



## **CABINET – 14TH OCTOBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: CASHLESS CATERING SOLUTION - SCHOOLS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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1. The attached report was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 29th September 2020. The scrutiny committee was advised that the purpose of the report is to update Members on the current position with regards to the Council's Cashless catering solution in schools, and to seek endorsement of a recommendation to Cabinet for further funding to expand the provision.
  2. Mr J Lloyd the Headteacher at Ystrad Mynach Primary School provided Members with an overview of the pilot scheme which has been in place at Ystrad Mynach Primary School for the past two years. He explained that this system has been welcomed and is used by 94% of parents. It allows parents to make online payments to the school, keep track of the amounts paid and also monitor the meals that children are having. Mr Lloyd also explained that the introduction of this scheme has saved effectively 10-12 hours of the school clerks time allowing her to support other work within the school. The solution ensures that the school cook gets accurate information on meal requirements and children in receipt of free school meals are not differentiated from other children. The school has also been audited during the past year and it was found to work very well with no issues reported.
  3. Members sought clarification with regard to how parents who are not using the system will manage when catering resumes in schools, considering the current covid-19 restrictions and the need to social distance. Mr Lloyd was able to reassure the committee that appropriate and discreet processes will be in place for money to be passed on to the school.
  4. The Scrutiny Committee discussed the system used at schools currently not using Caerphilly Catering, it was explained that the system outlined in this report would only be available to those schools using the Caerphilly Catering Service, although the contract does allow for further schools to be added at a later date.
  5. Members expressed concerns regarding the charges to be applied to schools after the first year and whether they were affordable. The benefits of time and efficiency as well as the potential increased uptake of free school meals, and the subsequent financial benefits to the school were highlighted.
  6. Assurance was sought regarding the reliance of the cashless system and if

schools could opt out in future. Members were advised that there was a very robust procurement process to secure this system and the contract includes appropriate break clauses to safeguard the Authority. Members were informed that schools want this system and they accept the charges because of the benefits that will result in terms of efficiency and accountability.

7. Members discussed how arrears in payments will be dealt with and wanted to be assured that children will still be provided with a meal. The committee were informed that the school already have good relationships with parents and would address any arrears as soon as possible and that the school would ensure that a meal is provided.
8. Following consideration and discussion the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that:
  - (I) To proceed to purchase the cashless catering solution for 84 school settings.
  - (II) The residual funding requirement of £246.5k be met from Education and Corporate Services Reserves.

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Appendices: Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee 29th September 2020 – Agenda Item 9.