

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 22 AUGUST 2007

FREE SCHOOL MEAL TRIAL – P1 - P3 PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members of the Cabinet for East Ayrshire to participate as one of the authorities involved in trialing free school meals for P1 - P3 pupils from October 2007 to March 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive is introducing a pilot for the provision of free school meals to all pupils attending primary 1 to primary 3. Across Scotland about 35,000 children in 5 local authority areas - Borders, East Ayrshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire - will participate in the pilot for six months between October 2007 and March 2008.
- 2.2 The initiative can be regarded as a further development of Hungry for Success - A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland,
- 2.3 Pupil numbers for 2007-2008 for primary years 1 to 3 is estimated to be 3690 pupils.
- 2.4 The overall school meal uptake in East Ayrshire is 52.4% of which the current free meal entitlement is an average of 20%.
- 2.5 The Scottish Executive's report (2007) on school meals based on an annual census day across the Scottish Local Authorities found that East Ayrshire has higher free meal entitlement and uptake than the average for Scottish Authorities.

2.6

Census Measurements	East Ayrshire	Scotland (Average)
% Free Meal Entitlement of school role	19.7%	18.6%
% registered of free meal entitlement	90%	87%
% taking free meals of free meal entitlement	82.1%	76.2%

3. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

- 3.1** This development is entirely consistent with, and complementary to, the education service's statutory local improved objectives published in Priority to Improvement 2007-2010. The objective "promotion of health and well-being" is particularly appropriate here.
- 3.2** The pilot provides an important opportunity to promote school meals and promote the importance of health and diet in the wider community. Accordingly this is a welcome development in the context of the Community Plan's – Health Improvement strand. Parents will receive information and promotional material explaining the benefits of the pilot and the Council's school meals service.
- 3.3** Detailed discussion with Head Teachers in primary schools is being arranged to ensure that the opportunities that the pilot presents are optimized including appropriate arrangements to record the uptake of meals in a manner that will allow evaluation of the pilot.
- 3.4** The evaluation of the pilot will include monitoring and recording of the actual uptake from primary one to primary three. A qualitative evaluation to measure and review the effectiveness of the pilot through parent and pupil questionnaires will be undertaken.
- 3.5** Additional infrastructure planning and costs at each school kitchen will range from the acquisition of additional seating, crockery, cutlery, and light catering equipment and where necessary the input of additional catering staff hours.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The Scottish Executive will provide funding of £561,000 through a specific grant in two installments during the current financial year. Should the estimated costs differ significantly from actual costs as the scheme unfolds then the Executive have indicated this will be reviewed.

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Under the Education (Scotland) Act, 1980 – Section 53 – authorities do not currently have the power to give free meals to anyone other than those entitled under that section. However, advice from the Scottish Executive is that this initiative can be conducted under the Power to Advance Well-Being contained in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1980 once the Scottish Parliament has approved to disapply parts of Section 53 using Section 57 of the local Government in Scotland Act 2003. It is anticipated that this order will be approved in Parliament by October 2007 in time for this pilot, and that therefore East Ayrshire Council will invoke the Power to Advance Well-Being to implement this initiative.
- 5.2** There are no policy implications at this time however the pilot initiated by the Scottish Executive, will generate important performance information which may influence future developments.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** In the context of the Council's Community Plan themes of Improving Health and Eliminating Poverty, the pilot provides an important opportunity for access to good nutrition early in life and promote the importance of health and diet in the wider community.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant risk implications.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** It is recommended that Members of the Cabinet:

- (i) approve East Ayrshire's participation in Scottish's Executive free school meals pilot and that all necessary arrangements will be put in place to ensure it is provided efficiently and effectively; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

30 July 2007
RG/JBS

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Robin Gourlay, Head of Facilities Management, Tel: (01563) 576089.

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