

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:  
PLACE SHAPING AND  
CONNECTIVITY**

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS FREE SCHOOL MEAL SCHEME**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 The report seeks approval to introduce a Free School Meal Scheme for eligible children during the school holidays.
- 1.2 The Policy is included in Appendix 1. Options are provided to establish the longevity of the scheme.
- 1.3 This is an urgent decision in order to mobilise the scheme in respect of October half term 2020.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Council recognises the impact that COVID-19 has had on families in many different ways and has in place a range of financial support mechanisms for households on low incomes. This including administering grants such as Council Tax COVID-19 hardship discount; emergency financial assistance and the self-isolation grant.
- 2.2 During the Easter and Summer Holidays a national scheme for children eligible for free school meals to receive a food voucher. This scheme is no longer available. Following a recent campaign to re-introduce the voucher scheme ministers confirmed last week that extending the national scheme was not part of their policy.
- 2.3 There are currently almost 6,000 North Lincolnshire children eligible for free school meals. The national scheme provided a voucher equivalent to £15 a week during the summer holidays. To continue the level of this support for the week of October half-term would cost an estimated £90k plus cost of administration of £5k-£10k. The cost of this is currently not

budgeted with council or school budgets, nor is there a specific government grant. The government have indicated that local authorities may utilise their allocations for COVID-19 emergency grant for locally determined responses.

- 2.4 In June 2020 the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) distributed £63m across upper tier local authorities for councils to establish emergency financial assistance schemes to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to coronavirus. This is in place locally administered in partnership with Citizen's Advice Bureau until 31 March 2021.
- 2.5 Enabling children and young people to access free school meals during the school holidays recognises the exceptional circumstances the COVID-19 pandemic has created for some families. The most expedient method for providing a school holiday free school meal scheme in respect of the October half term would be to provide a supermarket voucher retrospectively. As a one-off response the cost would be identified as part of the council's overall COVID-19 additional cost pressures, funded by the government grant for COVID-19.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **Option 1**

- 3.1 The cabinet member approves the free school meal voucher scheme as per Appendix 1 to be applied for the October 2020 half-term.

#### **Option 2**

- 3.2 Do not introduce an enhanced free school meal scheme for the October 2020 half-term.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

#### **Option 1**

- 4.1 The proposal provides a short term solution and complements the other schemes available to residents who experience financial hardship. This would commit approximately £100k to be funded from the COVID-19 grant.
- 4.2 Introducing as a temporary measure fits with the Council's enabling approach and provides an immediate response whilst alternative community led arrangements are considered into the future.

#### **Option 2**

- 4.3 Not introducing a scheme for the October 2020 half-term is consistent with the national requirements placed on local authorities.

**5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

5.1 The scheme can be funded for the week of October half term by utilising the COVID-19 grant. North Lincolnshire's allocation amounts to £13.3m. The September monitoring identified COVID related budget pressures amounting to £22m, and this continues to increase as the anticipated longevity of the coronavirus is more certain. A number of specific COVID-19 related grants and the September fees and charges reimbursement claim reduces the call upon the COVID-19 grant by £7.8m. As the infection rate continues to increase and prevention and intervention is applied to local areas the demand on council budgets increases and commitments against the grant reduces the ability for this funding source to mitigate against COVID-19 related financial risks which are expected to increase over the winter months. Any costs in excess of government grants and reimbursement schemes must be met from existing council resources or unplanned use of reserves.

**6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 In order to implement the scheme at pace, there may be risk of inappropriate use of vouchers. The scheme is based upon confirmed eligibility for free school meals at a date prior to the school holiday period.

6.2 It is proposed to utilise a range of supermarket vouchers to ensure accessibility to supermarket within the vicinity of the schools that children attend.

**7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 None

**8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 None

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The school holiday free school meal voucher scheme is approved for the October 2020 half term period.

DIRECTOR OF DIRECTOR LEARNING SKILLS & CULTURE AND  
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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – None**

## **Appendix 1**

### **School Holiday Free School Meal Scheme**

#### Eligibility

- School aged children: Reception to Yr11
- Registered for Free School Meal eligibility as at 22 October 2020.

#### School Holiday offer

- £15 food voucher for a supermarket within the local area of the child's school

#### Process

- Voucher distributed based upon pupil record to the named adult with parental responsibility.

#### Terms and Conditions

- Vouchers are not transferable and must be used to purchase food