

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 15th June, 2010.

Present: Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile (Acting Chair), Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Roy Rix

Officers: A Bryson (R), Mrs A Brown, P Diggins, P Harris, J McCann (DNS); Mrs T Harrison, Mrs J Trainer (LD)

Also in attendance: No other person's were present

Apologies: Cllr Mick Stoker and Cllr Mick Womphrey

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2010

Members considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2010.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2010 be agreed as a correct record and be forwarded to Council.

3 EIT Review of School Catering

Members received a presentation on the school catering service. Members were given a breakdown of the service and were advised of its objectives to increase the uptake in free and paid meals, continuation and development of 'in class' cooking lessons, introduction of a school and community cooking/health living club, build on partnership and media usage and continually review service standards.

Officers advised on the progress that had been made which included the introduction of Halal only sites, proactive pupil focus groups, and the refurbishment and improvements to kitchens and dining areas using the Standards Fund.

Members were provided with the breakdown and total for meals served, costs and income for both Primary and secondary school provision of meals. A further 2 year service level agreement had been agreed in 2009 with all primary schools. Members requested a written breakdown of the schools for which Stockton Borough Council were responsible.

Members discussed smart card payment systems, as a way of reducing the debt from non payment as the card would need to be loaded with money first and alleviating stigma for those who received free school meals. Officers noted that smart cards had been trialled by Gateshead Council and would request data on the results of this trial.

Members emphasised the importance of teaching good nutrition in primary school in the hope that it would stay with the children as they grew up, and officers discussed the activities had been introduced to educate children and

parents on healthy eating. The grab and go system, which provided an option of nutritionally balanced packed lunches during the summer months and operated in a small number of schools, was noted.

Discussion took place regarding schools undertaking 'food for life' which was the growing and eating of fruit and vegetables in school. It was acknowledged that there was a resource implication to undertaking and sustaining 'food for life'. Trials were taking place in selected schools throughout the country and it was still in its early stages. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council officers were following the results of these trials.

Discussion took place regarding the loss of the standards fund and the impact it would have on the service. Members suggested that the PCT could be approached to provide funding due to the overall aim of healthy school meals was to reduce obesity and subsequent cost to the NHS.

Non payments for school meals were discussed. Officers advised that it was Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council would provide a meal to a child who turned up to school without payment. Reasons why debt was incurred by parents included the time difference between applying for and being granted free school meals and not completing forms correctly, but there were cases where parents simply refused to pay. Members observed that clearer advice should be provided to ensure that school meals were paid. Members observed that the school had the relationship with the parents therefore the school should be responsible for the payment of the school meals.

Members suggested a way to generate income would be to hire out the kitchens when not in use, however officers advised that this would not be possible as a great deal of investment had been made in the equipment and schools would want to ensure that only qualified people used the equipment in the correct way. It could cost the school and authority more than it would generate income as catering staff costs would increase to ensure monitoring.

Members requested site visits to schools within the Borough to observe the meals provided and the method of the provision and would report back to the Committee. Members also requested a site visit to a school outside of the Borough to observe other methods of delivery.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The senior finance manager advised that he would obtain the figures and present them at a future meeting.
2. Site visits will be organised to schools within the Borough and one outside the Borough to observe delivery of service.