

**Executive**

**19 May 2022**

Report of the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee

## **School Holiday Food Scrutiny Review Final Report – Cover Report**

### **Summary**

1. This cover report presents the final report from the School Holiday Food Scrutiny Review undertaken by Children, Education and Communities (CEC) Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It seeks approval to the recommendations from the Executive.

### **Recommendation**

2. Having considered the School Holiday Food Scrutiny Review Final Report at Appendix 1 and its annexes, the Executive is asked to approve the recommendations as shown in paragraph 6, below.

Reason: To conclude this scrutiny review in line with CYC (City of York) scrutiny procedures and protocols.

### **Background**

3. Executive made a request on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for Children, Education and Communities (CEC) Policy and Scrutiny Committee to consider: **the effectiveness, impact and funding of the free school meal voucher scheme alongside other grassroots community-based provision and other schemes to address food poverty impacts.**
4. At their meeting in January 2022, the CEC Scrutiny Committee resolved to form a Task Group to research, evaluate and consider the key issues in supporting children's food provision during school holidays. The draft scoping report was considered on 28 February 2022 and the following objectives were set:

- To assess the position pre-pandemic with respect to support for children's food during school holiday times for those entitled to Free School Meals.
- To identify the support made available during the pandemic from various funding sources, CYC provision and other community-based food support.
- To establish options to support the ongoing food needs of children during school holidays as the Pandemic food support comes to an end.

## Consultation

5. The Scrutiny Task Group consulted with Council Officers, Executive Members, service providers and schools, details of which are contained in the report at Appendix 1.

## Review Recommendations

6. Arising from the Committee's extensive consultation and key findings are a number of recommendations for the Executive to consider, these were approved at the Committee meeting, 03 May 2022:
  - **Recommendation 1** Holiday food provision should be put in place for the remaining school holidays in 2022/23 in line with the recommendations below, acknowledging that the provision of vouchers at a cost £50k to £60k per school holiday week is not affordable without direct government funding.
  - **Recommendation 2** Despite its acknowledged limitations, HAF will remain an important part of the school holiday food offer, and CYC should continue to promote it and work with providers to make activities as genuinely accessible as possible, whilst also lobbying Government for greater flexibility in how the programme can be delivered.
  - **Recommendation 3** In determining how the £200,000 for Covid recovery efforts is spent, Ward teams should prioritise supporting settings and providers that, with appropriate support, could deliver a school holiday food offer targeted at those most in need and for whom other support may not be accessible.

- **Recommendation 4** The remaining £43,000 in the school holiday food budget should be made available for LACs, schools and community organisations to use to issue supermarket vouchers to families who are in need and for whom other support may be inaccessible. If demand proves to be high, Executive should look at ways in which this fund could be supplemented from other sources.
- **Recommendation 5** When details of the new Household Support Fund are available, CYC should identify how its delivery can be targeted to specifically benefit FSM (Free School Meals) families.
- **Recommendation 6** CYC should produce an advice and information pack designed to signpost families, advice partners and ward councillors to sources of information and support. This should be accessible to all but promoted specifically to FSM families.

## Officer Response

7. The Committee is thanked for its detailed report produced on a timely basis to allow planning for the rest of the 2021/22 and ahead of the 2022/23 school year to support children and families during the school holidays in accordance with any agreed Executive recommendations.
8. The numbers of children claiming free school meals over this period are expected to increase as the cost of living and especially food and fuel, continue to increase and expect to worsen over the winter 2022/23.
9. The financial implications of the recommendations as they stand are in line with existing budget allocations. Should Executive Members choose to support alternative options illustrative costs are below:
  - **Fund free school meal vouchers during every school holiday week in each year.** A prudent average estimate would be £60k per week for 13 weeks, a total of £780k per year. There is currently no government funding available for this purpose except HAF funding as outlined in the scrutiny report. The new Household Support Fund could only be used up to September 2022 with a maximum top slice of £50k to allow its existing grant conditions to be met (at the time of writing this report the recommendation to members was to top

slice £50k to allow supermarket vouchers to be issued which would align with Recommendation 4 above). This option would therefore require additional funding to be identified.

- **Fund free school meal vouchers alongside the planned HAF scheme** which operates over 6 weeks of the school holiday. This would require 7 weeks funding of vouchers at an estimated cost of £60k per week, a total annual cost of £420k. Again Household Support Fund would be insufficient to support this. This option would therefore require additional funding to be identified.

10. All recommendations as they stand can be implemented in principle however the number of eligible children in addition to those in early year settings in a ward will impact on what can be achieved through available ward based funding (Recommendation 3), which means that other forms of support will be necessary and critical to avoid further inequalities emerging.

## **Options**

11. Having considered the final report at Appendix 1 and its annexes the Executive may choose to receive the report from Scrutiny and either approve and/or amend, or reject the recommendations arising from the review as set out in paragraph 6, above.

## **Council Plan 2019-23**

12. This review is linked to the following the key outcomes of the Plan.

- Good Health and Wellbeing
- A Better Start for Children and Young People
- Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy
- Safe Communities and culture for all

## **Implications and Risk Management**

13. The risks and implications associated with the review recommendations were noted by the Committee in arriving at its final report at Appendix 1.

## Contact Details

### Author:

Dawn Steel  
Head of Civic, Democratic &  
Scrutiny Services  
dawn.steel@york.gov.uk

### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Janie Berry  
Director of Governance  
Janie.berry@york.gov.uk

Report Approved  Date 10/05/2022

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

### Annexes

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Appendix 1 | Report of the School Holiday Food Review Group, plus annexes. |
| Appendix 2 | Equalities Impact Assessment                                  |