

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Education and Families Committee

Approval  Noting

Ref AH/JMcK

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## Universal Free School Meals 2022/23 Update

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### Executive Summary

The Universal Free School Meals programme was announced in March 2021 with an update provided to committee in September 2021, in relation to the details below:

- the expansion of universal free school meals to primary four children in August 2021; and
- the expansion of universal free school meals to primary five children in January 2022.

The specific level of allocation of funding to North Lanarkshire Council for financial year 2021/2022 was £1,873,000. This figure was confirmed in a letter received on 14th May 2021 from the Scottish Government.

Figures provided for P4 and P5 pupil roll numbers were 7,686, all of whom from August 2021 and January 2022 were respectively entitled to free school meals and breakfasts.

This report provides committee with an updated position on the rollout of the programme within North Lanarkshire and it reinforces previous reports that have already been approved by Committee. The request at the Education and Families Committee in September 2021 was for a further progress report to be presented to Committee in the New Calendar Year, 2022, following implementation of P5 Universal Free School Meals. This initiative fully supports The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

The report focuses on the work successfully completed for implementation of P4 Universal Free School Meals in August 2021 and P5 January 2022 rollout.

The report also provides details of current and future revenue and capital spend, along with the current position on implementation of P6 and P7 rollout in the current parliamentary term.

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### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education & Families Committee.

- Review the information contained in this report as the update on implementation of Universal Free School Meals for P4 and P5; and

- Consider the current position of implementation of Universal Free School Meals for P6 and P7 and note the amendment from the initial target date of August 2022 to later in the parliamentary term, the timeframe has not yet been specified by Scottish Government.

## The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Support all children and young people to realise their full potential

Ambition statement (15) Encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities

### 1. Primary 4 Implementation August 2021 and P5 January 2022.

1.1 As part of the new 2021/22 implementation plan the service has focused on the following areas project resources, equipment investment, capital investment and dining capacity. Each of these areas are summarised below: -

1.1.1 Project Resources - Implementation for Universal Free School Meals P4 pupils in August 2021 went through very smoothly. Frontline staffing was reviewed, and a small number of posts were implemented to support the increase in meals across the estate. At the Workforce Steering Group in October 2021, approval was given for recruitment of Catering Assistant NLC3 posts and these were actioned as required. COVID-19 across Scotland has had a negative impact on school meals uptake and the service is closely monitoring this and ensuring effective management of budgets and positive action is implemented. The service is seeing a slow upward trend and is working with the Strategic Communications Team to promote the Marketing of school meal uptake and already some of our theme days have been a great success and the Facility Support Services Management team have made this a priority for 2022/23. Free school meal uptake is currently at 73% across all primary and ASN school settings.

1.1.2 A review of resources was undertaken to successfully implement the free school meals project. **Table 1** below, details the new additional posts created and approved at the Workforce Steering Group in October 2021.

**Table 1 Investment in Resources for Project**

Grade	Title	Duration
NLC14	Assistant Business Manager (Projects)	December 2022 Temp
NLC12	Area Manager Projects	December 2022 Temp
NLC7	Nutritional Support Officer	Permanent
		Total

1.1.3 Equipment Investment – Investment has been spent in 2021/22 in the provision of catering equipment required in schools to undertake the additional school meals required for P4 and P5 implementation.

1.1.4 Capital Investment – Facility Support Services undertook in partnership with colleagues across Asset & Procurement Services, some capital renovation works in a

small number of schools to implement P4 and P5 Universal Free School Meals. **Appendix 1** outlines these schools where changes were made to move from dining centres to production centres to assist with the additional meals.

- 1.1.5 Dining Capacity – After analysing information returned from Head Teachers and thereafter undertaking several on-site meetings at schools it was concluded that capacity can be met in all schools with a variation of methods to support this. P4 and P5 are fully supported, and this will continue for P6 and P7. Methods such as multiple sittings, additional dining areas and additional dining support have all been introduced. The service has also benefited from the rollout of the pre order service which speeds up the service at the till point.
- 1.2 To Summarise Universal Free School Meals for P4 and P5 has now been successfully implemented.

## 2. Implementation of P6 and P7

- 2.1 On the 29<sup>th</sup> October colleagues from Financial Solutions and Asset & Procurement Solutions submitted North Lanarkshire Council's estimated capital and ongoing revenue costs for the further roll out of P6 and P7 to Scottish Futures Trust who were collating this information on behalf of Scottish Government. **Appendix 2** to this report provides a summary of the submission provided. North Lanarkshire Council submitted a capital request of £4.251m. The outcome of this funding has not been finalised yet. The majority of this was to refurbish 15 kitchens that are currently either dining centres or regeneration units and the capital budget would be used to reinstate these kitchens to production kitchens effectively allowing them to cook on site for both school and nursery children.
- 2.2 This would stop production coming from other schools who would undoubtedly struggle with the volumes expected. To maintain quality and high standards of service delivery for high volumes it is best to cook on site. The remaining capital budget is required to update equipment to take on the new increase in meals such as new ovens with larger capacities and additional refrigeration etc. **Appendix 1 – Completed and Proposed Capital Works Kitchen Renovations** to this report outlines the kitchens as part of this submission that are proposed to be refurbished.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government on 14<sup>th</sup> December released an update to Local Authorities through the Scottish Futures Trust as to the current position in relation to P6 and P7 Universal Free School Meal rollout.
- 2.4 It was announced that there would be an additional £42m funding provided in the Scottish budget for 2022/23 for the current implementation of P4 and P5 rollout. No specific details have been provided for how the funding will be shared between local authorities and it is expected this information may be released late January or February 2022.
- 2.5 Scottish Government have also advised there is to be a short pause to implement the roll out P6 and P7 pending a spending review and agreed delivery timetable. They have stated that it is accepted that when current P5s become P6 they will not be eligible until detail is provided on roll out for Free School Meals for P6 and P7.
- 2.6 An initial capital investment of £30m for 2022/23 is to be provided in the Scottish budget for Local Authorities in preparation of P6 and P7 roll out. Again, there has

been no settlement in what share of this allocation North Lanarkshire Council will receive as yet.

- 2.7 Work will continue to ensure the service is prepared for the dates of implementation when announced.

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#### **4. Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty**

- 4.1 The introduction of this Scottish Government Policy contains no measures which would have a detrimental socio/economic impact on communities in North Lanarkshire as defined in the Fairer Scotland Duty. This initiative will reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio/economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. This report, will also support the Council to meet its statutory and legal requirements under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

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#### **5. Impact**

##### **5.1 Financial impact**

- 5.1.1 The Council received funding of £1.873m in the financial year 2021/22 to fund P4 meals from August 2021 & P5 from January 2022. The final distribution of Free School Meal monies for both revenue and capital funding for next financial year will be finalised within the 2022/23 Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 5.1.2 It is anticipated that the revenue grant allocation from the Scottish Government should meet the full cost of roll out which if based on indicative meal rate of £3.33 previously advised this should be in the region of £2.8m revenue funding. This is to fund the P4 & P5s additional daily meals.
- 5.1.3 Details of individual local authority capital grant allocations are still to be determined at a national level.

##### **5.2 HR policy / Legislative impact**

- 5.2.1 Any workforce changes outlined in this report have been undertaken in accordance with the Council's *Managing Workforce Change – Framework Guidance*.
- 5.2.2 Equality Impact Assessments and Fairer Scotland Assessments will also at the appropriate time be undertaken.

##### **5.3 Technology / Digital impact**

- 5.3.1 There are no Technological/digital impact from this report.

##### **5.4 Environmental impact**

- 5.4.1 NLC have an Environment strategy which includes the Single Use Plastic Action Plan 2019-2024. FSS are working to contribute to the actions in this plan.
- 5.4.2 Many Primary pupils engage in this process and as the service continues work will continue through the FSS action plan to engage with primary and secondary pupils.

## 5.5 **Communications impact**

- 5.5.1 Facility Support Services will continue to work with the Strategic Communications Section as outlined in the Committee paper for the P4 and P5 report in September 2021 in taking positive steps to ensure the availability of Universal Free School Meals are communicated effectively to our communities.

## 5.6 **Risk impact**

- 5.6.1 An operational risk register and action plan has been development and has been developed throughout the period of implementation of this initiative.

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## 6. **Measures of success**

- 6.1 Measures of success will be monitored and measured through pupil and parent consultation and school meal uptake levels. This will be achieved by undertaking pupil and parent surveys and monitoring uptake. Work will be ongoing with Head Teachers to maximise uptake and ensure the financial and health and wellbeing benefits are communicated to our families within North Lanarkshire. This will be rolled out in accordance with the Scottish Government timeframes within the Parliamentary term.
- 6.2 A further report back to committee can be expected to update on the new timetable of roll out when announced by Scottish Government and a further update to this report on progress for implementation.

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## 7. **Supporting documents**

- 7.1 **Appendix 1 – Completed and Proposed Capital Works Kitchen Renovations**
- 7.2 **Appendix 2 - NLC Capital and Revenue Submission Summary P6 and P7**



**James McKinstry**  
**Head of Asset & Procurement Solutions**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Completed and Proposed Capital Works for Renovation of Kitchens**

#### **2020/21 – Completed Capital Works**

Golfhill primary School  
Sikeside Primary School  
St Michael's Primary School

#### **2022+ Proposed Capital Works**

Aitkenhead Primary School  
Baird Memorial Primary School  
Corpus Christi Primary School  
Glencairn Primary School  
Glenmanor Primary School  
St Bartholomew's Primary School  
St Gerard's Primary School  
St Joseph's Primary School  
St Lucy's Primary School  
St Mary's Primary School  
St Monica's Primary School  
Ravenswood Primary School  
Stane Primary School  
Thornlie Primary School  
Townhead Primary School

## Appendix 2

### School Lunch Expansion - Estimated Capital and Associated Revenue Costs

Local Authority: North Lanarkshire Council

Category	Estimated Cost (£m)
<b>1. One-off Revenue Costs</b> Light equipment including pots, trolleys, tables, cutlery	<b>0.408</b>
<b>2. Capital Costs</b> Refurbishments to kitchens and serving areas (to support additional demand and convert from regeneration to production kitchens), serving equipment, ovens, fridges, and storage	<b>4.251</b>
<b>3. Ongoing additional recurring revenue costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food costs</li><li>• Production and serving staff</li><li>• Dining room supervision / additional cleaning requirements</li><li>• Loss of paid school meal income</li><li>• Other costs – cleaning materials, transport, consumables etc</li></ul> <b>Total Recurring Revenue Costs</b>	 1.352 2.754 1.283 2.907 0.743 <b>9.039</b>

Appendix 2 represents NLC's submission to Scottish Government as an estimate of both revenue and capital costs associated with the full roll out of free school meals for all years in Primary schools.

How-ever there is continuing uncertainty over the timing of full roll out and the funding being made available by Scottish Government to support both one-off and recurring costs.

If Scottish Government funding is not forthcoming, then planning would have to be amended.