



Subject:	Motion - Right to Food - Response from Department of Education
Date:	24th November, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present the response received from the Department of Education in relation to the motion on the Right to Food Campaign.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Council, at its meeting on 4th October, considered the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor McCusker:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“This Council recognises the impact the scourge of food poverty is having on families right across our city, made worse by the cost-of-living emergency and recent price rises and gives its formal backing to the Right To Food campaign, joining cities like Liverpool and Manchester in becoming a Right To Food city.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We believe that the British Government and any restored Executive must prioritise food poverty, implementing a range of new measures including universal free school meals, support for community kitchens and enshrining the Right To Food for all through legislation.”</p> <p>The motion was amended by the Council to provide for the inclusion of the following two paragraphs:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“This Council also notes the School Holiday Food Grant was a crucial element of government support to tackle child food insecurity, targeted at those most in need, and helped struggling families cover the cost of food at times when their children did not have access to Free School Meals.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This Council will write to the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education calling for the urgent restoration of the School Holiday Food Grant Scheme and to request that the Department protect and prioritise the needs of the most disadvantaged children and young people when making decisions regarding the allocation of its resources.”</p> <p>3.3 Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to the Permanent Secretary. A response has been received from the Director of Transport and Food in Schools, on his behalf, a copy of which is attached.</p> <p>3.4 The Director begins by stating that the Department of Education recognises the challenges which are being experienced by many families in accessing affordable and nutritious food. She explains that the Department of Education works closely with other departments to tackle food poverty, with the Department for Communities being the lead department in the development of the Executive’s Anti-Poverty Strategy, which seeks to bring focus to the Executive’s collective efforts to tackle the root causes of poverty and impacts of inequality. The issue of holiday hunger for children of school age will continue to be considered in the development of that Strategy.</p> <p>3.5 She points out that, since July 2020, the Department of Education, on behalf of the Executive, has been in receipt of additional ring-fenced funding to facilitate the payment of the School Holiday Food Grants payment scheme. This reflects the urgency of the scheme being developed in the early stages of the pandemic and the ability of the Education Authority to use the payment mechanisms already in place for its provision of uniform grant payments to low-income families. However, the additional funding ended in April 2023 and, despite recognising the important support which the School Holiday Food Grants payment scheme provided for low-income families who are struggling financially, the Department had no option but to discontinue the scheme from 31st March.</p>

<p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p>The Director then states that, based on the budget allocated by the Secretary of State for 2023-24, there remains an estimated funding gap for the Department of Education in the region of £300m. Faced with this extremely challenging financial position, the Department has, in addition to the decision on the School Holiday Food Grants payment scheme, taken significant decisions, including reductions to the Aggregated Schools' Budget, the Education Authority's Block Grant and the cessation of the Engage and Healthy Happy Minds schemes from the end of March, 2023.</p> <p>She goes on to point out that the Department of Education recently published an Equality Impact Assessment Consultation Report on the 2023-24 Resource Budget. However, in view of the available budget, decisions could not be delayed until the Equality Impact Assessment had been completed in full. The Equality Impact Assessment would enable the Department to better assess the impacts of the budget and provide valuable insight to inform future decisions, should additional funding become available.</p> <p>The Director concludes by confirming that responses received during the consultation period are being considered currently, with the final consultation report to be published on the Department's website in due course.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Document Attached</p>
	<p>Response from the Director of Transport and Food in Schools, Department of Education</p>