Agenda Item	**5**
Report No	**RBD-08-24**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Redesign Board**

Date: **2 October 24**

Report Title: **Food in Schools**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 At a meeting of the Redesign Board Workshop on 4 September 2024, a range of matters on "Food in Schools" was discussed including provision of service (Catering), take-up rates of free school meals, waste, legislative drivers and influences and the social determinants of health. This paper proposes the next steps and led by the Chief Officer Revenues and Commercialisation.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Redesign Board are asked to:
   i. Note the contents of this report including the outputs from the Redesign Board Workshop held on 4 September 24
   ii. Agree the next steps for "Food in Schools" as outlined at section 5.1.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource**
The work outlined at section 5 will initially be undertaken within existing resources. As this project develops, it may require some project management resourcing to co-ordinate efforts and support delivery. Where this resourcing is beyond the capacity of existing resources, the Project Sponsor will identify alternate funding resource and will report through the Redesign Board.

3.2 **Legal**
There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Risk**

As noted within the report, this area of work is multi-dimensional and has inter-connected policy areas. It will be important to ensure that whilst aware of these interdependencies, the project remains focused initially on its core deliverables.

3.4 **Gaelic**

There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Health and Safety**

There are no specific Health and Safety implications arising from this report, although there are in the delivery of the school meals service more generally. These will be taken into account as part of the development of the project.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an initial scoping report therefore an impact assessment is not required however an early screening will be undertaken by the Project Team which will assist in shaping and directing the work of the project.

5. Overview

5.1 The Highland Council's **Programme** is a statement of what it is committed to achieve and why. The Council's **Performance Plan** is a statement of what the Council expects to improve in due course through various strands of activity across the organisation. The **Operational Delivery Plan** provides detail on how we plan to deliver on the Programme and improve the outcomes for people and communities of the Highland area.

5.2 The Highland Council approved the Operational Delivery Plan on 9 May 24. It consists of six portfolio themes with overall sponsorship provided by the Assistant Chief Executives as shown below.

Portfolio	Sponsor
Corporate Solutions	ACE - Corporate
Income Generation	ACE - Corporate
Person Centred Solutions	ACE – People
Workforce for the Future	ACE – People
Reconfiguring our Asset Base	ACE – Place
Net Zero, Energy Investment and Innovation	ACE - Place

5.3   The Portfolios are organised into workstreams, which are divided into programmes and projects. Each of these has a critical relationship with the aspirations built into the Programme, or with the Council's budget strategy. **Food in Schools a project within the Corporate Solutions Portfolio.**

5.4   The Chief Officer Revenues and Commercialisation is leading this particular project. In recognition that the nature of this project has a number of interconnected policy areas the Lead reached out to a range of staff across Services to help inform the preparation, presentation and facilitation of the Redesign Board Workshop held on 4 September 2024.

5.5   A copy of the presentation can be found at **Appendix 1**. A copy of the key outputs can be found at **Appendix 2.**

5.6   Below is a brief summary of some of the data.
- More than 3.1m meals provided in 23/24
- 17,000 meals per day (1,900 Early Years; 9,800 Primary; 5,300 Secondary)
- Annual direct cost of service in excess of £14m (per Catering Services)
- Costs per meal = £4.59
- 67% of costs are staff; 28% food
- Prices charged £2.40 for P6/7; £2.65 secondary; £4.20 adult. (For those not eligible for free school meals (FSM))
- Take-up rates for free school meals at 72% for P1-5; take-up rates vary for children / young people entitled to free school meals, and across schools

5.7   Food waste is also an ongoing challenge including (a) the volumes of food going to waste and (b) the collection and disposal of food waste presenting avoidable damage to our environment as well as resulting in avoidable costs being incurred.

5.8   In relation to (b), positively, and as reported to the Communities and Place Committee, the Recycling Improvement Fund Project is delivering transformational change to kerbside recycling and food waste collections including schools. Funded by £6.5m funding from Zero Waste Scotland, this project is not only delivering significant change but will also support increases in recycling rates and deliver efficiency savings of more than £2m per annum.   In relation to (a), reducing food going to waste is imperative. This not only supports our environment but will also

lead to greater efficiency. The cost of purchasing food accounts for approx. 28% of costs.

6. Next steps

6.1 Analysis of the workshop outcomes has concluded that there are 4 key initial areas of work. These are:

Action	Comments
Take-up rates (FSM)	Sharing good practice, increasing take-up rates, targeted approaches
Income Generation	What other options are available, impacts,
Operating Model	How does our existing model and financing (costs, income) compare with other councils, service providers including commercial
Cost of food	How can we reduce the volume of food going to waste

6.2 It is important to recognise that given that the nature of this project area and its range of interconnected policy areas, further key areas of work (ie. scope) will develop over time.

6.3 The Chief Officer Revenues and Commercialisation will continue to work with key personnel across Services and hold Project Team meetings when required.

6.4 The approach will also include undertaking targeted surveys to better understand views, behaviours, opportunities etc. The Chief Officer Revenues and Commercialisation will liaise closely with senior leaders in the People Cluster for the design and delivery of this key area of work.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

Authors: Allan Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
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Date: 23 Sep 24

Redesign Board Workshop

Food in Schools

4 September 2024

Introduction

1. Social determinants of health
2. Service delivery
3. Other policy related areas
4. Finance
5. Take-up
6. Influences
7. Summary

Feedback, discussion, next steps etc

Social determinants of health
What makes us healthy?

"The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life"
WHO 2024

Social determinants of health (cont.)

Inequalities and food poverty – why do inequalities lead to poor outcomes and life chances?

There is an unequal distribution of income, wealth and power in society which means that those families with less access to these experience poorer life experiences and poorer health. Greater access protects health.

Insufficient income reduces parental ability to support the child's health and development by providing a good quality home, a healthy diet and opportunities for learning that provide the keys to a better future.

The emotional stress of poverty, impacting on the quality of life, family relationships, and parental interactions with children, leading to poorer mental health and well-being for parents and poorer child well-being.

Poverty makes people feel less confident, with less control over their lives. These feelings can impact parental health and well-being, their children's sense of confidence and on child health and wellbeing.

Key messages

- Food poverty is preventable. It is a consequence of the socioeconomic and environmental context in which people live.
- Food poverty has negative health and economic outcomes, as well as social and psychological impacts.
- The existence of emergency food and provision reflects the growth both episodic and chronic severe food poverty. As food bank usage is just one aspect of food poverty, it does not show the nature and the scale of the problem.

Social determinants of health (cont.)

Children's rights, Our responsibility

Article 24 (UN CRC)

"every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well -being so that children can stay healthy"

Service delivery – Catering Service
Overview

The Catering Service's primary role is the preparation, cooking and conveyance of meals for:

29 Secondary Schools,166 Primary Schools,140 Nursery settings and 3 Special Schools
- 3.1 million meals per year
- 17,000 meals per day, made up of:-
  - 9,800 primary meals, 1,900 early years meals and 5,300 secondary meals
- Includes approx. 60,000 adult meals per annum, approx. ½ of which were provided free for supervision
- Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to all Nursery, P1 to P5 and Special School Pupils
- Over 2000 pupils registered with special dietary requirements

Other catering provision includes:
- Catering Contract for Highland Hospice – 365-day operation
- Provision of Members Catering
- Non-Education Catering Events throughout the region

Service delivery - what do we have to provide
Food & Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (amended 2020)

- The regulations apply to all food and drink served in schools throughout the school day, including breakfast clubs, tuckshops, vending machines and after school clubs held on school premises.
- The amended regulations implemented in 2020 were to provide more fruit and vegetables, less processed red meat and sugar on the menu.
- A minimum of two full portions of vegetables and a full portion of fruit must be offered as part of a school lunch, with full portions of fruit and or vegetables also available in, for example, tuck shops.
- No less than 2 portions of vegetables and/or salad and 1 portion of fruit.
  - Secondary Schools – 80g x 3
  - Primary Schools – 40g x 3
- A maximum amount of red and processed red meat provision - such as bacon, ham and pepperoni - in school lunches to help reduce exposure to nitrites
- Removal of fruit juice and smoothies from primary and secondary schools to help reduce sugar intake

Other related policy areas

Other related policy areas

Good Food Nation - The National Good Food Nation Plan is the next step towards a better food system in Scotland. Its aim is to provide an overarching framework for a clear, consistent, and coherent future Scottish food policy that will be taken forward at both the national and local levels.

- The Council responded to the SG consultation on the National Good Food Nation Plan which closed on 22 April 2024.
- The consultation set out six potential outcomes, indicators, and targets
- Established an internal officer group and are also fully engaged with the Highland Good Food Partnership.
- Consultation responses currently being analysed with results anticipated to be published by SG autumn 2024.
- SG will publish draft National Plan potentially Spring/Summer 2025

Other policy related areas - Waste

Food.waste.is.disproportionately.bad.for.the.environment?_It"s.because.when.we.waste.food?we.also.waste.all the.effort.and.resources.that.went.into.producing.it¡.It"s.not.just.the.impact.of.waste?food.generates.large.volumes of.emissions.at.every.stage?from.growing?harvesting?processing.and.packaging.it?to.refrigerating.it.and.then transporting.before.we.prepare.and.cook.the.food¡
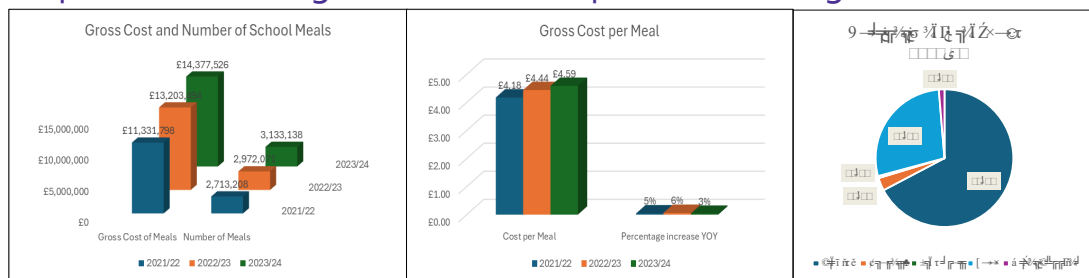
Wasting.food.means.wasting.money¡
Zero.Waste.Scotland

- The cost of collection and disposal of waste, including food waste, from the school estate is estimated as £0.850m.

- As part of the RIF service change Food Waste collections have been rolled out to 43 schools in total– in Inverness, Nairn and parts of R&C. Fort William is in the mix for May 25.

Finances - Catering Services
Snapshot of Catering service costs as per the Catering Service

Scottish local authority cost per meal in 22/23 was £3.83

Finances - Pricing of school meals 24/25

Category	Price
P6/7	£2.40
Secondary	£2.65
Adult	£4.20

Cost per meal iro £4.59;
22/23 income approx. £2.324m.

Finance - going forward:
- Rising food costs
- Equipment, Maintenance and Repair overheads
- Food in Schools – delivering sustainability saving of £262k (approx. 1% of total costs across all related service areas)

Take-up - Highland

Primary & Secondary Meal Take-up*

Primary	2022	2023	2024
P1-P5 UFSM % take-up of school roll	68%	69%	**72%****
P1-P5 UFSM % take-up of those present	77%	76%	77%
P6 / P7 FSM % take-up of school	61%	63%	61%
P6 / P7 FSM % take-up of those present	71%	72%	71%
Overall % take -up of school roll	59%	60%	62%
Overall % take -up of pupils present	66%	66%	67%

Secondary	2022	2023	2024
FSM % take-up of school roll	51%	54%	53%
FSM % take-up of those present	73%	76%	76.4%
Overall % take -up of school roll	32%	34%	40%
Overall % take -up of those present	40%	41%	49%

*Data Source: Catering service Census Data – figures are from one day – only day when absence and meal numbers are recorded tog ether

** 28% of the UFSM not having a meal equates to 3,231 pupils didn't take their free school meal
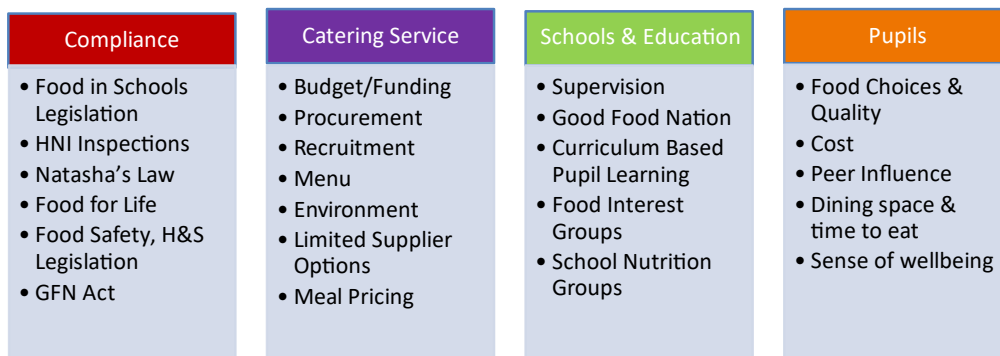
Food in schools - influences

Factors that could be influencing performance, e.g. takeup, cost etc.

Compliance	Catering Service	Schools & Education	Pupils
Parents & Carers	Outlets Near Schools	Advertising & Culture	Unforeseen Events

Food in schools - influences

Compliance
- Food in Schools Legislation
- HNI Inspections
- Natasha's Law
- Food for Life
- Food Safety, H&S Legislation
- GFN Act

Catering Service
- Budget/Funding
- Procurement
- Recruitment
- Menu
- Environment
- Limited Supplier Options
- Meal Pricing

Schools & Education
- Supervision
- Good Food Nation
- Curriculum Based Pupil Learning
- Food Interest Groups
- School Nutrition Groups

Pupils
- Food Choices & Quality
- Cost
- Peer Influence
- Dining space & time to eat
- Sense of wellbeing

Food in schools - influences

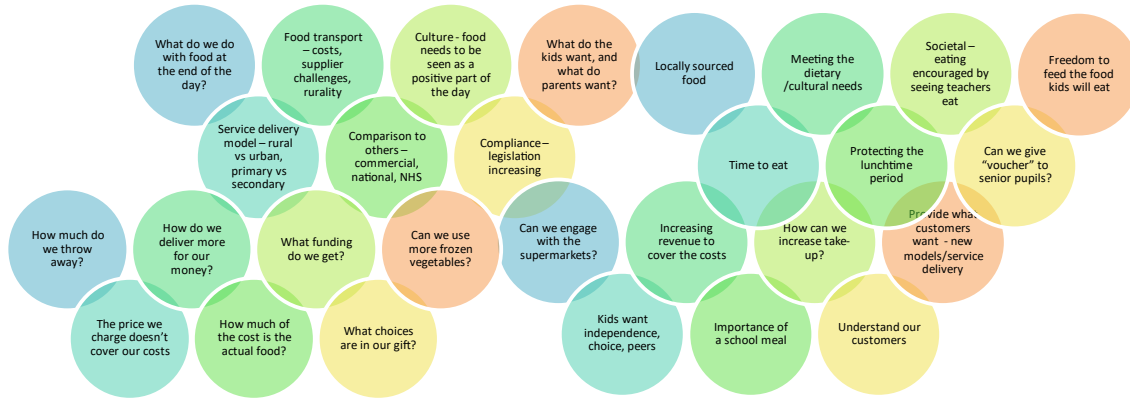| Parents & Carers	Outlets Near Schools	Advertising & Culture	Unforeseen Events
• Communication • Payment Systems • Free School Meals • Food quality & choice • Cost of living crisis	• Supermarkets • Shops • Garages • Mobile Caterers • Bakery's	• Fast Food • Role Models • Fashion/Fads	• Pandemic • Economic Decline • Weather Closures • Falling School Rolls • Strikes

Summary

- This is a critical service area, including health, environment, welfare and education.
- Changing and complex landscape
- Take-up rates appear mixed – duty of care to our children and young people.
- Financial pressures and ongoing requirements to deliver for value for money.
- We are purchasing food that is ultimately thrown away.

Workshop Output

1

Workshop Output

Selection of comments

- Recognition of complexity of the model – primary / secondary and rural / urban differences
- Compliance – nutritional standards and healthy eating, portion sizes
- Too much food is being binned
- Timing challenges for the school lunchtime, playtime and social time with peers – and the right of independence for older children to be out of school
- Physical environment for meals
- Understanding what the changing culture – more special meals, cultural and dietary requirements, choice
- Food education
- Financial analysis of our costs and funding model, how do we compare

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