



ISLINGTON

**SCHOOL MEALS: CURRENT TAKE-UP IN PRIMARY
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND A REVIEW OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL NUTRITION, INCLUDING THE
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IMPACTING ON
SECONDARY SCHOOL MEAL TAKE-UP**

**REPORT OF THE
HEALTH AND WELLBEING REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

London Borough of Islington
June 2011

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

Islington's Free School Meals for Primary Schools policy (FSM) is one of the Borough's flagship policies, which has achieved both local and national recognition. The policy has helped lead the debate on the relationship between school meals, health and attainment, and it has already generated the practical result of increasing the take-up of school meals by eligible pupils (i.e. those pupils that would previously have been eligible for free school meals) by over 2,000 pupils per day, achieving an overall take-up of 82%.

When the Health Scrutiny Committee first determined to scrutinise the free School Meals policy in September 2009, the scheme was commencing pilot studies at six local primary schools. It was then decided, due to a heavy work programme for the committee, to delay the scrutiny for a year. This has in fact proved to be very advantageous to the scrutiny, both because the Free Primary School meals have now had a chance to bed in at all the Borough's primary schools, and the body of evidence nationally relating improved pupil nutrition to improved wellbeing, concentration and attainment has increased significantly. There is also an emerging body of work relating to secondary school nutrition, and in particular, the challenges faced by schools that allow their pupils off-site at lunchtimes, and those pupils' choices of food available from hot food take-aways near the school.

In the light of the above developments, when the scrutiny was re-introduced, it was decided to expand the scope to include investigation of secondary school meals and nutrition, not just in relation to the food available in schools, but the choices available to secondary pupils both on and off the premises, how those choices influence eating habits, and the means by which we can try and influence those habits to achieve improved nutrition, with the consequent improvements in health and attainment.

One of the most interesting issues to emerge from the scrutiny, was the striking differences between the primary and secondary social context for the midday meal: Whilst at primary schools the pupils all relate to the school and their peers as a kind of extended family, where everyone dines together, secondary pupils go through a series of three identifiable developmental stages as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood, and that sociological and psychological pressures exert a significant influence on pupils eating choices, with the pressures changing and adapting as the pupils make their way through the developmental stages.

The committee learned about the complex emotional pressures on young teenagers at break time, but it also learned about some very simple presentational measures which help to increase uptake of the school meal offer. The most productive of these ideas came from the pro-active involvement of the meals provider with the school: In one example the provider helped redecorate the canteen, provided music in the canteen, and introduced a new queuing system, all of which significantly improved uptake (see para 5.46). Basic economics are also involved: In one example, the school was charging slightly more for the school meal than some of the hot food takeaways nearby (who were targeting schoolchildren at lunchtime), which obviously encouraged the pupils to choose the cheaper option. It was interesting to note also that the meals contractor stated that they did not always encounter a co-operative attitude from some schools when attempting to promote some of these measures.

The committee was also struck by a very articulate presentation from pupils at Central Foundation School of their views, and a survey they had carried out on pupil views about the

school meal offer. It was clear in this instance that whilst the pupils were unhappy with the quality of the food, their interest was in getting more positively nutritious food, not just more chips and pizza.

The subject of school meals and nutrition overall has proved to be far more engaging and complex than the committee had expected, and has resulted in a fairly lengthy and dense report. However, I would encourage readers to explore the detail, in particular the sections on the approach of the Council's provider, Caterlink, (5.59 et seq), the insights into teenage psychology provided by the School Food Trust (5.70 et seq), and the work done at Carshalton Boys school, where the 'Whole school food' programme increased meal uptake from 50% to 95%.

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN KLUTE
CHAIR OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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Acknowledgements

The Health and Wellbeing Review Committee would like to thank the witnesses who gave evidence in relation to the review and to the officers who have contributed to the report, in particular the pupils of Central Foundation, and the Headmaster of Carshalton Boys School.

Officer support

Scrutiny and Democratic Services - Peter Moore, Rachel Stern
Children's Services - Thanos Morphitis

SCHOOL MEALS - NUTRITION

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee notes that the Free School Meals pilot and subsequent roll-out of full policy have been successful in achieving a significant improvement to take-up of school meals in nurseries and primary schools.

The Committee feel strongly that access to good food is vitally important to all school children and are conscious that good nutrition in schools provides an ideal opportunity to make a difference to children's diets, which in turn affects their ability to concentrate and learn.

The Committee are of the view that its recommendations will assist in contributing to the very good work that is already going on, and in extending improved meal take up to secondary schools.

The Committee would like to thank all of the witnesses who gave up their time to come and give evidence on this review. All of the evidence sessions provided useful, interesting and enlightening information that has contributed to the formulation of the Committee's recommendations.

We note that councils are subject to increasingly tight budgetary restrictions and are mindful of the impact this will also have on schools. We hope that our recommendations will assist with the already excellent work that is going on in Islington Schools to improve the nutritional standards of pupils' diets.

The Committee recommends the following:

Administration and Organisation

1. The committee strongly urges all schools in the borough to adopt a 'Whole School Food' policy, similar to that described for Carshalton Boys School (para 5.112 et seq), where the educational focus is expanded to cover not just meals, but lessons in nutrition, cooking, the relationship between nutrition, health and exercise, and including a complementary physical exercise programme as part of the school timetable.
2. Members noted that take-up for 2010/11 is 82% overall for primary schools, with only one primary school still below 70%. Secondary school take-up (where free meals are only available to children whose parents are on income support) is at 62%, which equates to the primary level take-up prior to the introduction of FSM. We request that the 12-month report back from officers includes details of the social make up for the take up of free school meals in order to assess whether cultural factors affect this.
3. We recognise that free school meals eligibility levels are a determinant for funding for Education and commend officers' work on finding a solution to ensure that this data is still collected.
4. We think it is vital to have pupils involved with the choice of food supplied and recommend that schools seek and respond to the views of pupils and involve them, as appropriate, in preparation, menu planning etc.
5. We note evidence that cooperation and joint working with caterers varies from the school to school so would encourage all Head Teachers to enter into a dialogue with their meals provider and note that schools where regular meetings take place between the Head and caterers appear to have more success in improving uptake of school meals.
6. We noted the importance of having a clear school meal specification and effective monitoring of the contract to ensure that the meals provided are meeting national and local requirements and addressing the needs of pupils.

7. We commend the best practice example of cooks sharing knowledge across different schools to enable different food cultures to be catered for across the year. We also note that pupils repeatedly requested more cultural food provision and specific theme days. We ask schools and caterers to share information where there is expertise of this nature.
8. We note evidence received that demonstrated that there was a link between food and health, weight, wellbeing, behaviour, concentration, performance and also attainment. We are aware that as yet there will not be enough information to measure this in Islington schools but request that officers consider whether data gathering frameworks can be put in place that could assess any possible link in the future, with the view to a further scrutiny of the wider health and social benefits of free school meals. Also that officers keep themselves aware of the continuing work taking place at national level which is discussed in this report.

Food

9. We note that presentation of food is vital and received evidence that there was still a problem with getting children to eat oily fish and presenting it in a way that children liked to eat. We support caterers in their continued efforts to improve menus and presentation of dishes to ensure they are both attractive and nutritionally balanced.
10. We support those schools who have surveyed their pupils to establish their suggestions for menu improvements. Where possible and appropriate we support schools to try to introduce more of these requested food options to their menus.
11. We also note that pupils are keen to have a greater variety of food including set menus and Food from Different Cultures or Countries. We ask schools to consider whether there is capacity to extend their menu provision to include these suggestions.
12. We noted some pupils concerns about fat and oil content in their food and support those schools that have endeavoured to remove less healthy options from their menus.

Environment

13. We note the evidence we have received that ensuring pupils are not allowed off site during the school day improves school meal take up and recommend that, where possible, schools implement this policy on their site. We also request that schools consider the possibility of staggered lunch sittings to accommodate this policy.
14. We heard repeatedly that pupils' uptake of the meal offer are significantly affected by the quality of the canteen environment. This has included line organisation; cleanliness of canteen seating area; playing of music and improved decor. We commend those schools who have already taken steps to improve their facilities and recommend that any school that has not done so undertake an audit to establish what improvements can be made. Something as simple as redecorating the canteen has been found to have a significant influence on uptake.
15. We note the evidence that flexible spaces are key to accommodating all secondary school pupils for lunches and also recommend that schools consider whether the space on site is being used to its best potential to accommodate the maximum number of pupils for on site lunches.
16. We heard evidence that extended break times also increased uptake and minimised food wastage. We note that increases as little as five minutes has been shown to improve these factors and that evidence from providers has highlighted one hour and fifteen minutes as a good length of time for lunch as it allowed staggered sittings. We request that schools consider the possibility of extending their lunch periods to facilitate this.

Affordability and Pricing

17. We are aware that affordability of meals is a concern to some schools, pupils and parents. We were concerned to hear evidence that the cost of a meal can be significantly higher at schools not on the council's main contract. We note that schools can buy into the Caterlink contract as part of the wider contract held by the Council which simplified negotiations and ask that officers ensure that schools are made aware of this possibility.

Planning

18. We support the restriction of hot food take away outlets near schools and other public amenity spaces, and recommend the introduction of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) similar to that of Waltham Forest restricting, for example, the operation of hot food takeaways near schools. Policy measures could include not allowing more than one hot food takeaway outlet in a protected parade of shops, or alternatively requiring a gap of five to ten retail shops between each such outlet in the event of a new application.
19. We request that Development management policies be amended to bring policy protection against these developments in sooner rather than waiting for an SPD.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Committee meeting on 11 June 2009 the Chair stated that the Committee could propose up to two scrutiny reviews for consideration and suggested that the Committee carry out a short scrutiny review into the health benefits of free school meals. The review commenced on 24 September 2009.
- 1.2 At their meeting on 16 November 2009 the Committee noted that their workload had significantly increased since agreeing their work programme in June. Following a vote it was agreed that the scrutiny review into Free School Meals be deferred until the new municipal year.
- 1.3 The Overview Committee approved the priority topics for scrutiny at its meeting on 5 July 2010.
- 1.4 The Health and Wellbeing Review Committee, as part of its work programme for the year, was asked to undertake an investigation into School Meals – Nutrition with the objectives outlined below. The review commenced in September 2010.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the review were as follows:

- To assess the increase in take up of meals in primary schools since the introduction of free school meals.
- To provide information on number of breakfast clubs in primary schools
- To assess the take up of school meals in secondary schools

3. METHODOLOGY AND TIMETABLING

- 3.1 Following agreement of the Scrutiny Initiative Document (SID), officers designed a work programme for the Committee meetings, visits and documentary evidence.
- 3.2 The submissions are detailed in the minutes of the meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Review Committee on the Council Democracy website (www.islington.gov.uk/democracy) or from the Scrutiny Section at the Town Hall (Tel: 020 7527 3252).

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Council took a decision to introduce Free School Meals (FSM) for nursery and primary pupils from September 2009 at the full Council meeting on 26 February 2009.

4.2 The Council made the following budget available to implement the decision:

2009/10	£949,000
2010/11	£949,000 + £1.946m Total: £2.895m

4.3 The budget made available for 2009/10 was £949,000 and based on original estimates, if the policy was introduced universally from September 2009, this would cost £1.994m. This was based on the number of term days between 1st September 2009 and 31 March 2010. This necessarily meant that the policy would have to be phased in due to the difference between this potential cost and the budget available.

4.4 On 21 May 2009, the Executive agreed a proposal to take forward the implementation of the policy initially through a pilot phase in order to:

- establish a system which addressed concerns about registration for school meals of those parents eligible for free school meals under the national criteria in order to secure the longer term financial interest of the council and schools;
- identify the impact of the new registration system;
- monitor the change in take up of school meals following the introduction of the policy;
- identify the capital investment required to enable all schools to deliver the anticipated increase in take up;
- assess the cost of administering the new policy.

4.5 The report to the Executive in May 2009 also identified that the cost could be slightly more than the original estimate as a result of changes in base data. The estimates for the budgets agreed by full Council in February 2009 were based on 2008 data and on a take up rate of 85%.

4.6 The Executive were advised in November 2009 that since the original Council decision, analysis was undertaken on data that became available following the 2009 pupil census. This showed an increase in the overall roll figure and a reduction in FSM eligibility and resulted in a revision of the estimated cost of implementation which was reported to the Executive in May.

4.7 The May 2009 report identified a required budget of £3.15m for the full implementation of the policy i.e. an increase of £255,000. However, by November this potential 'shortfall' needed to be considered in light of the actual take up experienced in the pilot schools and best estimates of the future pattern of take up.

4.8 The May 2009 report also identified the potential additional costs in relation to equipment, capacity and administration.

4.9 The Government required formal registration of pupils qualifying for free school meals under the national criteria. In light of this, representations were made to the Department for Schools, Children and Families (DSCF) on whether Islington might be protected should the numbers of children eligible for FSM drop as a result of the introduction of the policy.

4.10 At their meeting in November 2009 the Executive were also given the following update on the progress of the implementation of the FSM scheme.

The Pilot

4.11 Six schools were selected for the pilot: Ambler, Christ the King, Clerkenwell, Laycock, New North Community School and Yerbury. These schools were chosen on the basis of:

- Highest and Lowest % of FSMs
- Highest and Lowest take up of meals
- Schools being in different geographical areas of the borough

Registration process

- 4.12 The registration process piloted was specifically designed to ensure that all parents eligible to receive free schools meals under national criteria continued to register. The schools funding formula and many grants were allocated based on national FSM eligibility. Securing registration for this element was imperative to secure the long term financial interests of the council and schools.
- 4.13 The pilot scheme therefore required all parents to formally register for FSM. Parents were informed that unless they completed the required registration form, a free school meal would not be provided.
- 4.14 Two registration processes were piloted. The first required forms to be returned to schools directly; the second required forms to be returned to Cambridge Education @ Islington. This was to gauge the most effective and efficient method of gathering the data.
- 4.15 The registration process commenced at the end of June 2009 for the pilot schools and had to continue into October 2009. A key feature of the scheme was the support and co-operation of head teachers and school administrative staff to follow up parents who did not return forms. All schools worked hard to support the scheme and it required continual focus through the Autumn Term to ensure maximum return.
- 4.16 Officers recognised that it may not be possible to achieve a 100% return rate as some parents may not wish to take up the offer of a free school meal for their child, nor complete a registration form. The aim was therefore to achieve, at least, a 90% return rate of forms.
- 4.17 The return rates as of 12 November 2009 ranged from 86% to 93% as set out below:

Registration Levels

School	% Returned Forms	% FSM Eligibility (national criteria Jan09)	% FSM Eligibility (national criteria Oct 09)	% Eligibility Increase / Decrease
1.	87%	49%	55%	+6%
2.	92%	49%	52%	+3%
3.	86%	35%	51%	+16%
4.	93%	50%	59%	+9%
5.	91%	69%	65%	- 4%
6.	92%	9%	8%	-1%

- 4.18 There was a variance in the percentage eligible for free school meals since the January 2009 pupil count. Officers subsequently checked each setting and in particular chased up individual parents previously eligible for FSM that had not returned their registration forms. Any significant drops in eligibility were being followed up. It was noted that there would be changes in these figures in any event due to changes in the pupil body and parents' individual circumstances which could not all be attributed to the new registration process.
- 4.19 The aim of the registration process would continue to be to achieve a maximum return of proof of eligibility for free school meals against the national criteria.

4.20 The registration process was rolled out to all schools and required the registration of over 11,500 pupils. This commenced in October 2009 and was due to be completed by December 2009 in order to enable a roll out to all schools within the available budget without delay. This was also picking up children due to start in January 2010.

Take up

4.21 The delivery of the new Free School Meals scheme commenced in September 2009 in the pilot schools. The increase in take up was supported through the efforts of school staff and the school meals provider Caterlink.

4.22 The change in take up compares school meals taken in the first half term of 2009 with the same period in 2008 and shows the following:

Changes in Free School Meals take up

School	FSM take up Sept-Oct 2008	Paid school meal take up Sept-Oct 2008	Total school meal take up Sept-Oct 2008	Total school meal take up Sept-Oct 2009	Percentage change in school meal take up
1.	78%	60%	68%	70%	2%
2.	82%	43%	63%	91%	28%
3.	87%	29%	47%	70%	23%
4.	84%	51%	68%	83%	15%
5.	67%	71%	68%	75%	7%
6.	100%	54%	57%	89%	22%
Totals:			62%	82%	20%

4.23 In order to calculate the financial implications for a full roll-out to all nursery and primary pupils, the registration response rate had been taken into account as had the increase in take up rate in the pilot schools. The previous 62% take up figure in the pilot schools mirrored the borough-wide take up figure prior to the introduction of the new policy.

4.24 The figures in the pilot showed an increase of 20% in take up. However, for the purposes of calculating the budget required in a full year, the previous borough-wide figure of 62% was used as the baseline and an increase in take up to 85% was assumed in the immediate term with the possibility of reaching 90% take up overall as the policy was embedded across all schools.

Kitchen facilities and equipment

4.25 It was necessary to confirm that suitable arrangements could be made to accommodate the anticipated increase in school meal take up. This was particularly in relation to food storage facilities, fridges, kitchen capacity, dining equipment, dining furniture, as well as any logistical problems faced by individual schools for the lunch time period.

4.26 A detailed school by school audit of the implications of an increased take-up of school meals was undertaken across all nursery and primary schools. The audit assessed capacity of equipment at three levels of take up: 80%, 85% and 90%. This showed that there was considerable essential investment in capacity required at a number of schools. On the basis of the anticipated take up of 85%, a sum of £261,000 was required to enable schools to deliver the new policy.

4.27 The Executive were advised that it would be necessary to invest in this equipment immediately in preparation for the full roll out. An additional sum of £40,000 would also be required to cover additional equipment needed if take up reached 90%. This would need to be invested appropriately as numbers hit a critical point in individual schools, which then required the purchase of additional ovens or hot and cold service trolleys.

- 4.28 The audit also identified the need for an enhanced repairs and maintenance budget as a result of the new policy as wear and tear on existing equipment would be far greater than currently experienced. An additional maintenance budget of £100k per annum is required.
- 4.29 The pilot confirmed the capacity of the council's school meals contractor Caterlink to be able to deliver the higher level of school meal take-up anticipated. This was successfully demonstrated despite an initial difficulty in one school on the first day of operation.
- 4.30 The council was successful in its bid to the DCSF for additional targeted capital funding for school kitchens. This, together with required match funding from the council and contribution from the London Diocesan Board for Schools, resulted in an overall investment programme of £1.1m. This programme ensured that the last remaining primary school without a production kitchen would have one fitted, together with essential repairs and refurbishments across a number of other schools. The successful bid also included funds to replace all flight trays with separate plates, bowls etc. which officers considered would increase the attractiveness and take up of school meals.

Administration

- 4.31 The implementation of the policy has required an increase in administration. As well as constant follow up at school level, additional staff had to be engaged to process the forms, often having to go back to parents that did not fully complete the key questions. The administration of the pilot phase was assessed and amended before roll out to other schools. This covered both the letter and forms sent to parents and the necessary training sessions for administrative support staff regarding system processes and data requirements of project as well as the processing thereafter.
- 4.32 The additional administrative costs were greater in the first two years of the policy as the system bedded down. The aim following the pilot was to move to an annual renewal process during 2010/11 thus providing a more efficient ongoing system. On line registration options were also considered.
- 4.33 The additional administrative functions included: sending out forms; logging and collating information of returned forms; checking FSM eligibility of each returned form on the tax website; chasing schools / parents of non-returned forms - asking for additional information; writing to parents; updating the ONE system with FSM eligibility data; analysing data of returned forms; liaising with Head teachers / admin staff in each school; providing guidance to schools in relation to dinner money arrears; providing details to schools of which pupils are permitted to receive meals; providing guidance to schools on how to record paid / unpaid meals on SIMS Dinner Money module; providing analysis of actual meal take-up; reviewing current business processes; providing assistance in implementing FSM Online Registration; liaising with other boroughs and DCSF; and providing briefings for schools.
- 4.34 The additional costs for 2009/10 were £95,000 and for 2010/11 were £90,000. There was also the additional one-off cost in 2009/10 for the school by school equipment audit of £15k
- 4.35 Officers also visited the national free school meal pilot sites to draw on any good practice regarding the efficient administration of the scheme.

Financial Impacts

- 4.36 The original overall cost of the free school meal policy in a full year was based on an anticipated increase in take up of 23% i.e. from 62% to 85% and took into account the additional administrative costs and increase in repairs and maintenance budget required.

4.37 The school meal costs reflected the lower charge in the contract when a higher proportion of school meals were served.

2010/11

The projected costs were as follows:

School meal costs	£2.985m
Additional administrative costs	£90,000
Additional repairs and maintenance budget	£100,000
Total	£3,175m

4.38 This compared with the full year allocation agreed by the council of £2.895m and showed a revenue shortfall of £280, 00 on the budget made available.

4.39 In relation to 2009/10, the estimates were based on an initial uptake of up to 85%. They also reflected the equipment investment required to enable schools to implement the policy as well as the costs of delivering the pilot phase and preparation for the full roll out of the policy.

2009/10

School meal cost at pilot schools (to March 2010)	£309,000
Additional administrative costs	£95,000
Kitchen equipment audit	£15,000
Additional capital investment to provide for 85% take up	£270,000
Total	£689,000

4.40 This compared with the allocation agreed by the council of £949,000 and left a balance of £260,000.

4.41 The Executive agreed at their November 2009 meeting that the policy be rolled out from 8 March 2010 at a cost of £280,000.

4.42 In September 2010 the Health and Wellbeing Review Committee began their review into the Free School Meals Programme.

4.43 The council has since retendered the school meals contact in partnership with Camden council. The opportunity to tender a larger and longer contract enabled a very competitive procurement process which resulted in considerable savings to the council of 900k per year.

4.44 The council will continue to provide school meals free to nursery and primary pupils and has not increased the charge of £1.80 for the set meal for secondary pupils.

5. THE COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS

- 5.1 When the Committee originally started their review on 24 September 2009 it was with the aim of assessing the potential benefits of the introduction of the extension of free school meal entitlement to all nursery and primary school children in Islington. Thanos Morphitis, Service Director Children's Services presented an overview of the scheme to date
- 5.2 It was noted that the new provider and the introduction of new national minimum standards for healthy eating had improved the take up of free school meals and there had been good feedback about the new school meals contractor
- 5.3 Although there was a target of 90% take-up, it was stated that it would be a challenge to reach 90% of take up overall – a lot of school funding was based on the take up of free school meals under the criteria set down by the Government and in addition a great deal of the local funding formula was based on this
- 5.4 The cost of the scheme was estimated at £3.1 million based on a 90% take up and capital costs – funding of £949,000 was available in this financial year (2009/10) and £2.9 million in the following year (2010/11)
- 5.5 The cost of a school meal charged to parents was £1.80; however the Council pay the contractor, Caterlink £3.50 per meal.
- 5.6 Schools were supporting parents to complete the forms and were making it clear that forms should be returned in order to be eligible for free school meals – it was agreed that a copy of the registration form be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- 5.7 It was stated that parents who had not opted to take up free school meals were being encouraged to do so and menus were sent out to all parents in advance – it was agreed that a sample menu be circulated to all Members of the Committee
- 5.8 At their meeting on 16 November 2009 the Committee noted that their workload had significantly increased since agreeing their work programme in June. Following a vote it was agreed that the scrutiny review into Free School Meals be deferred until the new municipal year.
- 5.9 The Health and Wellbeing Review Committee recommenced its review into School Nutrition in September 2010 with the addition of a review of secondary school nutrition. The Scrutiny Initiation Document, attached at Appendix A, was approved at their meeting on 2 September 2010.

Progress in Islington

- 5.10 At the Committee's meeting on 12 October 2010 Thanos Morphitis, Service Director Children's Services, updated the Committee on the progress of the FSM scheme in nurseries and primary schools.
- 5.11 The Committee noted that Primary School Meals take up before the Free School Meals policy was 63%. As of October 2010 this has risen to 80%. The Individual Schools ranged between 62 to 95% take up. Officers were undertaking active engagement with schools that had take up rates of under 70%.
- 5.12 35 primary schools (80%) in Islington had breakfast clubs. Their average daily attendance was 600 children with individual schools ranging from 11 to 42 children per day.

- 5.13 97% of Islington schools also had healthy schools status which promoted Healthy eating as part of -
- policy development
 - the curriculum, teaching and learning
 - work with parents
 - support for vulnerable pupils
 - culture and environment including: Out of hours learning; Playgrounds; Dining and food provision; Pupil voice; Work with the community; Staff wellbeing
- 5.14 Other initiatives running in schools included –
- Family kitchens – 29 primary schools
 - Food and exercise choices and body image
 - Applying national guidance to all foods
 - Encouraging and increasing amount of cooking in Food Technology Curriculum
- 5.15 Investment had been put into school kitchens to cater for increased numbers of children taking school meals and there were no concerns on the practical implementation of the scheme.
- 5.16 The Healthy schools programme was now embedded in schools so it was hoped that this would continue even if external funding was to cease
- 5.17 The move from food based to nutritional standards had given more opportunity to develop the menu. There was a termly survey of schools and there had been a good return of nearly 50% - the response had indicated that schools were happy with the quality of food since Caterlink had taken over particularly with regard to fruit and vegetables – there was still a problem with getting children to eat oily fish and presenting it in a way that children liked to eat
- 5.18 Caterlink had systems in place for monitoring quality and the client monitored this as well – the contract specification set out the standards and in relation to portion size – too much food on a plate could sometimes deter young children from eating, however there was a facility for them to go back for more if they wanted to do so.
- 5.19 Members expressed concern that some schools still had take up of less than 70% and there should be a report back to Committee on the reasons for this and the social make up for the take up of free school meals and whether cultural factors affected this.
- 5.20 It was stated that the LBI policy on free school meals, as it was a universal policy, overcame the difficulty of eligibility as long as parents filled in the registration form. This was important as free school meals were a determinant for funding for Education
- 5.21 In secondary schools free school meals were available to those on income support or family credit and earning under £16,190 a year – it was not possible to increase this level without having a policy similar to that at primary level.
- 5.22 39 of the 45 primary schools used Caterlink and four out of ten secondary schools in the borough used them – the remainder of the schools made their own arrangements.

School Nutrition in Islington Secondary Schools – the views of Schools and Pupils

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

- 5.23 The Committee heard evidence from Tina Southall, Deputy Head of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School (EGA).

5.24 The percentage of pupils at EGA registered for free school meals by year group was as follows:

Year	Percentage of the year group who have registered their free school meal entitlement
7	51%
8	61%
9	55%
10	55%
11	36%

5.25 Years 7 – 10 were not allowed off site during the school day and Year 11 were currently allowed off site at lunch time, if they earned a privilege card. By Sept 2011 all students would remain on site during the school day.

5.26 Commercial food available within five minutes walk of the school included numerous cafes, supermarkets, Chapel market, McDonalds.

5.27 The School Meal uptake at EGA varied a great deal between year groups –

Years 7 – 10
1 to 2% per year group routinely brought a packed lunch. 90% + per year group routinely had a school meal (The stats define a pupil who routinely had school meals as one eating in school 3-5 times a week)
Year 11
14% of the year group (all entitled to FSM) routinely had a school meal at lunch time. 22% of the year group (all entitled to FSM) routinely used their entitlement to get sandwiches at break time.

5.28 Other factors affecting uptake included Ramadan; Special food event days and Chip day.

5.29 The school had carried out a catering survey via catering staff and had made a number of findings. Separate vegetables were often not taken with the meal of the day, even though they were part of the meal offer. Salad from the salad bar was often left over. More hot meals were taken on Fridays but it was suspected that this was due to the fact that this was chip day.

5.30 A student survey had also been carried out and the School had determined that chips were popular as was pasta. Pupils requested more theme days and requested music in the canteen / better facilities

5.31 At EGA they felt that improving Student Diet required Education, Advertising, improved food on offer and a better dining experience.

Central Foundation School

5.32 At the same meeting on 1 November 2010 Adrian Hracki and Tahmid Choudhury, pupils and School Council members of Central Foundation School (CFS) were present and gave a presentation to the Committee. Brendan Goodfellow, Healthy Schools Co-ordinator, Central Foundation School was also present and contributed to the debate.

5.33 The pupils had carried out their own survey at CFS of school meals and nutrition.

5.34 The breakdown of the lunches pupils were consuming/buying was 47% School Dinners; 35% off site and 18% packed lunch.

- 5.35 The pupils were asked what they thought of the food in the Canteen on a sliding scale with the following results – Fantastic 2%, Very good 9%, Good 16%, Satisfactory 26%, Poor 18%, Very Bad 8%, Dreadful 21%
- 5.36 When asked what food they normally chose in the canteen the results were as follows – Chicken 39%; Sandwich 25%, Pizza 25%, Pasta 8% and Salads 3%.
- 5.37 Pupils were asked what concerns they had about school meals and a number of reoccurring themes were identified. Impolite Dinner Staff was the main concern with 6% of all students complaining about this. The also complained about lack of vegetables; price and affordability; line organisation; cleanliness of canteen seating area; lack of 'Meal Deals'; fat/oil content in the food and the canteen environmental condition.
- 5.38 Pupils were also asked for their suggested improvements and the identified the following things - A greater variety of food; Crisps; Ice Cream/Frozen Yogurt; Set Menus; Different Desserts; Protein Shakes; Softer Pizza; Food from Different Cultures or Countries and the introduction of Biscuits
- 5.39 The Chair thanked all of the presenters for their attendance and their extremely helpful evidence.
- 5.40 The Committee noted that current Year 10 pupils at EGA knew that they would not be able to go off the schools grounds for lunch once they moved into year 11.
- 5.41 All pupils at EGA had 12 weeks of Food and Nutrition classes in years 7-9. Food and Nutrition had improved pupils awareness of healthy eating and calorie intake.
- 5.42 Packed lunches were not vetted at either CFS or EGA. Evidence from pupils and staff was that there was a mix of food included in the packed lunches some was unhealthy and some healthy
- 5.43 CFS meals were provided by AIG but the meals at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson were provided by Caterlink.
- 5.44 CFS pupils were very concerned about the fat and oil content in their school meals.
- 5.45 The physical site at CFS was small which meant there was a restriction on how many pupils could be accommodated for on site meals.
- 5.46 At EGA Caterlink had participated in a survey to gauge pupils' opinions on the meals and assisted with new queuing systems and decoration of the canteen.
- 5.47 Overall the pupils at CFS seemed to have more interest in vigorous exercise such as gym sessions. The Food Technology classes were improving each year and were useful. They were a mix of actual cooking and learning about nutrition
- 5.48 There were a significant number of fast food outlets within a short distance of the schools which provided cheaper options to school meals.
- 5.49 The cost of £3-4 at CFS seemed to be high given that pupils did not enjoy the food. The Committee noted that the meal cost at EGA was £1:80 for a standard meal and less for a sandwich meal.
- 5.50 A greater variety in food and including more vegetables in a more discrete way would be an improvement.

- 5.51 There were different motivating factors behind what girls would eat and what boys would eat however at EGA they were not given the option of pizza etc.
- 5.52 EGA monitored both pupils they thought were overweight and those who appeared to have eating disorders. The numbers of children leaving primary school who were classified as obese was high at nearly 22%. Girls at EGA were monitored on a visual basis and therefore they would not necessarily be considered as obese even though their BMI may define them as such.
- 5.53 The majority of food at EGA was halal as they had a high number of Muslim students.
- 5.54 Councillors stated that it would help to get pupils engaged with the food supplied if they were involved in preparation and menu planning.
- 5.55 Periodic focus groups were held at CFS to discuss the food.
- 5.56 EGA had included an area for growing food as part of their BSF building improvements.
- 5.57 Some pupils would eat healthily at home but some would request unhealthy food on the basis that they had a healthy lunch.
- 5.58 The Committee noted that schools could buy into the Caterlink contract as part of the wider contract held by the Council which simplified negotiations.

School Nutrition in Islington Secondary Schools – the views of a Provider

- 5.59 Neil Fuller, Chief Executive and Penny Richards, Operations Director, Caterlink gave a presentation to the Committee.
- 5.60 The challenges within secondary schools included non-gated policy, lots of local competition, government guidelines, short meal breaks, lack of school support or supervision and old facilities.
- 5.61 The highest uptake of schools meals was in years 7 to 9. Extended break times also increased uptake. Cash taking sites and a high street approach also contributed.
- 5.62 Caterlink had attended year 6 and 7 parents' evenings to explain to them the new menus.
- 5.63 Steps taken to improve quality included:
 - Multicultural food offers
 - Following the Every Child Matters guidelines
 - Healthier options
 - Themed food events
 - Freshly made grab and go products
 - Farm to Fork Journey
- 5.64 Motivation and training had been carried out to reassure, motivate and develop. This had included craft training from their executive chef, provision of a dedicated group training manager, NVQ training for all, apprentices and employee benefits.
- 5.65 The length of lunchtimes and working well with a school made a big difference to improving school meal uptake. One hour and fifteen minutes was a good length of time for lunch as it allowed staggered sittings.

- 5.66 Breaking up queues was vital and staggered lunches, longer breaks and more outlets helped with this. If pupils had four lessons in the morning and only one in the afternoon they would often wait to eat and have fast food on the way home which was not ideal.
- 5.67 If sales of meals were improved then other factors would fall into place. By using local suppliers distribution costs were improved. The majority of costs came from labour so saving money on ingredients would not result in large savings.
- 5.68 Pupils receiving free school meals could use a voucher to get a variety of meal options so they were not penalised.
- 5.69 The cooperation from the schools varied and it could be hard to get meetings with head teachers. It was vital that pupils, parents and schools were involved in the process.

Improving nutrition in Schools – Evidence from the School Food Trust

- 5.70 The Committee received evidence from Brian Dow representing the School Food Trust, who articulated the increasing sociological and psychological pressures on young people as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- 5.71 To the School Food Trust School food was more than “school dinners”. It covered all of the following areas:
- Eating - Lunch; Breakfast; Mid-morning break; Tuck shops; Vending; Extended schools;
 - Teaching and learning - Food in the curriculum; Cookery skills
 - Lifestyle impact - Food habits; Social interaction.
- 5.72 School food mattered as what a child eats affected their Health, Weight, Wellbeing, Behaviour, Concentration, Performance and possibly attainment.
- 5.73 The take-up of food in schools had declined and there were a number of forces affecting school meal uptake.
- 5.74 The uptake of school meals was driven by the interplay of a complex and interconnected set of factors.-

Stakeholders: who were influencing decision-making:

- Young people who were the primary customers and consumers
- Parents who were low involvement customers
- Schools who were implementers

Factors: which drove the perception of the value and quality of school meals versus other options:

- Food
- Customer Journey (i.e. how far customers had to travel and how easy it was)
- Price.

- 5.75 There were lots of needs to satisfy at lunchtime and ideally the journey started with physiological factors such as the need to refuel and ended with the psychological factors such as the need for release. However, this was often not the case in secondary school.
- 5.76 Each factor could provide young people with different rewards –
- Refuel: provides hunger satiation; replenishing energy; sustenance
 - Reward: the food provides pleasure; enjoyment including what the food feels and tastes like
 - Re-energise: Pupils were refreshed and rejuvenated

- Relax: the lunch break allowed time to rest, have a time-out from the academic day and allowed time to switch off
 - Re-connect: the lunch break also allowed time for engaging; interacting; communicating
 - Relationship building: pupils could establish and nurture friendships; learn about others; socialise and allowed time for moral and interpersonal skill development
 - Release: gave the pupils freedom; physical, psychological and emotional self-expression; creativity; autonomy
- 5.77 How pupils approached lunchtime differed by developmental stage. Different year groups looked for different (sometimes conflicting) things from their lunchtime experiences and the role of school food within it. There were broadly three developmental stages across secondary school: Tweens: time of transition (yrs 7/8); Early teens: time of fragmentation (yr 8-10) and Mid teens: time of independence (yr 10-11).
- 5.78 The defining characteristics of Tweens were:
- They were adapting to changes: a time of turmoil where they were bombarded with new experiences (often report feeling overwhelmed)
 - They were clinging to routine and familiarity of primary school (friends, lunchtime choices)
 - They were congregating in big herds: for security, to make new friends
- 5.79 The things that would impact on their school meal choice:
- They were more likely to place importance on refuelling before other behaviours (as in primary)
 - They would use canteen as a meeting point and a safe, controlled area
 - There was a high uptake of school meals (esp. hot set meal) carried over from primary or as means of settling into new school
 - The defining characteristics of Early Teens were:
 - Pushing boundaries: a time of classic teen rebellion (confidently testing the limits at school)
 - Friendships in a state of flux : peer group fragmenting and 'tribes' forming
 - New forms of social interaction emerging as they move from same sex to mixed gender groups: posturing, conflict, behaviour matching, and social hierarchy negotiation
- 5.80 The things that would impact on their school meal choice:
- Most likely to prioritise releasing over refuelling with some choosing not to eat at all
 - Peer matching in food choice and foods chosen that accommodate territoriality (foods types that can be 'sneaked' out of the canteen). Switch away from hot set meal to other options as become more experimental and desire to separate themselves from other peer groups (especially year 7s)
- 5.81 The defining characteristics of Mid-Teens were:
- Becoming more task-orientated as they juggle more demands and responsibilities (often report feeling time-pressured)
 - More cemented friendships and less conflict between groups (more cooperative)
 - Growing in confidence, less preoccupied with peer behaviour and move between multiple peers groups as they become more independent in organising own schedules
- 5.82 The things that would impact on their school meal choice:
- Seek more flexible food options that fit around their busy schedules and enable multi-tasking during lunchtime
 - Strong desire for portable food options that allow them to eat on the go / go on 'lunch runs' for one another
 - Happier to make food choices independent of friends but still seek to separate themselves from younger years to assert their 'adulthood' in the school

- 5.83 The Customer journey represents the biggest barrier for most customers (over food and price) and is made up of a range of different experiential factors
- 5.84 For young people the barriers were –
- Dining Room layout
 - Seating
 - Queues
 - Payment method
 - Dinner-time staff
 - Environment
 - Product branding
 - Portability
 - Communication (branded)
- 5.85 For parent the barriers were –
- Payment method
 - Communication
- 5.86 Food choice had to be peer approved and young people learn to develop normative food preferences and behaviours in relation to school food based on what their immediate peer group is consuming (i.e. they buy same/similar thing). For many, certain foods had different meanings imbued onto them and are used to differentiate peer groups (e.g. hot set meals for those receiving free school meals, pasta for football lads, popular girls have flapjacks)
- 5.87 Residual negative imagery was attached to school food (i.e. it is low quality, childish, uninspiring) and could make them unappealing to image-conscious peer groups and affect uptake.
- 5.88 Lunchtime is pivotal part of the school day; highly anticipated and valued for all young people who need (demand) space and time to eat. Lunchtime is about identity formation, asserting independence, forming norms and is different depending on developmental stage.
- 5.89 Schools where uptake of school meals had increased had a strong vision for school food and works closely with catering staff to deliver it. There were multiple food zones around school and multiple sales occasions (before school, morning and afternoon breaks). The school had a range of seating zones / flexible seating and revamped and decorated canteens. They also had branded food options (e.g. Theo's wraps, Pasta King), portable grab 'n' go food options and regular menu variety with food based events/promos. They had outside eating space, student engagement and input into canteen decisions and real plates and cutlery.
- 5.90 In Schools where the uptake had declined the school and catering staff were not working together (catering staff see Local Authority as their employer / school see canteen as a supplier). There was a limited food offer, i.e. heavy focus on hot set meal and no dedicated canteen space. Students were allowed to eat packed lunches in classrooms/around school site. There was a strong teacher presence policing dinner hall with flight trays style crockery and fixed seating and tables. There would also be food outlets near school that were open on way to school. At these schools the time for lunch had also decreased e.g. to 25 minutes meaning that the canteen staff feel rushed and rush children through. Dietary requirements were also not catered for by the meals.
- 5.91 The Committee noted the change in % of pupils having a school lunch who took a particular item with a chart showing the change between 2005 and 2009 in the percentage of pupils having a school lunch who took an item of food or drink from a specific food group. The

increases had all been towards water, fruit, vegetables and more healthy options with deep fried unhealthy options declining.

- 5.92 The take up of Free School Meals had increased. In 2006 – 82% of those known to be eligible were eating meal in primary and 73% in secondary. By 2010 - 86% of those known to be eligible were eating meals in primary and 78% in secondary
- 5.93 School food was important right across the school day and children consider their lunch time the most important part of the day. The educational benefits of good nutrition had now been established and the opportunity to change behaviour in schools was profound.
- 5.94 The School Food Trust reported evidence on behaviour and concentration based on two items of research that had involved randomised control trials and the test groups were shown to have a 33% improvement in performance versus the control group.
- 5.95 There was a misperception that breakfast was more important than lunch as a meal. Those students who did not eat breakfast at home were often from socially deprived families.
- 5.96 Primary school pupils were generally less concerned with the canteen environment and looked for more basic things.
- 5.97 Girls and boys looked for different things from their school meals.
- 5.98 No single item of research had been done on the pupils who had their meals off site but other pieces of work had looked at certain factors. However, poor quality food provision was potentially more of a problem in an urban environment where there was a greater off site offering.
- 5.99 It was better to keep pupils on site if possible as this generally improved their level of nutrition. Some schools were phasing lunches to accommodate more pupils.
- 5.100 The current average school meal cost £1.20 but this may change when ring fenced funding ended.
- 5.101 The Trust had carried out a pilot at a girls' school to assess what made a difference to food wastage. The school had been wasting 45% of all food. After adding five minutes to the lunch period, laying music and putting tablecloths on tables there was virtually no waste which obviously improved the costs incurred.
- 5.102 The Schools Food Trust had carried out research that showed that there was a link between food and behaviour.

Improving nutrition in Schools – Food for Life Partnership

- 5.103 Marjon Willers, School Food Policy Officer, Health Education Trust gave a presentation to the Committee on the Food for Life Partnership.
- 5.104 The Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) was a Big Lottery funded project to transform school food culture covering:
- School meals
 - Food education, cooking lessons, on-site food growing, visits to farms and improvements to the dining area.
 - Whole school approach to decision making
- 5.105 Over 3,000 schools were currently enrolled and as part of the awards scheme 186 bronze awards had been given of which 54 had progressed to silver and 7 to gold.

- 5.106 Head teachers reported improvements in attendance, behaviour, attentiveness in class and attainment, benefits that were also demonstrated by research into food in schools and the link between diet and behaviour. Pupils gained knowledge and skills in areas such as cooking, growing, sustainability, health, decision making and debating.
- 5.107 Schools also reported increased school meal take up. In November 2010, of the awarded schools which have given data on their school meal take up (75 out of 185), the average increase in take up from their enrolment with FFLP to when they achieved their highest award (Bronze, Silver or Gold) was 19%.
- 5.108 The Food for Life Catering Mark was an award scheme for schools. The three tiers of Bronze, Silver and Gold allowed caterers to make step-wise progress towards greater use of fresh, seasonal, local and organic ingredients, high welfare meat and eggs and sustainable fish. The FFL catering mark was independent from the FFLP.
- 5.109 The FFLP worked because it offered a whole school approach to food with improved food quality and provenance. There was pupil involvement in: Menu development choices, Dining room environment and the queuing system. The scheme helped to build an improved relationship between catering staff, school staff and pupils and integrate lunch as part of the school day.
- 5.110 The Food for Life Partnership made some suggestions for Islington including:
- Stay-on-site policy
 - Inspections of standards
 - Record take up of school meals and FSME at secondary schools
 - Encourage the transformation of food culture using FFLP framework
 - FFL catering mark for secondary school meals
 - School food premium at local level aimed specifically at secondary schools and targeted at schools which achieve a certain percentage of take up.
- 5.111 This encouraged schools to prioritise actions to increase school meal take-up (i.e. Stay-on-site policy, dining room improvements and a 'whole school' approach to food education, working closely with the caterer to improve school meals). Currently the school has little incentive to innovate in this area.

Food for Life Partnership – A Case Study: Carshalton Boys

- 5.112 David Hall, Assistant Deputy Head, Carshalton Boys gave evidence to the Committee.
- 5.113 Tackling obesity was identified as a national problem. There were National Educational Targets to address the issue. FFLP had been a significant part of Carshalton's drive towards young people making healthy life choices. The number of obese children had been reduced from 9% of their pupil body to 3%.
- 5.114 They had 100% participation in three hours of high quality PE per week. Their school food met nutritional standards and FFLP Bronze and Silver. There was compulsory cooking for all and food and nutrition was part of an integrated curriculum.
- 5.115 Being part of FFLP provided focus, advice, resources and SMART criteria to assess progress against.
- 5.116 Lunchtime was a key time to ensure learning as was good food and ample time for exercise/physical activity. The uptake of school food had improved 200% from 270 to over 800 servings.

- 5.117 Exercise was key to the success of a healthy schools programme. Personal fitness/skill and individualised exercise programmes were also important as was the need not to focus on competition sport in lessons.
- 5.118 Catering at Carshalton Boys was now an in-house operation and therefore allowed a much greater control of menus and healthy eating. Changes to the original system included:
- Improved Quality of Food
 - Only healthy drinks.
 - Fresh Home made soup daily.
 - Fresh vegetables / fruit / salad bar daily.
 - Food grown by pupils was used in the café
 - There were four main meal options (vegetarian, Halal and two others)
- 5.119 As a result of the changes the pupil satisfaction survey had gone from 50% satisfaction to 95%.
- 5.220 There had been student and staff surveys to encourage healthy eating and implementation of new menus. The food choices had gone from less to more healthy and positive comments had improved. The catering managers support through FFLP assistance with new suppliers / ideas and problems. There was also a forum to share good practice.
- 5.221 At Key Stage 3 level pupils learnt design and technology and practical cooking. At Key Stage 4 they could take Food and Nutrition (GCSE). They also studied enrichment cooking and had an alternative learning week.
- 5.222 Breakfast at the school cost £1 and was served between 7:00am and 8:30am when school started. Free breakfasts were also offered on GCSE exam days.
- 5.223 Flexible spaces were key to accommodating all pupils for lunches.
- 5.224 The school had worked hard to get parents on board with the new system including speaking to them at parents' evenings.
- 5.225 Carshalton had worked with their PE staff who acted as role models to encourage students to live healthier lives. Year 7 students were taught practical cookery and also had growing beds to produce their own fruit and vegetables.
- 5.226 Achievement and outcomes were improved as exam results had risen and bad behaviour had fallen which could have a direct link with funding.
- 5.227 Improved food quality meant more sales and margins improved. It required more money to cater for fewer pupils.
- 5.228 Cooks shared knowledge across different schools which meant different food cultures could be catered for across the year.
- 5.229 Years 7 and 8 also used a computer programme called Relish that allowed them to substitute unhealthy foods for healthy ones.
- 5.230 180 flagship schools were part of the programme and this had now grown to 3,000. The vast majority were not getting any extra funding so cuts to central government funding would not affect them. The framework would still be in place in schools to support the system and flagships could support other schools.

Healthy Eating in Schools and Planning

- 5.231 The Committee heard evidence from Ashley Niman, Planning Officer, London Borough of Islington.
- 5.232 The Committee noted that, in a recent case brought by Tower Hamlets, the Administrative Court allowed their appeal and held that the potential impact that a further hot food takeaway in the area would have on the promotion of healthy eating at the nearby school would be a material consideration when considering whether permission should be granted.
- 5.233 The Committee noted that Islington Core Strategy Submission had been completed in June 2010 and included a relevant policy IMP2. A draft document would be out to consultation until the end of January. This included Policy DM35 which identified a number of uses the Council disliked including hot food takeaways. This will become Development Management policy alongside a SPD to be produced in 2012.
- 5.234 The distance from a school to a hot food takeaway was relevant. As Islington was such a dense borough it would be useful to state an exact distance in any SPD document.
- 5.235 Councillors were interested to hear that Tower Hamlets had included youth facilities and parks in their radius of exclusion for new hot food outlets.
- 5.236 Although officers could not alter the status of existing hot food outlets, they could use judgement and supporting policies to refuse an application to change a use class for a site.
- 5.237 Hot food takeaways were all A5 uses and there was no distinction between the types of food served.
- 5.238 The Council could consider having policies that there would be no more than one such outlet in a protected parade of shops or they could require a gap of five to ten retail shops between each outlet.
- 5.239 Acland Burghley were changing their policy so that students would no longer be allowed out at lunchtime. Councillors stated that more pressure should be put on schools to follow a similar policy.
- 5.240 Even where a school had a policy of not letting pupils leave the premises at lunchtime the council should still set an example by looking to control the number of outlets.
- 5.241 Saturation was probably more important than proximity and councillors were sure there would be strong support for a Waltham Forest style SPD.
- 5.242 The Chair would be meeting with Councillor Convery, the Executive Member with responsibility for the Core Strategy and suggested that it may be appropriate to question whether the Strategy could still be amended to bring the policy protection in sooner rather than waiting for an SPD.

CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Free School Meals policy was introduced initially as a pilot scheme in only six primary schools. The Committee consider that the Free School Meals pilot and subsequent roll out of full policy have been successful in improving take up of school meals in nurseries and primary schools.
- 6.2 We have heard a wide variety of evidence from a number of sources. The Committee would like to thank all of the witnesses who gave up their time to come and give evidence on this review. All of the evidence sessions provided useful information that has contributed to the formulation of the Committee's recommendations.
- 6.3 We consider that the evidence we have received has given us a clear basis on which to propose additional improvements to the way school meals are provided.
- 6.4 The Committee feel strongly that access to good food is vitally important to all school children and are conscious nutrition in schools provides an ideal opportunity to make a difference to children's diets. This is particularly important when considering those pupils from less privileged backgrounds who may not have access to an appropriate diet elsewhere. We commend the efforts of caterers for ensuring that any stigma that pupils may feel is attached to receiving free school meals is lessened, by ensuring they have access to the same food options on site as their peers.
- 6.5 We note that councils are subject to increasingly tight budgetary restrictions and are mindful of the impact this will also have on schools. Whilst there is undoubtedly always more that could be done to improve school meal provision, we hope that our recommendations will assist with the already excellent work that is going on in Islington Schools to improve the nutritional standards of pupils' diets.
- 6.6 The Committee are of the view that its recommendations will assist in contributing to the very good work that is already going on and in extending improved meal take up to secondary schools.

APPENDICES

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT - APPENDIX A

LIST OF WITNESSES / DOCUMENTARY SUBMISSIONS - APPENDIX B

Scrutiny Review Initiation Document

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)
Review: School Meals - Nutrition
Scrutiny Review Committee: Health and Wellbeing Committee
Director leading the review: Sarah Price
Lead Officer: Thanos Morphitis
<p>Overall Aim:</p> <p>To encourage the take up of nutritionally balanced meals in schools</p>
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the increase in take up of schools in primary schools • To provide information on number of breakfast clubs in primary schools • To assess the take up of school meals in secondary schools
<p>How is the review to be carried out:</p> <p>Scope of the Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report on take up of school meals in primary schools in light of change in council policy in March 2010 • To report on number of breakfast clubs available in primary schools • To consider for sample secondary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School meal take up by paying and free schools meals students ○ Numbers of students taking 'meal of the day' ○ Views on menu options taken by students ○ Number of students bringing packed lunches ○ School policy of students leaving premises at lunch times ○ Number of students going out for lunch and the capacity of schools to provide school meals for all pupils ○ Food options available outside the school and distance from the schools ○ Recommendations for improving nutritional intake of secondary students • To consider what action the council might be able to take to encourage healthy lunch choices for secondary students and discourage unhealthy alternatives <p>The types of evidence that will be assessed by the review:</p> <p>1. Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on primary school meal take up

- on numbers of primary school breakfast clubs

2. Witness evidence

- presentation by two secondary schools (one in LBI contract and one outside)
- presentation from School Food Trust on initiatives that have worked to improve take up in secondary schools
- presentation from contractor on initiatives that have worked to improve take up in secondary schools
- Presentation from planning officers on potential for restrictions in planning permission for fast food outlets near schools

3. Visits

- to secondary schools to observe lunchtime provision and sample meals available

Witnesses

Thanos Morphitis, Assistant Director of Children's Services
Tina Southall, Deputy Head of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School
Adrian Hracki and Tahmid Choudhury, pupils and School Council members of Central Foundation School
Brendan Goodfellow, Healthy Schools Co-ordinator, Central Foundation School
Brian Dow, School Food Trust
Marjon Willers, School Food Policy Officer, Health Education Trust
David Hall, Assistant Deputy Head, Carshalton Boys
Neil Fuller, Chief Executive and Penny Richards, Operations Director, Caterlink

Documentary submissions

Free School Meal Application Form
Autumn Sample Menu 2010