

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF THE ASSESSMENT FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO SHARED BENEFIT SERVICE.

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 6th JUNE 2018

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

This report proposes the transfer for the assessment of free school meals (FSM) to the shared benefit service operated by Torfaen County Borough Council for a two-year trial.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

To agree the proposal to transfer the assessment of FSM to the shared benefit service for a two year period from 1st September 2018.

To agree the cost of this is £15,500 per annum, this will be paid to Torfaen County Borough Council for the provision of this service. This will be funded by an existing vacancy.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 Currently the assessment for FSM pupils is carried out by the School and Student Access Team within the Children and Young People Directorate.
- 3.2 The criteria for entitlement for FSM is determined by the Welsh Government for all of Wales and the assessments are made in line with these.
- 3.3 The current arrangement for assessing Monmouthshire resident benefits entitlement is carried out by Torfaen County Borough Council as part of a shared service arrangement.
- 3.4 During 2017-18 Torfaen County Borough Council moved their assessment of FSM from education to the shared benefit service and as a result they have seen an increase in entitlement of FSM by 20%. On their assessment, 50% of this was due to the roll out of Universal Credit and 50% due to the targeting of families that are entitled to FSM but not claiming.

Proposed changes

- 3.5 The proposal is to transfer the assessment for FSM for Monmouthshire County Council residents to the share benefit service operated by Torfaen County Borough Council.
- 3.6 The benefit of this is that through the shared service Torfaen would be able to review and target the relevant families to make them aware of their entitlement and the benefits that offers. With the aim to increase the take up of FSM in Monmouthshire to reduce the cost burden to families.
- 3.7 This will over time see increased income to the Revenue Settlement Grant for Monmouthshire, and see an increase in grants offered to schools.
- 3.8 There will be an increase in the catering budget to provide that FSM, however, the benefits are likely to outweigh any additional costs.
- 3.9 All of our schools ensure that processes are in place to ensure that pupils claiming FSM are not identified by peers to minimise any stigma attached to this.
- 3.10 Grants such as the Pupil Development Grant are directly distribute to school using FSM data from Welsh Government.
- 3.11 The service will be managed by a Service Level Agreement similar to the one offered for the current shared service with clear criteria agreed between the parties. This is attached in appendix 1.
- 3.12 All the compliance for GDPR will be undertaken by Torfaen County Borough Council, through an information sharing agreement, any costs of this, and any cost of engaging with the households will be picked by Torfaen County Borough Council.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Two options have been considered, the first is to continue with the current arrangement, the disadvantage of this is that we would not see any increase in the entitlement and the benefits this bring. Under the current arrangement, Monmouthshire would naturally see an increase in FSM entitlement with the introduction of Universal Credit in June 2018, but it is anticipated that the increase would be greater if the services was transferred to Torfaen County Borough Council.

Given the current joint service arrangements for the benefit, entitlement Monmouthshire Children and Young People's directorate do not have access to the individual household's information and therefore are unable to carry out this service within the directorate.

The second option is share above and is the preferred option.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

This is included in appendix 2.

6. REASONS:

With Torfaen County Borough Council currently processing the benefits for Monmouthshire County Council residents through the share benefit service. This service holds all the information required to target families that can benefit from claiming FSM. The criteria for entitlement is determined by Welsh Government and the same across Wales.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The cost to transfer the service is £15,500 per annum. This will be funded via a vacancy that is currently being held open.

Under the current formula distribution for the Regional Settlement Grant, Monmouthshire County Council would see a benefit in funding, however, Welsh Government are looking at the settlement distribution currently, therefore any changes may affect this.

Currently the pupil development grant is calculated using this indicator and therefore any increase in entitlement will be of a benefit to schools through this grant.

There could be a loss in income for school meal if some of these families are paying for a meal currently. The worst-case scenario is that we would see income reduce by £53,625 per annum, however this is an unlikely scenario.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

This is included in appendix 3.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet Member for Education
Cabinet Member for Resources
CYP Select Committee
DMT
Torfaen County Borough Council – Head of Revenues and Benefits.
All consultee's comment have been included in the report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Service Level Agreement

11. AUTHOR:

Nikki Wellington

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Evaluation Criteria – Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions & Council

Appendix 2

Title of Report:	TRANSFER OF THE ASSESSMENT FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS To TE SHARED BENEFIT SERVICE OPERATED BY TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL.
Date decision was made:	6th June 2018
Report Author:	Nikki Wellington

What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?
The assessment for Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement will transfer to Torfaen County Borough Council from the 1 st September 2018 to the shared revenue and benefits service, for a 2 year trial.
24 month appraisal

What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?
This is set out in the Service Level Agreement in appendix 1
24 month appraisal

What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?
£15,500 the benefits due to the expected increased take up are not known yet. Up to £53,625 loss of income.
24 month appraisal

Any other comments
