

Meeting:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	Wednesday 18 October 2006
Subject:	School Food Improvement Strategy
Key Decision:	For Information
Responsible Officer:	Geoff Wingrove, Director, Strategic Services, People First
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Janet Mote
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	N/A

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this follow up report is to advise the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Sub-Committee of the progress achieved so far in relation to the new food-based standards, with special reference to the provision of drinking water in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Sub-Committee is requested to receive this report for information.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

2.1 Background

The Government has announced new standards for school food, which are to be introduced in three parts, all of which are to be phased in by September 2009. The new standards cover all food and drink sold or served in schools, which include: breakfast, lunch and after-school meals; and tuck, vending, mid-morning breakfast and after-school clubs.

There is growing recognition from government agencies that getting children to drink more water throughout the school day has many benefits including improved nutrition and wellbeing, better behaviour and academic performance. One of the requirements of the new food-based standards for drinks in schools outlined in the *'guide to introducing the Government's new food-based standards for school lunches from the School Food Trust'*, is that 'free, fresh drinking water should be available at all times'.

The Government has introduced a transitional grant to support the new school food agenda. A further £240m over and above the existing £220m will also be made available to continue to subsidise ingredients until 2011. It is anticipated that schools utilise the grant facility alongside delegated budgets to meet the new requirements.

A high-level School Meals Improvement Strategy has been developed, which sets out Harrow's vision and goals in response to the government's new school food agenda. The outcomes in this document are aligned clearly with Harrow's "Change for Children" Framework, which has at its foundations the Every Child Matters Agenda for Change. A year-on-year action plan has been developed to support the strategy, which sets-out the steps needed to ensure that every child in school benefits from a healthy balanced diet, particularly those children who are nutritionally at risk.

Details of the food-standards to be introduced by September 2009 are provided in **Appendix 1**, for further information.

2.2 Statutory and Policy Framework

The following information provides the policy and institutional context:

- **The Education (school premises) Regulations 1999:** require a school to have a wholesome supply of drinking water for domestic purposes, including a supply of drinking water.
- **The Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools:** drinking water should be available to pupils throughout the day at a number of points within a school, and not from taps or drinking fountains in the toilets.

- **National Healthy School Standards:** schools should have easy access to free, clean and palatable drinking water.
- **Food in Schools Programme:** that access to water is a fundamental human right and necessary for good health. Schools can play their part in provision of drinking water.

3. Current Position

A telephone survey was carried out involving schools in the borough during July and September 2006 to gather baseline information about the current water provision in schools. A questionnaire was developed to support this process, and a further survey will be commissioned to include those schools that were unable to respond in the first survey.

Overall, 61 schools were surveyed:-

- 50 First & Middle Schools
- 10 High Schools
- 1 Special School

Of all schools surveyed:

- Currently, all schools provide access to drinking water throughout the school day. However, there is a mixed economy in terms of provision, availability and accessibility to pupils.
- The majority of schools promote water consumption as part of the overall school culture.
- Traditional drinking water fountains are located at all school sites, with the exception of one special school.
- The provision of water is variable across schools (i.e. the availability and accessibility of water during lunchtimes and at after school clubs).
- 81% of all schools had procured water dispenser solutions from a third-party supplier.
- Staff Room's provide teaching and non-teaching staff with either bottle-fed or mains fed point of use (POU) water dispensers.

First and Middle Schools

- Of those First and Middle Schools surveyed all pupils are encouraged to bring in named water bottles on a daily basis, which can be re-filled at designated water outlets.
- 54% of schools provide drinking tap water either in every classroom or via the Medical/Welfare Office.

High Schools

- Water availability in High Schools is less visible compared with First and Middle Schools, and water maybe seen by pupils as a less attractive option than alternative drinks. However, schools are working proactively and collaboratively with the local authority to improve water provision and accessibility to pupils throughout the school day.
- 55% of those High Schools surveyed provide vending facilities on-site where still or sparkling water can be purchased.
- 18% provide extra water for pupils during lunchtimes. For those remaining schools, water can be accessed at designated water outlets.

4. Key Challenges

To support schools in-line with new standards by:-

- Promoting the benefits of water consumption.
- Making sure that water is available, freely accessible and free of charge to all pupils where they are having lunch, and available for after school activities.
- Signpost water stations in dining room areas.
- Assessing whether drinking water fountains located in play areas and in toilets, is suitable for a modern day school setting.
- Identifying robust, affordable and sustainable solutions to ensure that water is available and accessible to school pupils throughout the school day.

5. Progress to Date

- A survey of schools has been undertaken to establish current water provision within schools.
- An exercise has been undertaken to identify third-party suppliers who specialise in providing water solutions specifically for schools. Preferential packages have now been secured for Harrow schools.
- A meeting has been held with the Corporate Procurement Team and support has been secured for schools, if required, in the development of contracts with third-party suppliers.
- Contact with neighbouring local authorities is currently underway to identify areas of best practice in this respect.
- Rooks Heath College are organising a '**Promoting Healthy Lifestyles**' event in November, and the local authority will be providing a display on the importance of water in schools.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Myfanwy Barrett
		Date: 29 September 2006.....
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Helen White.....
		Date: 4 October 2006

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Melanie Irons, Professional Officer, Project Management & Policy,
People First ext: 7529

Sue Conn, Service Manager, Project Management and Policy, People First
ext: 6830

Background Papers:

Harrow Council's Draft School Meals Improvement Strategy.

School Food Trust – A guide to introducing the Government's new food-based standards for school lunches, June 2006.

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	