

Terms of Reference for a Review of Warwickshire County Council's School Meals Service – January 2007

Aims and Objectives

Aim

Following the national trend school meal take up in Warwickshire has over the last year or so witnessed a marked downturn. This has been largely attributed to a general criticism of the quality of school meals broadcast by Jamie Oliver. The majority of school meals in Warwickshire are provided by the County Council and as a consequence of the reduced take-up of the service the ~~the~~ manner in which the service is delivered and in particular the positioning of risk is now considered in need of review. The aim of this review which has been requested by members of the Resources, Performance and Development and Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committees is to assist in developing strategies and policies aimed at addressing those issues highlighted.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the review are

1. to agree a series of recommendations for actions that will increase take-up of the service,
2. consider mechanisms which assist the service and its customers in balancing financial/operational pressures
3. to assist school Governing bodies in ensuring that their obligations regarding the provision of good quality school meals can be met and considering ways of improving awareness/take-up of free school meals
4. further enhance the nutritional quality of the meals provided thus helping to enhance educational attainment in schools.

Scope

In order to achieve the above, the review will consider,

- school meal provision in primary and secondary schools
- the seasonal factors that determine take-up of the service
- the impact of the dining environment and experience on take-up of the service
- trading accounts and potential school by school/sector by sector issues
- clustering arrangements of schools
- the potential impact of the kitchen upgrade strategy
- the timing of lunch times within the school day
- the quality and training of catering and lunchtime staff

The review will not consider, draw conclusions or make recommendations on,

- Independent schools
- Health and obesity amongst young people
- Funding Formulae

The review will utilise the following sources of evidence.

- Guidelines on mandatory services
- Ofsted healthy eating reports

- Up to date figures on school meal take up and demand analysed by sector and locality
- Current financial information
- Information on experiences from other parts of the country broken down by area, school type and locality
- Benchmarking information
- Examples of best practice
- The results of a survey conducted with every pupil regarding the ECM outcomes including healthy eating
- WES survey data
- UCE pupil attitude survey

Indicators of Success

The principal indicator of success is that the recommendations made are accepted and implemented with a corresponding impact upon the objectives outlined above.

Following implementation, monitoring of the situation will continue using SMART targets based upon school meal take-up, financial considerations and supplier and customer perceptions

Methodology

The review will utilise the following

- Site visits to sample school meals and see catering and dining facilities first hand
- A DVD which illustrates facilities and practice in eight schools
- Where appropriate, visits to other authorities to learn from best practice
- Survey results

The following stakeholders will be consulted

- Young people
- Parents and carers via appropriate mechanisms
- Governors through their forums
- Head teachers via their conferences

A Member/officer panel will be established to oversee the review. This will comprise

Councillors

Booth
Timms
Whitehouse
M Singh
Compton
Moss

Phil Evans	–	Head of Facilities Management
Sandra Russell	-	Head of Catering
Shona Walton	-	Principal Inspector, Access and Innovation
Michelle McHugh	-	Scrutiny Officer
Paul Williams	-	Scrutiny Officer

Timetable

December 2006	Initial meeting of panel
January 2007	Two meetings to develop working group's understanding of issues and oral update reports to relevant committee
February 2007	Site visits
May June	Panel to produce recommendations