

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 10 December 2019

Towerbank Primary School – Catering Provision

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive Ward 17, Portobello/Craigmillar
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Committee notes the changed location of the current production kitchen for Towerbank Primary School from Portobello High School to St John's Primary School; and
- 1.2 That members consider funding a pilot hybrid kitchen model at Towerbank Primary School as part of the budget setting exercise for 2020/21.

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Towerbank Primary School – Catering Provision

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On 9 October 2018, Committee approved a motion relating to a number of actions at Towerbank Primary School and its current status as a dining centre. This report addresses the motion and highlights the changes made and/or proposed within available budgets. It proposes that if any further changes are made, that political groups should consider making provision for the cost as part of the 2020/21 budget setting exercise.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 14 August 2018, the Education, Children and Families Committee approved a motion that stated “Committee notes Towerbank Primary school is one of the largest primary schools in the City of Edinburgh’s school estate, with a roll of over 600. Situated on a very limited site, it recently had a large extension added which allowed more pupils to eat school lunches at once but did not include an on-site kitchen/preparation function.
- 3.2 Committee notes that Towerbank Parent Council have been working with council staff to improve the quality of school meals. They are concerned about the deterioration of the quality of food when cooked elsewhere and transported for service. They therefore request a pilot scheme to cook some food on site at Towerbank.

Committee called for a report in one cycle looking at the feasibility of a hybrid model of food production at Towerbank, whereby dishes are still largely prepared off site but are cooked/assembled on site to improve quality and uptake of school meals.

The report should cover

- Physical resource requirements (an examination of different models/methods e.g. oven, grills, microwave);
- Staff resource requirements to include training requirements for current employees;
- Costs; and

- Potential timescales for implementation.”
- 3.3 A report which detailed the physical and financial challenges of implementing a production kitchen within Towerbank was tabled to Committee on 9 October 2018. Following this report, a further motion was passed that stated: “Asks that additional detail be provided to the next sitting of the Committee to include:
- Details on why six deliveries per day are still required and if this could be reduced;
 - Details of when and why the access point covered by point 3.6 was removed from planned works; and if such works should be considered even if no changes are made to catering in light of the current requirement for vehicles to access the servery via the playground;
 - Further exploration into the alternative/hybrid models, for example Rieber micro kitchens, including a break-down on requirements based on component parts of the existing menu; and
 - Quotations for options explored from a range of contractors with costings available for review by committee members”
- 3.4 In addition, a further motion was passed stating “Agrees to set up a working group with officers and interested parties from Towerbank to explore further options for a hybrid model, including the micro kitchens currently used in Hull, other options for drainage, an examination of the foods best prepared on site, and if there are any intermediate steps that could be put in place as part of a journey to a production kitchen. A report covering the options explored by the working group should be presented to Committee when the work is complete.”
- 3.5 The purpose of this report is to address the above motions by proposing changes that can be delivered within existing budgets and those which would require an additional investment to be approved.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Towerbank Primary School has a current roll of 630 pupils, one of the largest in the school estate. It is currently a dining centre with meals produced off site and transported in daily, a model widely used across other local authorities. The school has received considerable investment in dining facilities to accommodate the increase in uptake of meals as a result of the free 1-3's and currently caters for a daily average of 300 pupils (Monday – Thursday).
- 4.2 The catering services' principal objective is to deliver high quality, hot meals to the 97 schools under its responsibility, which is typically 18,500 meals per day Monday to Thursday. The volume is expected to increase to close to 30,000 once the 1140 programme is fully implemented. Many production units in schools were closed several years ago mainly as part of a budget saving exercise. Therefore, the current service is delivered from 54 production kitchens across the school estate with kitchen staff playing a significant role in preparing and transporting hot and cold food to the other 69 establishments (41 primary schools and 28 nurseries), which don't have cooking facilities.

Working Group

- 4.3 As part of the approved motion a working group was set up and has principally been attended by Council officers.

Deliveries

- 4.4 As the school is a dining centre only, there are currently two catering related deliveries per day, i.e., the delivery and pick up of the reiber boxes. Any change to the catering model would see an increase due to food deliveries, for example, productions kitchens receive, on a daily basis:

1. A fresh fruit and vegetable delivery from a local supplier;
2. Fresh milk from a Scottish dairy;
3. Fresh meat from an Edinburgh butcher; and
4. Fresh bread and eggs (if on the menu).

On top of the above, schools will typically receive deliveries from the below suppliers once or twice a week:

1. Frozen and Dry goods; and,
2. Cleaning Materials and Disposable Products.
3. However, as a full production kitchen has been discounted (see paragraph 4.6) and a hybrid model is being considered the current 2 deliveries per day is envisaged.

Access for deliveries

- 4.5 Proposals for a ramp were previously considered however the main issue is budget and that transportation will not allow the main roads around the school to be blocked. Following discussions with the Parent Council, it is understood that non-food deliveries to site do on occasion block the road. The Parent Council are keen that the ramp access to the rear of the school originally proposed is still pursued as this would allow for less disruption to the use of the playground and a safer access point for all deliveries, not just those related to catering.

Production Kitchen/Hybrid

- 4.6 A full production kitchen model was considered. However, notwithstanding the cost, any proposal would require to be built within the existing playground area thereby reducing valuable recreation space. For information, the costs would be in the region of £250k (capital) and £35k (revenue). For these reasons the Group discounted this option.
- 4.7 Two suppliers provided costs for a hybrid model. The service has spoken with the main kitchen suppliers who have advised the models proposed are the most realistic option. The service accepts that the Parent Council's preferred approach is a hybrid service, yet no budget currently exists to deliver this.
- 4.8 A hybrid system at Towerbank can be delivered with a capital budget of circa £50k and an ongoing revenue cost of £15,000 pa to cover additional staffing costs.

- 4.9 As this model has never before been adopted by the service, it is envisaged that a significant amount of management time would be required to set up associated processes and systems. As an aside, the Towerbank Parent Group have offered their assistance as part of the working group.
- 4.10 A hybrid kitchen will assist in meeting future increased demand created by the 1140 programme. However, although this is a pilot testing a new model, there is a risk that delivering it will increase the pressure to replicate the model for the other 10 dining centres which have a similar amount of transported meals.
- 4.11 In acknowledgement that there are no current budgets to meet the costs, members are asked to consider identifying a budget within 2020/21 budget setting exercise.

Other matters

Production Kitchen

- 4.12 In recognition of the current drive to improve food quality at the school, the catering service has proposed a change of production kitchen for Towerbank from Portobello High School to St John's Primary School. There are two principal reasons for this: firstly, St John's is closer to Towerbank thereby cutting down the transportation time and, secondly, Portobello HS currently prepares the meals for the High School and the separate primary school menu for Towerbank. St John's will be able to focus solely on the primary school meals as part of that service within the newly built school.

Future Menu Design

- 4.13 The Scottish Government are due to publish a final draft on the amendments to the nutritional requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008, in spring 2020. The Council's menu currently complies with the 2008 regulations and the menu for 2019/20 was written with a focus on that compliance. A summary of the key changes are noted below;
- A reduction in sugar in primary and high school menus and a change to the way nutritional analysis is completed;
 - Increase in fruit and vegetables;
 - A reduction in red and processed red meat;
 - Reduction in sweetened or baked products to 3 times per week;
 - Pastry and pastry products to be reduced; and
 - Ensure all bread served is high fibre.
- 4.14 The focus for the new 2020 menu will be on ensuring compliance to the enhanced nutritional analysis and working with suppliers to minimise added sugar in products and increase "hidden fruit and veg" in any pre-prepared sauces the service currently procures. The service's focus will be to review all core products and ensure they are compliant with the 2020 standards.
- 4.15 In preparation for the design of the 2020 menu, the catering service has offered to seek the views of Towerbank Parent Council. While the menu must be designed for mass production and nutritional requirements, as with any local authority, views on impact of travel will also be a material consideration. It is likely that a draft menu

will be ready for publishing early January and will be sent to the Parent Council for comment soon after.

Food waste

- 4.16 As part of the discussions, the catering team has asked Place Management to complete a full audit of current facilities for recycling. Any actions from this audit will be implemented.
- 4.17 In terms of reducing food waste, Communities and Families are undertaking a pilot project in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland to monitor and measure food waste in selected areas across the estate. This will take place at Waverley Court in the first instance and the school aspect will follow in August 2020 in line with the academic year. Ten schools have been selected for inclusion, including Towerbank. Stage one will look at mapping food waste flows, monitoring and measuring.
- 4.18 In order to help build a whole school approach to food, the Development officer for Food and Health has offered support in developing food education within the school curriculum. Using [Better eating, better learning](#) as a framework and evaluation tool could help make links to the meals provided in school, an understanding of the standards adhered to, animal welfare and food production.

Summary

- 4.19 The clear aspiration of the Parent Council remains the quality of school lunches through the delivery of a hybrid kitchen. This report sets out the cost of doing so., the service has relocated the production kitchen to St John's as a measure for improvement.

In addition, it has been agreed that the creation of ramp access for deliveries will remain 'live'.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following the relocation of the production kitchen from Portobello High School to St John's Primary School in November, meal quality at both Towerbank and St John's will be monitored.
- 5.2 If a budget allocation is made, a more detailed proposal for how a hybrid system would work will be produced.
- 5.3 The Property and Facilities Management Division within Resources will continue to work with the school, parents and Communities and Families over the provision of a ramp access.
- 5.4 The Division is currently carryout a strategic review of meal provision across the city to address future demand, provide efficiencies and manage costs moving forward.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The proposals of addressing food waste and the relocation of the production kitchen contained within this report can be contained within service budgets.

- 6.2 There is no funding available within the existing Property and Facilities Management budgets to support this in either current or future financial years. Consequently, any proposal for a hybrid kitchen would require new investment in the Property and Facilities Management Division budget as a formal growth bid through the Council budget planning process.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

N/A

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Motion to Education Children and Families committee dated 14 August 2018 - https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/Data/Education,%20Children%20and%20Families%20Committee/20180814/Agenda/motions_and_amendments_-_education_children_and_families_committee_-_14_august_2018pdf.pdf
- 8.2 Report to Education, Children and Families committee dated 9 October 2019 - https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/Data/Education,%20Children%20and%20Families%20Committee/20181009/Agenda/item_72_-_towerbank_primary_school_-_on-site_cooking_of_school_meals.pdf

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None