

Report To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Of: Director of Environmental Services

Date: 13th June 2006

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Title:

Response to the Final Report of the Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Panel

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to respond to recommendations put forward to tackle childhood obesity issues through local programmes and policies which impact on the under 11 year-olds in Bolton's primary schools.

The actions relate to the Council's school meals provision in primary schools and the healthy eating developments linked to reducing obesity.

For Information:

The Scrutiny Panel is requested to note the responses to recommendations 4, 5, 6, 15 contained in the report.

Background Documents:

Pilot Healthy Eating Programme for Primary Schools.

Local Area Agreement – Healthier Communities – Children and Young People

Final Report from White Paper for 'Nutrition Standard' Legislation – May 06

Policy Options Report to Children's Services - School Meals Funding

School Meals Transformation Report to Executive Members – June 2006

1. Purpose of this Response

To meet objectives from the recommendations in the final report of the 'Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee' -... *"investigate whether policies, programmes and actions aimed at tackling obesity among children under 11 years old by working with schools are being implemented effectively in Bolton"*.

2 Background

Central government interventions as part of the National Health Strategy, is looking at children's health inequalities related to poor diet, rising childhood obesity levels and soaring NHS costs in treating diet-related health complaints; and has seen an increased focus on school meals quality and level of provision. The School Meals Review Panel (DfES) have reported to the Secretary of State recommending to government a series of 34 recommendations for School Meals improvements including the intention to introduce tighter Nutrition-based Standards rather than the food based standards currently in place and only loosely monitored.

The School Food Trust has been set up to add an advisory capacity to drive improvement and more robust monitoring through Ofsted to report on quality and menu compliance.

The School Meals Service works with other government's school based initiatives include Food in School Programme (FIS), National Fruit Scheme, The Five-a-Day Programme, The 'Healthy Living Blueprint' issued by Secretary of State, Charles Clarke 2004, The Healthy Schools Programme, "The Transformation of School Food" legislation and associated Children's and Young People Legislation – *Every Child Matters, Choosing Health: making healthier choices easier*" White Paper.

Only 8-10 % of daily food is consumed in school by students.

Current Nutrition Standards do not measure actual consumption of food, nor the nutrient content.

3 Environmental Services – School Meals

Bolton's School Meals Service has many examples of good practice and strong initiatives supporting corporate, health and Council priorities whilst constantly seeking to improve and respond to customer demand and advise other Council food providers.

The service supports the government's agenda "Improving Health and Care in the Community" to tackle child poverty and improve health and eating habits of young people. Bolton has embraced DEFRA and The Food Standards Agency initiatives on nutrition and food standards.

Healthy eating is part of a common focus throughout schools and communities to raise awareness and improve dietary trends and consumer choices including targets to reduce health inequalities and tackle childhood obesity through local interventions.

Linking to the government's "Building Schools for The Future" agenda, the service has supported and led schemes to develop and improve kitchen and dining facilities. Also innovative contracting and partnering arrangements have enhanced existing delivery arrangements.

The food ethos supports the retention of traditional catering whilst new product research and development links directly with pertinent food-related health issues, and the increased use of fair traded products. Sustainable procurement procedures, ethical retailing and support of the local economy are a feature of catering management.

Key Areas of responsibilities

3.1 Budget responsibility for the non-delegated element of the School Meals Service which include the majority of the Primary and Special School Sector

- 3.2 Procurer of the service for the non-delegated Primary and Special School Sector. Currently there is a single service level agreement with the Commercial Services Department.
- 3.3 Provider of a light touch monitoring service to the non delegated Primary and Special School Sector.
- 3.4 Annually determines the pricing policy for the take up of a paid meal and recommendations for the free meal allowance in the non-delegated Primary and Special Sector.
- 3.5 Make all necessary arrangements for the collection and banking of school monies from the non-delegated Primary and Special School Sector.
- 3.6 Determinations of how capital monies are spent either to replace or repair heavy equipment or to improve facilities to satisfy legislative or developmental requirements for the whole of the School Meals Service.
- 3.7 Provider of a broad School Meals Policy Statement.

Responses

4. "Ensuring that all pupils have the option of choosing well balanced school meals"

(a) Interventions at national level with a statutory instrument "The Transformation Of School Food" report – finalised May 2006 and effective from September 2006. This ensures:-

- ◆ A National Standard for the School Meal with clearly identified nutrient levels.
- ◆ A Whole School Approach to nutrition including awareness, curriculum, promotion to parents, joining up health and education and service delivery agencies.

- ◆ Asset Management directives for kitchen builds to ensure fit-for the purpose facilities to provide a hot sustaining meal, fresh produced on site, for all.
- ◆ A plan to measure the nutrient content of school meals menus by 2007
- ◆ Extension of the standards to other school food eg. Tuck shops, Breakfast clubs etc

(b) School Meals conforming to Nutritional Guidelines to ensure healthy choices.

Bolton School meals currently conform to the 2001 National Nutrition Standard and will comply with the new regulations applying in September 2006.

Ofsted inspections aim to include healthy school meals and school food monitoring from next autumn. Service providers and schools are still awaiting finer detail.

Please Note:

The new legislation to school standards also applies to “school food” and not just School Meals i.e. Breakfast Clubs, After School Clubs, Vending. This may be organised by schools without recourse to a specialist service provider. Head teachers and governing bodies are therefore responsible directly for compliance, the detail of which is due to be finalised in Jan 2007 with a recommendation to phase the conversion to the standards from September 2006.

Environmental Services does not provide a meals service to 5 secondary schools and 3 Primary schools in Bolton. An advisory service is provided to 2 of the 3 primary schools and there is dialogue with all five secondary schools.

5. Continue to evaluate and develop menus

Trialled Menus - April 2005 – April 2006 for all primary schools ahead of new legislation. The trials are complete and the new flexible single menu is being checked for final adjustments in the summer term. Supplier and food contracts are reflecting the changes and the school meals tariff is undergoing review.

Barriers – under funding of the free school meal by 10p.

Purchase of nutrient measuring software – “Nutmeg” ahead of legislation is a key action. Menus are now ‘in the system” and we are able to cost and measure 13 key nutrients for each day and week of the menu and therefore score ready for September 2007.

Continued research and work to develop this is needed to streamline the measuring and be confident of accuracy.

Installation of a novel fixed price/fixed meal secondary dining model to ensure balanced and healthy food combining. This innovative model “Spectrum” is generating interest by other schools and Local Authorities but further installations in schools with varying profiles i.e. low free meal ratio, and very large roll, is needed in order to record the cost implications and continue to measure nutrient uptake for key stage 2 and 3 students. This needs to be funded by the council to reduce business risks for individual schools.

Extensive research is taking place in Facilities Catering – Environmental Services to meet the demands of further regulation phased over 3 years covering nutrient measuring and even consumption-measuring later in the decade – 2011.

There are both local and regional bids for nutrition research programmes around consumption measuring to NRF & Big Lottery Funds.

Ensuring a proportion of the grant from the Standards Fund for improving school meals is

spent on high quality healthy food.

Environmental Services has set up “The School Meals Strategic Steering Group” to oversee government funding for School Meals improvement. The steering group has met twice and the first set of investment options for spend 2005/6 have been collated to be recommended to members for approval. See *School Meals Transformation* Report to Members June 2006. One option includes a “Food on the Plate” grant aimed to go directly on the school meal food cost for higher quality, wholesome ingredients on the primary school menu. The value of this funding is @£400 per primary and nursery school kitchen for 3 terms trading to be distributed ready for September 2006 new regulation.

Environmental Services Catering has compiled a brochure for all schools to advise on the spend of the pass-ported school improvement grant (Part B) which is £1070 per primary and nursery school designed to be spent by the individual schools to ensure ethical and effective food improvement investment.

The funds also extend to Pupil Referral Units for primary aged pupils.

These will be inspected by Ofsted and surveyed by the DfES School Food Trust.

Please Note:

The Part B targeted grant element is delegated directly to schools. The decisions for responsible investment into school food initiatives lies with the head teacher and governing body.

6. Consider a wider marketing and promotion strategy of new menus, possibly in conjunction with other healthier eating initiatives

There is a huge increase in school meals marketing in the summer term 2006 including:

- Fun Bus – Victoria Square – May 30th – June 3rd

- Additional leaflets and flyers for parents – brighter design with eye-catching detail

- Pencil cases giveaways for new customers in September

- More press articles

- Radio adverts

- A newspaper School Meals feature pull out in the BEN Education Supplement

- Reviewed parents evening displays – new boards and signage

- Competitions e.g. Love ya’ Dinner Lady

- Updated web site –Intranet

- Generic planner and surveys to the community.

Also, work with Healthy Schools Team to assess awards and arrange focus groups and talks.

7. Develop joint working to address childhood obesity

- Health sub set representation at Assistant Director level for Environmental Services

- Liaison with PCT groups

- Included in the “Food Strategy for Bolton” Consultation Group

- Close working with The Healthy Schools Team – Assessor for Healthy School Award

- Bolton’s Head of Service for Catering, Elaine Long represents Greater Manchester at DfES in London

- Support to LPSA for Benefits Uptake and current support work on free meal authorisation improvements.

- NW Food and Health Taskforce Liaison and regional bid submission.

- DfES Offices direct and the new School Food Trust

- Greater Manchester Hub for School Meals – Bolton is chairing this group

Head teachers and school community personnel
Networking groups and benchmarking groups - Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA,) and Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE)

The Service is willing to take part in initiatives, projects and interventions designed to improve the trends and is currently bidding for funding to conduct food consumption programmes which measure actual nutrient intake from the school meal.

The Service manager intends to be included on all related strategy groups whether PCT, Corporate or Children's Services- led.

8 Summary

The Scrutiny Panel should note of the responses to recommendations 4, 5, 6, 15.

Under funding of the free school meals is a key barrier to progress in ensuring a sustainable affordable school meals service in the future. Future compliance may also be at risk should the pricing and funding policies not be resolved.

Standards Fund contribution is designed to improve school food in general and support the short term transition of the provision and not the long term viability of the service.

Child Food Poverty in Bolton remains a key priority and improved nutrition awareness, Healthy Eating in schools and a focused drive to support children in deprived areas should, with joint interventions from partner health agencies, encourage better dietary health, improved general health outcomes and long term a reduced level of overweight and clinically obese young people.