spokesperson

Date 7th April 2020

Philip Scott

Conservative Group Spokesperson

Date 7th April 2020

Fraser Macpherson

Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson

Date 7th April 2020

Gregor Murray

Independent Member

Date 7th April 2020

Ian Borthwick

Lord Provost

Date 7th April 2020