



Notice of a public meeting of

School Meals Scrutiny Review Task Group

- To:** Councillors Brooks, Fitzpatrick, Pennington and Potter
Mr A Pennington (Co-opted Statutory Member)
- Date:** Monday, 25 November 2013
- Time:** 5.30 pm
- Venue:** The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

AGENDA

1. **Declarations of Interest**

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- Any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- Any prejudicial interests or
- Any disclosable pecuniary interests

Which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of annex B to agenda item 4 on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). This information is classed as exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered their wish to speak on an item on the agenda or an issue within the Task Group's remit can do so.

Anyone who wishes to register or who requires further information is requested to contact the Democracy Officers for this meeting, details of whom are listed at the foot of this agenda.

The deadline for registering to speak is **5:00pm on Friday 22 November 2013.**

4. School Meals Scrutiny Review - Interim Report (Pages 3 - 14)

This report presents further information in support of the ongoing scrutiny review of school meals, being undertaken by a Task Group of the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers:

Name: Louise Cook/Catherine Clarke (job-share)

Contact Details:

- Telephone – (01904) 551031
- Email – louise.cook@york.gov.uk
catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officers responsible for servicing this meeting.

- Registering to speak
- Written Representations
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

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- ensure that what you want to say speak relates to an item of business on the agenda or an issue which the committee has power to consider (speak to the Democracy Officer for advice on this);
- find out about the rules for public speaking from the Democracy Officer.

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Further information about what's being discussed at this meeting

All the reports which Members will be considering are available for viewing online on the Council's website. Alternatively, copies of individual reports or the full agenda are available from Democratic Services. Contact the Democracy Officer whose name and contact details are given on the agenda for the meeting. **Please note a small charge may be made for full copies of the agenda requested to cover administration costs.**

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Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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<http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>



School Meals Scrutiny Review Task Group**25 November 2013****School Meals Scrutiny Review - Interim Report****Purpose of Report**

1. This report presents further information in support of the ongoing scrutiny review of school meals, being undertaken by a Task Group from the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Review Background

2. At a meeting in June 2013, this Committee considered an introductory briefing provided by the Head of School Services & Directorate Support on the take up of school meals in general, and the take up of free school meals (FSM). The Committee agreed the topic was suitable for a scrutiny review and requested a scoping report for their July 2013 meeting.
3. In July 2013, the Committee received an introductory paper on the current provision of school meals and FSM in York, and considered a proposed timetable for carrying out the review. Based on the information provided, the Committee agreed the review remit detailed below, and set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf.

Review Remit

4. Aim: To improve the take-up of school meals and free school meals
5. Objectives:
 - To explore reasons for the relatively small increase in take-up of school meals across all York schools.
 - To investigate why some parents/carers who are entitled, do not register and claim for free school meals and consider how the Local Authority (LA) working with partners can encourage them to do so.

- To investigate the reasons why significant numbers of entitled pupils whose parents/carers **have** registered and claimed, do not take up the offer of a free school meal.
- To look at the effectiveness of cashless payment systems for school meals and their impact on school meal take-up.

Review Terminology:

6. Entitled to FSM – Pupils are entitled to receive a FSM if they live in households claiming qualifying benefits
7. Registered and claiming FSM – This relates to those who meet the entitlement criteria and register with the LA to claim FSM. This is what is reported by the School Census and described in publications as ‘known to be eligible for and claiming FSM’
8. Taking FSM – This relates to how many of the pupils registered to claim FSM actually take the meal on any given day.
9. Pupil Premium – Additional Government funding of £653 per pupil per year for every pupil registered for free school meals

Consultation & Timetable for Review

10. In August 2013 the Task Group agreed a timetable for the review detailing the work they would carry out and the consultation they would undertake - see Annex A.

Information Gathered to Date

11. An interim report was presented to the full Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2013 detailing in full the information gathered to date in support of this review.

Additional Information Gathered

12. Cost & Take-up
Based on information provided by the Local Authority's current provider of school meals (ISS), the Task Group noted that the cost in York was the highest in their portfolio, but recognised that their cost prices for each LA were based on what was included in each contract.

13. Taking into account all of the information provided in regard to cost and take-up, the Task Group agreed that the cost of a school meal in York was a prohibitive factor in increasing take-up. They noted the cost in other Local Authority areas where take-up was good (£1.80-£2) and queried what level of take-up would be required in York in order to bring down the price in York schools to £2 (without needing to raise the Local Authority subsidy). The Head of School Services confirmed that ISS had estimated an increase in take-up to approximately 55% (currently 38%) would be required to reduce the selling price to £2.

Free School Meals & Application Process

14. The Task Group were pleased to note the work recently undertaken by the Schools Services and Benefits teams to bring the application process for FSM in York in line with other LA areas exhibiting best practice and high take-up levels. They also acknowledged there was likely to be a number of reasons for none take-up of FSM in York, including the stigma of being on free school meals, quality, type and variety of food being served, the preference in York for a packed lunch, as well as pupils being absent from school and choosing not to take a meal.
15. Having considered the data collected by the Schools Services Team (see paragraph 23 above), they agreed that further research was required and queried whether it would be possible to identify all of the parents/carers of those pupils entitled to free school meals who had not registered and claimed.
16. As a result, the School Services Team has completed a piece of work in conjunction with the Benefits Team, to identify those parents/carers, and all were written to, encouraging them to apply.
17. To date approximately 180 families have responded to the contact which was made with them. Of those 132 families were eligible and are now claiming free school meals for their children whilst work is being done with the other families to identify whether they are still on benefits which qualify them for free school meals.
18. Of those 132 families many will have more than one child within school. It is estimated that as a result of this exercise 160 pupils have now applied and qualified for free school meals. This means that as a result of this exercise an additional £144k of funding has now become available for York schools.

19. School Visits

As part of the review the Task Group agreed they would like to carry out a number of visits to schools. In September 2013 the Head of School Services was asked to approach the 8 schools listed below to arrange visits in November. They also decided which members should visit which schools:

- i. Carr Junior School: Cllr Potter and Andrew Pennington
- ii. Westfield School: Cllr Fitzpatrick and Cllr Brooks
- iii. Joseph Rowntree: Cllr Potter and Andrew Pennington
- iv. York High: Cllr Fitzpatrick and Cllr Brooks
- v. Woodthorpe Primary: Cllr Fitzpatrick and Cllr Brooks
- vi. Burton Green: Cllr Potter and Andrew Pennington
- vii. Elvington: Cllr Brooks and Andrew Pennington
- viii. Robert Wilkinson: Cllr Fitzpatrick and Cllr Brooks

20. The Task Group members will be attending during the lunchtime period and have produced a brief survey to aid them in their discussions with pupils, school staff and catering staff.

21. To date, members of the Task Group have visited York High School and Robert Wilkinson Primary School. Those members will provide verbal feedback on those visits at this meeting.

22. Once all the visits have taken place the feedback will be collated and fed into the draft final report for this review.

23. Free School Meals for Infants

In light of a recent Government announcement on their plans to provide free school meals for infant school children (school years 1-3), the Task Group recognised this would lead to a substantial increase in the numbers receiving a school meal, and requested additional information to understand the knock on effects of this on the Local Authorities current contract with ISS.

24. The Head of School Services held a recent meeting with ISS to discuss this and feedback on that meeting is shown at exempt Annex B. In support, a representative from ISS will be present at this meeting to answer any questions the Task Group may have.

25. The Task Group will also need to consider the knock on effects of the forthcoming changes on the provision of school meals and FSM to children in Years 4+.

Completing the Work on this Review

26. Two further meetings of the Task Group will be required:

Meeting 1 – To consider the feedback from all the school visits and identify their review conclusions and draft recommendations

Meeting 2 – To consider the review draft final report before its presentation to the full Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its next scheduled meeting on 22 January 2014.

Implications

27. **Financial** – The report does refer to the following areas which may have implications on resources:

- the current cost of subsidising the price of school meals
- the potential increase in funding to schools by increasing the number of parents/carers applying for free school meals
- The cost of installing and running costs for cashless school meals systems
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications
- **Equalities** - There are no equalities implications
- **Legal** – There are no legal implications

Council Plan 2011-15

28. Protect vulnerable people – by increasing free school meal take up will enable more low income families children to access a daily healthy meal.

Risk Management

29. The risks in not conducting this review are:

- Schools could lose out on additional funding which is provided to them for every child on their roll who qualifies for free school meals;
- Pupils entitled to free school meals miss out on eating a free meal every school day.

Recommendations

30. Having considered the information provided within this report the Task Group is recommended to:

- i. Note the new information provided in support of this review as shown in paragraphs 17 & 18 above and at exempt Annex B, and identify any further additional information required.
- ii. Agree two further meeting dates to conclude the work on this review.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and workplans.

Contact Details

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Scrutiny Services

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

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Tel No.01904 552054

Report Approved



Date 15 November 2013

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes

Annex A – Review Timetable

Annex B – Information from ISS on Effects of Recent Government's
Announcement (Exempt)

School Meals Scrutiny Review Timetable

Visits / Meetings	Area of Inquiry	Suggest Method
<p>Meeting 1- Information Gathering</p> <p>21 August 2013 @ 5:30pm</p>	<p>1. To consider how the Local Authority working with partners can encourage those parents/carers who are entitled to register and claim for free school meals for their children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet with representatives of ISS (Education) catering contractors to consider options/solutions to non-take up of school meals from pupils who are entitled and whose parents/carers have registered. To explore reasons for relatively small increase in take-up of school meals across all York schools • To consider the current free school meal application process and consider possible improvements by comparing the current process to those LA's where 100% of eligible parents/carers apply.
<p>Meeting 2 - Information Gathering</p> <p>25 September 2013 @ 5:30pm</p>	<p>2. To investigate the reasons why significant numbers of entitled pupils whose parents/carers have registered and claimed do not take up the offer of a free school meal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider prohibitive factors affecting take up of school meals and FSM • To meet youth council representatives to discuss reasons for low free school meal take-up from their perspective.
<p>School Visits Consultation</p>	<p>3. To look at the effectiveness of cashless school meals and there impact on school meal take-up</p> <p>4. To investigate why entitled parents & carers do not register and claim for FSM, and why take up of school meals is limited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet with pupils, school staff and catering staff, including one which has a cashless payment system to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Look at impact of cashless system and any resulting improvements. b) Explore reasons for low take up of school meals

		and FSM and explore options/solutions
Meeting 3 - Information Gathering 25 November 2013	To receive information on the knock on effects of the forthcoming Govt provision of FSM to all infant school children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider all the information gathered to date, identify what if any additional information is required, and if possible identify some initial conclusions
Meeting 4 Date to be Agreed	To consolidate information gathered to date and identify some initial conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet with parent/carers representative groups (Citizens Advice?) to look at barriers and reasons for not registering and claiming. (IF REQUIRED) To consider information gathered from all the school visits
Meeting 5 Date to be agreed	To identify suitable recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider a draft final report containing findings from all the information gathered and draft recommendations

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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