

**COVID 19 TACTICAL CO-ORDINATING GROUP****DATE: 21 MAY 2020**

<b>DECISION REQUEST / PROPOSAL</b>	Provision of Free School Meal Scheme over May half-term holidays
<b>DECISION PROPOSED BY</b>	Hannah Myers
<b>SERVICE AREA AFFECTED</b>	Children's Services
<b>IDENTIFIED CRITICAL SERVICE Y/N</b>	Y

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A COMMITTEE REPORT AND SHOULD OUTLINE ISSUES IN BRIEF FOCUSING ON KEY INFORMATION

**1. DECISION SUMMARY**

The decision is to approve the funding for the implementation of a Free School Meals Scheme for all eligible children for the school half term, between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

The cost of providing this will be approximately £163,000 for the week.

Headteachers have agreed that it is essential to offer this scheme over this half term period to continue to ensure vulnerable children have access to food provision during this time.

**This decision will support the priority to (delete as appropriate):-**

2. Protect the vulnerable people in our communities
3. Safeguard our children and young people

**2. INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY**

On 26 March, the local authority agreed to support funding for children to access free school meals during the Easter school holidays. This was to ensure that Wirral's most vulnerable children could access food provision during the COVID-19 lockdown measures, during the period when this was not usually covered by the current free school meal scheme.

Given the lockdown measures have remained in place, with only some minor easing on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, it is considered that a consistent view must be taken by the local authority to support the provision of free school meals over the May half term. These dates fall between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 29<sup>th</sup> May.

It is considered that it is even more pertinent for the local authority to approve this proposal given that many families may have been financially impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and may be in greater need of support of this nature.

The cost of £163,000 per week has been identified based on the current value of £15 per eligible child per week.

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENT / H&S AND STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING DECISION**

The free school meals scheme is an online voucher scheme which is administered directly by the school to families.

The scheme ensures that families can use the vouchers in local supermarkets which are open and adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Without the Edenred scheme in place, over half term there is a risk that vulnerable children may be without a sufficient meal each day. The provision of the scheme over the holidays will ensure that vulnerable children are safeguarded and protected.

The local authority scheme will cover all children who are eligible for free school meals including non-means tested infants.

The local authority will work with schools to ensure appropriate support for administering the scheme is provided, where necessary.

### **4. WHAT POWERS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED**

The scheme will comply with all relevant legislative guidance and law as well as local policy and practice.

### **5. IDENTIFICATION OF CONTINGENCIES OR OTHER OPTIONS**

Other options have been considered and discounted.

Doing nothing isn't an option as we need to ensure that our children are able to access their school's meals as entitled and to protect and support the welfare of children and their families.

### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (APPROXIMATE / PROJECTED)**

The cost of providing this will be approximately £163,000 for this week.

The local authority has liaised with schools to understand whether they have any surplus remaining from the Easter financial Free School Meal support and this has been calculated within the figures.

The figure is also based on the increase in children eligible for Free School Meals at £15 per eligible child.

Following Government Coronavirus guidance, it has been ascertained that the Department for Education will not reimburse this expenditure.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

<b>DECISION PRESENTED TO TSG ON</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>DECISION OF TSG</b>	<b>APPROVED</b> <b>REJECTED</b> <b>MORE INFO REQUIRED</b>