



## **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023**

### **WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO FOOD & NUTRITION**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Committee on 'Whole School Approach to Food and Nutrition' (WSAF&N), known to schools as the Food for Life (FFL) programme, as part of engagement on a new offer.
2. As the proposal involves a potential change to the service offer for WSAF&N, an engagement exercise is underway with primary schools to inform a final decision by the Cabinet in the new year.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

3. The WSAF&N programme is a key part of the public health approach to tackling obesity in children and young people. It is an embedded approach to the Leicestershire Healthy Weight Strategy strategic objective 2; Support settings to prevent obesity and increase healthy weight in adults, children and families.
4. The proposal is aligned with the following policy frameworks:
  - a. Public Health Strategy "Delivering good health and prevention services 2022-2027 – promoting healthy living and healthy places principle";
  - b. the Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032 "Staying Healthy, Safe and Well", and
  - c. the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-26, in particular the outcome of
    - i. 'Keeping people safe and well: ensuring that people are safe and protected from harm, live in a healthy environment and have the opportunities and support they need to live active, independent and fulfilling lives'.
    - ii. Improving opportunities: 'Every child gets the best start in life'
5. The County Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27 (agreed by the Cabinet in February 2023) includes a target of saving £150,000 by 2024/25 through a review of the WSAF&N programme.
6. The service is offered to all primary schools but with additional emphasis on those with high levels of obesity. It fits well with several local and national programmes and strategies and the National Food Strategy signposts local authorities to adopt the model, indicating a desire to make the approach mandatory in the future.

## **Background**

7. The WSAF&N programme was first commissioned in 2013 and the service is provided by the Soil Association. The programme is referred to by schools as the 'food for life' programme and has been running in the county for approximately 10 years. Extensions to the contract have been made annually in line with the initial award and are now at the maximum extension permitted with the current contract due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.
8. The aim of the programme is to:
  - adopt a supportive healthy food culture, from sourcing fresh sustainable food to creating opportunities for social contact through food
  - build confidence in children and their families in developing good food choices and maintaining a healthier lifestyle.
  - reflect food nutrition and healthy eating in every-day life in a school setting
  - reach out beyond the school gates into the community with activities such as gardening becoming part of the school curriculum.
9. The Public Health departmental management team have reviewed an options appraisal for achieving the MTFS saving from the WSAF&N. Some aspects of the current offer are valued by schools and are aligned to work that forms an important part of the public health offer, particularly in relation to obesity.
10. The WSAF&N offer sits within a broader food and nutrition approach within the Public Health department that would benefit from a review. It is therefore proposed that a different approach to food and nutrition in schools is offered for 2 years to allow time for a thorough review of the wider public health food and nutrition offer including evaluation of whether WSAF&N is an essential part of this. This will be funded via Public Health reserves and therefore the full MTFS savings target can still be achieved.

## **Proposals**

11. The current offer provides officer support to primary schools looking to achieve the bronze, silver, and gold level standards, with online support and training in addition.
12. The proposed new approach will focus on supporting primary schools to achieve bronze level. The proposed offer will include:
  - Access to an online training platform for all schools regardless of level of award.
  - Officer support at bronze level, targeted at schools with high levels of obesity only
  - Schools not identified with high levels of obesity and those wanting to achieve the silver and gold awards can still do so, without additional cost using the online support and training.

## **Engagement**

13. A targeted engagement exercise is underway with primary schools to gather views on the proposed changes. The engagement process began on the 4<sup>th</sup> October and will run until 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, to obtain the views on the programme and to understand the potential impact of the new approach.

14. Views are being sought via an online survey with primary schools, asking about the impact of the programme, the impact of the proposed changes and gathering wider views about food and nutrition from a school's perspective to inform the future review.
15. This report forms part of the engagement and HOSC members are asked to provide feedback on the proposed new approach.

### **Resource Implications**

16. The new proposal has been costed at £70,000 which will be funded via Public Health reserves, therefore, MTFs saving can still be achieved.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

17. The engagement closes on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023. Feedback received will be reported as part of a report for final decision by the Cabinet in the new year, anticipated in January 2024.
18. The current contract will end in May 2024. The outcome of the Cabinet decision will inform next steps.

### **Conclusions**

19. To summarise, MTFs savings are required from the WSAF&N. Some aspects of the current offer are valued by schools and are aligned to work that forms an important part of the Public Health offer, particularly in relation to reducing obesity in children and young people.
20. The WSAF&N offer sits within a broader food and nutrition approach within Public Health that would benefit from a review. It is therefore proposed that a new approach to FFL is taken for the next 2 years, allowing time for a thorough review of the wider food and nutrition offer including evaluation of whether WSAF&N is an essential part of this.
21. The new service would continue to offer the FFL programme to all primary schools to achieve bronze level award with officer support targeted on those schools identified with high levels of obesity. Schools will be able to achieve 'Silver and Gold' accreditation via the Soil Association themselves without additional cost should they wish.
22. HOSC members are asked to consider the proposed new approach to whole school approach to food and nutrition and provide feedback as part of the engagement process.

### **Background papers**

23. Report to the Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2026/27 - 22 February 2023 <https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6913>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

24. None

### **Equality Implications**

25. Under the Equality Act 2010 the County Council is required to have due regards to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

26. A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the proposal. The impact of a change in service model will be further informed by the findings of the engagement exercise with schools.

27. The post-engagement EIA will be presented to the Cabinet to be considered as part of the decision.

### **Human Rights Implications**

28. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

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