

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 26 JANUARY 2011

SCHOOL MEALS ETHICAL INCENTIVE SCHEME

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with an update on the school meals ethical incentive scheme 'Get Stuck In' and recommends an adaptation of the scheme to develop a partnership with the Charity Mary's Meals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 One of the key recommendations of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Act 2007 is to place a duty on the council to promote the uptake of school meals. In 2006 the Council awarded a contract to assist with the development and implementation of a marketing plan, which complemented a range of initiatives developed by East Ayrshire to improve school meals.

The first theme of the marketing plan was in communicating the nature and credentials of the School Meals Service, with a key focus on the quality of produce, the use of local suppliers and offering a range and choice of freshly prepared food. The marketing material developed demonstrated a high quality service that is an integral part of the school, focused on health and education.

- 2.2 Having established the credentials of the service the marketing plan for 2008/9 and 2009/10 focused on pupils as the users of the service. In keeping with the ethical nature of the service and to ensure clear links with Educational values an alliance was created with Save the Children Charity for an ethical incentive scheme, which aimed to increase the uptake of school meals, thereby benefiting pupils who use the service and benefiting children and families in the UK and around the world with items from Save the Children's wish list. The introduction of the Ethical Incentive scheme was endorsed by cabinet on 18th June 2008.
- 2.3 The service continues to develop the themes established in the marketing plan with communication and publication of menus through the school, on GLOW and through promotional information to parents. The service has continued to focus on the quality of the menus and the food served and currently hold the Soil Association's Gold Standard for its Food For Life Approach with the use local, organic and higher animal welfare produce. The use of the ethical incentive scheme compliments the values promoted by the service.

3. THE GET STUCK IN SCHEME

- 3.1 The 'Get Stuck in' incentive scheme has provided a range of positive benefits through the partnership with Save the Children and the positive links with Health and Education.
- 3.2 The 'Get Stuck In' incentive scheme operated for two six month periods between October 2008 to March 2009 and from October 2009 to March 2010. Within these periods the scheme raised 75,000 and 99,000 points that were converted to a range of gifts for Save the Children including chickens, yaks, desks, bikes and medical kits, all chosen by the children of East Ayrshire.
- 3.3 For the first time the school meals services are able to work within a policy framework and take an active role in supporting pupils to become educated consumers of tomorrow who will understand the health, environment and sustainable development impacts of their food choices.
- 3.4 A key theme of the scheme was that a single child could not earn enough points to gain any gifts on their own, they needed to work together, as a class, as a year, as a school or as a group of schools. This further reinforced the value of community, global citizenship and the selfless nature of the 'gifts'.
- 3.5 A range of activities also took place to support the promotion of the scheme including Save the Children volunteers giving presentations to pupils using a 'GLOW meet' allowing other schools to be involved via a web link. Using GLOW to report the points tally through the scheme and provide access to a wide range of educational material and video links.
- 3.6 The incentive scheme also helped to increase the uptake of school meal numbers by a further 2% in Primary Schools and by 4% in Secondary schools, against a national picture of reducing school meal numbers.
- 3.7 The scheme has also received a wide range of national interest including press and media coverage. The scheme has also achieved success through winning the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) Best public / voluntary partnership working initiative in November 2010.

4. REVIEW

- 4.1 Having established the benefits of working with a Charity such as Save the Children and the positive outcomes from creating an 'ethical' incentive scheme it is proposed that the service continues to develop an alliance with a charity that focuses on the pupils as the users of the service and looks to build on the Educational benefits of the scheme. It is the strong view that by linking the service more to the curriculum and health and wellbeing the 'value' of the service is retained against a range of competing commercial and high street marketing messages. It is therefore anticipated this will continue to support the aim to increase the uptake of school meals thereby benefiting East Ayrshire pupils with fresh, healthy and locally sourced food, increasing knowledge of

global issues and an opportunity to help others.

4.2 Although continuing with the incentive scheme is proposed the opportunity has been taken to review the arrangements to offer an opportunity to freshen up the scheme and in particular consider an alternative partnership. Having considered a number of charities as well as continuing with Save the Children, it is proposed that a charitable organisation which presents the best opportunities, should be able to support the initiative with;

- Educational Resources which are free and can be made available to schools.
- A Volunteer network and existing links to support schools with learning.
- Ethical promotional gifts which can be used in East Ayrshire Schools
- An outstanding reputation and a wide range of projects supporting children.
- A clear link to the values of East Ayrshire, Education and the catering service
- Able to demonstrate a determination to fight poverty and improve the lives of children in adversity.

5. PROPOSAL

5.1 It is proposed to run the scheme in 2011 with the support of Mary's Meals.

5.2 Mary's Meals is an international movement to set up school feeding projects in communities where poverty and hunger prevent children from gaining an education. Mary's Meals provides daily meals in school for over 450,000 children in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Mary's Meals not only addresses the immediate needs of hungry children by giving them a daily meal, it also allows those children to receive an education that can provide an escape from poverty for themselves and their communities.

5.3 The scheme will also allow the points raised to be used to support the Mcheza School in the Balaka District within southern Malawi therefore providing further opportunities to develop links that have already been established with East Ayrshire and Malawi, for example through the Scotland Malawi Partnership. By highlighting an individual school the opportunity to personalise outcomes and offer the potential to create longer lasting links is also heightened.

5.4 The scheme is designed to strengthen the wider links within the whole school and enhances global citizenship and enterprise within the pupils. It will be supported by a range of posters, cards and leaflets explaining the scheme to parents and pupils along with additional promotional items, provided by Mary's Meals.

5.5 The scheme will operate in all educational establishments where onsite services provide lunchtime meals. Points will be collated through the onsite services management system using free and paid meal numbers.

5.6 To feed a child for a full year costs £6.15 and therefore to feed the Mcheza School with 509 children the total cost would be £3130.

- 5.7 As the purpose of the scheme is to incentivise East Ayrshire children to choose school meals each time a pupil takes a meal this will contribute towards the points total.
- 5.8 To support the scheme a range of material will be produced including leaflets, posters, points cards with additional promotional material being provided by Mary's Meals. All graphic design and printing will be obtained through the Councils Graphic Design service and additional use will be made of GLOW and internet pages to further reduce the cost of the scheme.
- 5.9 Participation by schools will require minimal involvement in the administration and promotion, as with previous incentive schemes, which will allow schools to focus their involvement in promoting the scheme and the service through educational links and class participation on aspects of the Curriculum.

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no significant risk implications and auditable records will be maintained.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of the incentive is budgeted within the Health Promotion and Nutrition fund within the catering service and through the increased use of GLOW and internal graphic design and printing the overall cost will be reduced from previous years.
- 7.2 The anticipated cost of the scheme would be in line with the cost to feed the Mcheza school of £3130 and a limited additional cost of print material.
- 7.3 It is anticipated however that potential increases in uptake will support the school meals income budget and offer further financial benefit.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Nil

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The scheme supports to the requirements of the Health Promotion and Nutrition Act 2007 around promoting school meals, including free meals. And provides opportunities to link the catering service to the objectives of Curriculum for Excellence.

10. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The incentive scheme promotes citizenship, enterprise and community involvement providing links to Lifelong Learning and Health and Wellbeing. The school meals service is important across a range of health and education themes and through the promotion of free school meals helps in eliminating poverty.

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 Members are asked to:

- i) Note the success of the Get Stuck in incentive scheme
- ii) Approve the implementation of a new incentive scheme in partnership with the Mary's Meals charity and:
- iii) Otherwise note the content of the report.

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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: ANDREW KENNEDY

AK/JW
12 January 2011

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet report 18 June 2008

Members wishing further information should contact Andrew Kennedy, Acting Head of Facilities Management, Tel (01563) 576089