



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Cabinet – 15 December 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 a second capital grant award in the sum of £2,526,996 for the upgrade of school meal infrastructure, 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 Cabinet: 1) Approves the second capital grant award for the upgrade of school meal infrastructure in the sum of £2,526,996, resulting in a total commitment of £4,331,993, and it be included in the capital programme for 2022/23. |
| Report Author: | Louise Herbert-Evans |
| Finance Officer: | Ben Smith |
| Legal Officer: | Caritas Adere |
| Access to Services Officer: | Rhian Millar |

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 the roll out will be phased and complete in 2024, and to date all reception pupils in Swansea are now able to have a free school meal.

- 1.2 To extend the roll out to all pupils it is necessary to upgrade the majority of kitchen and dining facilities.
- 1.3 WG has provided the authority with two capital grants now totalling £4,331,993 to enable the authority to achieve this.
- 1.4 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. This was offset against the local authority QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning 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.
- 1.5 On the 21 July 2022 Cabinet resolved that the capital scheme in the sum of £1,804,997, as detailed in the report together with the financial implications be approved and included in the Capital Programme 2022/23.
- 1.6 On 30 August 2022, WG awarded a second tranche of funding to the Council of £2,526,996 for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, which was paid in full in September 2022.
- 1.7 This second grant has to be used in the 2022-23 financial year for eligible expenditure or displaced against other education capital expenditure. Any displaced funding must be used during the 2023-24 financial year for eligible expenditure.
- 1.8 The allocation of £2,526,996 capital expenditure provided in 2022-23 has therefore been offset against the local authority QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B spend in the same year, with the 2022-23 displaced funding applied to the 2023-24 programme for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure.
- 1.9 The aim of the second grant is also 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 programme

- 2.1 There are a number of strands to this programme 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 that the grant funding is spent within the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years.

- 2.2 All schools have now been surveyed by the equipment supplier and most of the additional equipment has been ordered. Work is in progress to undertake necessary mechanical and electrical works and install the equipment.
- 2.3 However, five schools require additional kitchen and/or dining space, and 15 schools require extraction and/or electrical upgrades. The number of schools requiring more substantial works could increase as the remaining electrical surveys are completed. This work is currently being specified and will take longer to complete.
- 2.4 At this stage the budget monitoring indicates that the required works can be delivered within the available budget provided by the two grants totalling £4,331,993. This forecast will be subject to change and is dependent on the outcomes of the final electrical surveys and the cost of the more substantial works described in paragraph 2.3 above once tendered.
- 2.5 Officers will work closely with WG officers regarding the spend profile and delivery within the required financial years. Completion of all the works by the 31 March 2024 is potentially achievable, however this will be subject to no significant issues being encountered and contractor capacity.
- 2.6 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 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, 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 programme 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 programme supports the delivery of that statement.
- 3.6 The programme 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 programme's delivery.

4. Financial Implications

Capital

- 4.1 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. This was offset against the local authority QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning 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.
- 4.2 On the 21 July 2022 Cabinet resolved that the capital scheme in the sum of £1,804,997, as detailed in the report together with the financial implications be approved and included in the Capital Programme 2022/23.
- 4.3 On 30 August 2022, WG awarded a second tranche of funding to the Council of £2,526,996 for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, which was paid in full in September 2022.
- 4.4 This second grant has to be used in the 2022-23 financial year for eligible expenditure or displaced against other education capital expenditure. Any displaced funding must be used during the 2023-24 financial year for eligible expenditure.
- 4.5 The allocation of £2,526,996 capital expenditure provided in 2022-23 has therefore been offset against the local authority QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B spend in the same year, with the 2022-23 displaced funding applied to the 2023-24 programme for capital expenditure on the school meal infrastructure.
- 4.6 This report is seeking authorisation to commit the second grant being £2,526,996 to the capital programme, bringing the total capital allocation for the Universal Free School meals programme to £4,331,993
- 4.7 The total funding requested has been profiled as set out in Appendix A.

Revenue

- 4.8 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 programme 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.
- 5.3 Delivering this programme will assist the Council in meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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

21/07/2022 Report of the Director of Education Capital programme authorisation for the commitment of funding to support the rollout of universal primary free school meals

Appendices:

Appendix A - Financial Implications Summary

Appendix B – IIA screening form

Appendix A

Financial Procedure Rule 7

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : SUMMARY

Portfolio: EDUCATION
 Service : PRIMARY PROVISION
 Second 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> | 2,526 | | 2,526 |
| EXPENDITURE | 2,526 | | 2,526 |
| <u>Financing</u> | | | |
| Welsh Government Capital Funding Grant to Support the Rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals | 2,526 | | 2,526 |
| FINANCING | 2,526 | | 2,526 |
| | | | |
| <u>1.2. REVENUE COSTS</u> | 2022/23 £'000 | | FULL YEAR £'000 |
| <u>Service Controlled - Expenditure</u> | | | |
| Employees) | | | 0 |
| | | Unknown will be met from existing budgets | 0 |
| Maintenance) | | | 0 |
| Vehicle running costs) | | | 0 |
| NET EXPENDITURE | 0 | | 0 |
| <u>Financing</u> | | | |
| FINANCING | 0 | | 0 |