

The background of the slide features the coat of arms of the Government of Nunavut. It is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a stylized building. The top-right quadrant shows a caribou head with antlers. The bottom-left quadrant shows a sailing ship on wavy lines representing water. The bottom-right quadrant shows a bird with spread wings. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. Below the shield is a banner with the text "ANE FOR A'".

Agenda Item 5

Covid-19 Response – Funding Food Provision Summer 2020

Falkirk Council

Title: Covid-19 Response – Funding Food Provision Summer 2020
Meeting: Emergency Executive
Date: 28 May 2020
Submitted By: Director Of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide information on how the Council is using their £878k share of the Scottish Government's Food Fund and to set-out the future costs and funding requirements if the various elements of providing food/school meals have to continue over the summer period.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:

- i. Note the content of this report and the details surrounding each of the options and proposals contained within it;**
- ii. Consider the 3 options proposed (Section 4.1 – 4.5) for the summer school meal provision and decide what option officers should progress;**
- iii. Agree to continue to support and fund the Falkirk CVS Emergency Food Project (as outlined in Sections 4.4 – 4.6); and**
- iv. Agree that the Hardship Fund (Section 5.1) should be used to meet any additional costs associated with the decisions that are made.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Addressing the impact of poverty on children is a key priority for both the Council and our Community Planning Partnership. Recent reports highlight the disproportionate impact that Covid-19 will have on people experiencing poverty. We expect to see an increase in the number of children experiencing poverty, whilst those already experiencing poverty are likely to experience a greater impact of Covid-19, with child poverty becoming more ingrained. The current situation will compound stress and trauma in vulnerable families¹.
- 3.2 Locally we can already see the impact of COVID 19 on household income. In March 2020 there were **8,405** Universal Credit claimants across the Falkirk Council area compared to **6,235** in March 2019 and Crisis Grant applications have increased by **50%** compared to this time last year. These indicators, alongside the national findings, highlight the increased need for us to do what we can to address the impact of poverty on children and families in our area.

- 3.3 For the past three years we have worked in partnership with the third sector and community organisations to make sure children and families have access to food and activities during school holidays. We took a varied approach to make sure there were options to suit a family's needs. Due to the current lockdown restrictions it is not possible to deliver these activities during summer 2020 and therefore a different approach is required.

3.4 Current Funding Allocations

The current funding has been allocated across 3 distinct areas of provision:

a. School Meal Provision – Holidays	£ 700k
b. Supporting FCVS Emergency Food Project	£ 100k
c. Supporting People Initiative	£ 78k
Total Funding Allocations	£ 878k

3.5 Easter Holiday School Meal Provision

In advance of the Easter holidays, a payment of £35 (£3.50/day) was made to all pupils who were eligible for Clothing Grants and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). The total cost of this was **c£180k**

After Easter, Education Scotland reviewed the varying approaches that each Council took and their findings showed that an average weekly payment of £2.37 was made by those Council's that made such direct payments.

3.6 Summer Holiday School Meal Provision

Reviewing the approach taken for Easter, Officers agreed to develop a range of potential options for consideration by Members.

3.7 Falkirk CVS Emergency Food Project

This project is co-ordinated by CLD in partnership with a number of local voluntary groups. Initially 3 central points were set up to receive and then distribute the food parcels to a wider network of 18 local distribution points.

Since it started in April, demand has grown by **61%** which highlights the growing number of households that are experiencing food insecurity during these very challenging times.

3.8 CVS Falkirk Community Food Fund

CVS Falkirk will administer £78k to support additional supplies for the Community Food Project Network. Established by a number of Community Food Projects, this network is open to all services offering community food during the crisis. The network is supported by CVS with a weekly online forum meeting.

Taking a community choices (participatory budgeting) approach, CVS worked with the network to identify need and agree how the money should be spent. Additional supplies will be purchased and distributed across the network. This will top up the food provided by the Emergency Food Project and will include fresh produce, special dietary requirements and special ingredients for recipes to be included in food parcels. CVS will administer, account for and report on the funds on behalf of the network.

4. Considerations

Summer Holiday School Meal Provision (38 days from Fri 26/6/20 – Tue 18/8/20)

4.1 Assuming that it is necessary to continue to provide this service, there are 2 ways in which to deliver this provision:

- Option 1 - to make direct payments to families
- Option 2 - to continue to provide “grab n go” meal bags

4.2 Officers have developed 3 separate proposals under Option 1:

- Option 1a – To pay £3.50/day (in line with Easter payment) **Cost c£ 683k**
- Option 1b – To pay £2.50/day (more in line with national position) **Cost c£ 488k**
- Option 1c – To make a flat payment of £100 (approx. £2.63/day) **Cost c£ 514k**

School Leavers (June 2020)

Given we do not know those pupils that will be leaving school at the end of term, the above proposals are based on making the payments from the data that was used to make the Easter payment, so this will include the S6 pupils.

4.3 Option 2 – To Maintain the Current Grab n Go Meal Service Provision.

Additional costs would be incurred in the following areas:

- Catering Staff Cleaning Staff Caretaking Staff Food Costs
Transport Costs Premises Costs

Costing for this option also includes a larger meal bag being provided each Friday over the holidays. Costings are based on 3,000 meals/day. **Cost c£ 313k**

4.4 Options 1a and 1b can be processed via the Revenues Team and would include all children who received the payment at Easter, with the exception of those pupils (in S4 – S6) who will have left school by then.

4.5 Option 2 will require the existing 38 school distribution centres to be opened and catering staff to work during the holidays to prepare the meals. Early discussions with Catering Services indicate that staff would be willing to undertake this work.

Falkirk Emergency Food Project

4.6 High levels of demand for food parcels have meant that the average cost of providing this service has increased from c£7k to c£13k per week.

4.7 When set-up costs have been accounted for, the £100k allocation is expected to be fully spent by week commencing **25 May 2020**. Given the significant increase in demand for this service, Officers feel that emergency funding should be provided for this to allow it to continue at least until the end of the summer holiday period.

- 4.8 The additional funding that would be required to continue this project until the end of August 2020 is estimated to be **c£ 200k**.
- 4.9 It is also worth noting that in national forums it has been recognised that the £30m national Food Fund is not sufficient to meet the expected demand.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial/Resources

School Meal Provision (£700k Budget)

Taking into account the costs associated with making the payments to eligible pupils over the Easter holidays (c£180k) and the additional costs incurred in providing meals over the recent Public Holidays (c£13k), the total overall costs associated with each of the options outlined above are:

- **Option 1a £ 876k = £ 176k overspend**
- **Option 1b £ 681k = £ 19k saving**
- **Option 1c £ 707k = £ 7k overspend**
- **Option 2 £ 506k = £ 194k saving**

Falkirk CVS Emergency Food Project

As outlined in Section 4.4 – 4.7, if this project has to continue until the end of August 2020 then additional funding of **c £200k** will be required.

Scottish Government Hardship Fund

Falkirk Council received £1.5m as their share of these Scottish Government monies to deal with our response to the Covid19 pandemic. It is proposed that any additional costs associated with the proposals contained within this report are met from these funds.

5.2 Legal

There are no legal issues associated with this, however, it should be noted that there is no statutory requirement to provide school meals during the summer holidays as this is out-with the school term.

5.3 Risk

Not supporting the above provisions could risk reputational damage to the Council given the extreme and challenging position the world finds itself in with the current Covid-19 Pandemic.

5.4 Equalities

There are qualifying criteria attached to each of the 2 provisions outlined in this report.

5.5 Sustainability/Environmental Impact

The success and the sustainability of the above provisions is directly limited to the availability of funding.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 There is no doubt that everyone's life has been affected in some way by the Covid pandemic. In addition, our own local intelligence gathering confirms that there are a significant, and at present, increasing number of families that are suffering from significant food insecurity and are relying on the above provisions to support their families.
- 6.2 Given the above, there is no doubt that continuing with these 2 methods of food provision is the right thing to do. The challenge facing us is selecting the appropriate option and finding the required resources to fund it.

Director of Children's Services

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¹ https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/17369/COVID-19-and-children-young-people.pdf