



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Cabinet – 21 July 2022

Capital Programme Authorisation for the Commitment of Funding to Support the Rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals

Purpose:	To comply with Financial Procedure Rule No 7(Capital Programming and Appraisals) to commit and authorise schemes in the Capital programme.
Policy Framework:	Financial Procedure Rules
Consultation:	Education, Finance, Legal Services, Corporate Building Services, Corporate Property Services, Access to Services
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The capital scheme in the sum of £1,804,997, as detailed, together with the financial implications is approved and included in the capital programme for 2022/23.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Welsh Government (WG) announced in December 2021 its intention to extend free school meals to all primary school pupils. The expectation is that this will be introduced for the youngest (infant) pupils in September 2022, and older (junior) pupils phased from September 2023.
- 1.2 Audits of school infrastructure (including kitchen and dining facilities), workforce and contractual arrangements, have since commenced to better understand existing capacity and where these need further development/investment.

- 1.3 On 24 February 2022, WG awarded funding to the Council of £1,804,997 for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, which was paid in full in March 2022.
- 1.4 The grant had to be used in the 2021-22 financial year for eligible expenditure or displaced against other education capital expenditure. Any displaced funding must be used during the 2022-23 financial year for eligible expenditure.
- 1.5 The allocation of £1,804,997 capital expenditure provided in 2021-22 was therefore offset against the local authority 21st Century Schools Band B spend in the same year, with the 2021-22 displaced funding applied to the 2022-23 programme for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure.
- 1.6 The aim of the grant is to support the rollout of universal primary free school meals. Eligible expenditure for this funding will include the following capital costs:
- Purchasing new equipment;
 - Upgrading existing equipment;
 - Upgrading existing kitchen/dining facilities; and
 - Works to increase the capacity of school meal infrastructure.

2. Description of project

- 2.1 An impact assessment has been undertaken which has found that, on the day of the assessment in January, **10877** meals were served, of those 3688 were free school meals. In September 2022, on the introduction of free school meals for infant pupils, then if the number of junior pupils taking a meal remains the same and there is a 100% uptake in the infants then this will rise to **13859**. If free school meals are then extended to all junior pupils in September 2023, then this will rise to **16841** on the same set of assumptions.
- 2.2 There are a number of strands to this project to enhance and upgrade the existing dining and kitchen infrastructure to support the roll out of universal primary free school meals, with a very tight delivery timescale to ensure that the infrastructure is ready for the increased number of meals, and also that the grant funding is spent within the 2022-23 financial year.
- 2.3 This includes scoping works required to address, where possible, special constraints, electrical capacity and extraction upgrades.
- 2.4 A schedule of kitchen and dining equipment requirements to upgrade or add to existing equipment at the majority of primary schools was produced which totals approximately £916,000.

- 2.5 Facilities Management has engaged with the Council's contractor, and as expected, a supply chain risk was raised, not least, as Swansea will be one of a number of authorities undertaking the same process.
- 2.6 With this in mind, and to mitigate this risk, in advance of this report authorisation was obtained under delegated powers to commit an initial £916,000 of the £1,804,997 grant to the capital programme. Equipment orders have been placed and equipment received, some of which has been delivered directly to schools, and some of which is stored, in a council industrial unit, so that it is available as and when infrastructure/electrical upgrades are undertaken.
- 2.7 Since then further scoping work has been undertaken which has identified the need for additional kitchen and/or dining space at 5 schools, together with extraction and electrical upgrades at a number of other schools. It is also recognised that as the installation of equipment is progressed that further electrical upgrades may be identified as needed.
- 2.8 The balance of the funding is therefore proposed to be allocated to the further identified works as outlined above, but noting that funding will be insufficient to fulfil all of the requirements. This has been raised with WG and it is understood that the potential for additional funding is being considered.
- 2.9 It should be noted that both the equipment and infrastructure upgrades will consider the council's carbon reduction aims where possible.

3. Integrated Assessment Implications

The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in

accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 3.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 3.3 An IIA screening has been undertaken and it has been determined that the project does not require a full IIA report.
- 3.4 The extension of free school meals to all primary school pupils is a WG commitment, and below is an extract from the written statement of Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language on the policy:
“Our ambitions are informed by our understanding that younger children are more likely to be living in relative income poverty and, in taking this action, an additional 196,000 children will become eligible to take up the offer of a Free School Meal in Wales. Our commitment, therefore, represents a transformational intervention and an important further step to reaching our shared ambitions of tackling child poverty and ensuring that no child goes hungry.”
“Evidence also points toward the wider benefits of Free School Meals, including raising the profile of healthy eating across the whole school, increasing the range of food pupils eat, improving social skills at meal times, as well as improvements to behaviour and attainment. More widely, in rolling out this commitment we will be working with partners to increase the supply of Welsh food onto the school plate. This will shorten supply chains and reduce carbon emissions, support local food producers and distributors, and strengthen the Foundational Economy.”
- 3.5 This project supports the delivery of that statement.
- 3.6 The project supports in every respect the WFG Act, including supporting a sustainable Swansea, and carbon reduction.
- 3.7 All key stakeholders will be communicated with throughout the project's delivery.

4. Financial Implications

Capital

- 4.1 WG awarded £1,804,997 to the Council in February 2022 for School Meals Infrastructure. The grant related to 2021-22 financial year and had to be spent within that year or any unspent grant had to be returned. The grant was paid in March 2022. The grant was allocated as funding for eligible expenditure within 2021-22 in order to secure the grant and not lose it. This has freed up other funding resources within the 2022-23

budget so in 2022-23 £1,804,997 will be available to spend on school meals infrastructure.

- 4.2 This report is seeking authorisation to commit the full grant being £1,804,997 to the capital programme.
- 4.3 The total funding requested has been profiled as set out in Appendix A.

Revenue

- 4.4 Where capital funding is used to add additional square meterage to the size of a school, this would lead to an increase in the rates bill for the school and also an increase in the delegated budget share, as premises funding is based on gross floor area. In both cases, the increased funding would be found from within the overall delegated schools' budget.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council will need to comply with the terms and conditions attached to any grant funding referred to in this report.
- 5.2 All contracts for works, goods and services necessary to deliver the projects must be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the relevant EU Regulations as appropriate. The contractual liabilities/obligations of the Council and any appointed contractors will be covered by the individual contracts entered into.

Background Papers: 17/03/2022 Delegated Powers Report Capital programme authorisation for the purchase and storage of equipment to support the rollout of universal primary free school meals

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Financial Implications Summary
- Appendix B - IIA

Appendix A

Financial Procedure Rule 7

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : SUMMARY

Portfolio: EDUCATION
 Service : PRIMARY PROVISION
 Funding Grant to Support the Rollout of
 Scheme : Universal Primary Free School Meals

<u>1.1. CAPITAL COSTS</u>	2022/23 £'000		TOTAL £'000
<u>Expenditure</u>	1,805		1,805
EXPENDITURE	1,805		1,805
<u>Financing</u>			
Welsh Government Capital Funding Grant to Support the Rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals	1,805		1,805
FINANCING	1,805		1,805
<u>1.2. REVENUE COSTS</u>	2022/23 £'000		FULL YEAR £'000
<u>Service Controlled - Expenditure</u>			
Employees)			0
Maintenance)			0
Vehicle running costs)			0
NET EXPENDITURE	0		0
<u>Financing</u>			
Unknown			
FINANCING	0		0