**SCHOOLS FORUM – 1ST JULY 2015**

**SCHOOL MEALS CONTRACT**

1. **Purpose of the Report**

To provide the Schools Forum members with information and the latest position on the status of the re-procurement of school meals for participating primary schools and academies.

1. **Background**

With the introduction of Food and Nutrient Standards in 2008 and the re-introduction of hot meals in 2009, the existing corporate hot school meals contract was awarded to Cygnet Catering in July 2009. Prior to the introduction of Universal Free School meals it had an estimated value of £1.7M per annum. All primary schools were initially included in the contract along with 2 secondary schools, however the secondary schools opted out of the contract provision during the contract term. The contract which was for five years was extended for one further year to allow a new provision to be re-commissioned in line with new food standards legislation which came into force January 2015 and to assess the impact of Universal Free School Meals which came in September 2014. The contract (which was due to expire this month (July 2015)) has been extended further until April ’16 to allow for the re-procurement.

The current operating model is 2 service styles, fully managed cook on site provision and cook-chilled delivered in to be re-heated on site.

There are currently 45 participating schools which are made up of both Maintained and Academy schools, although all primary (with the exception of one nursery). This will drop to 32 schools (15 maintained schools and 17 academies) with the new contract. The funding for school meals was fully delegated to schools in 2008.

Overall take up for school meals has been approx. 32% however the introduction of Universal Free School Meals has seen it increase to 54%.

1. **Proposed Tender details**

The Council will act as a paid agent on behalf of primary maintained schools and academies in North East Lincolnshire to set up a school meals framework arrangement, who following consultation have chosen to opt in to this new arrangement. The new provision will meet the governments food standards, and will put a service in place that provides healthy, age appropriate school meals to children in participating schools. The service will have performance measures in place that allow it to be appropriately monitored and managed to ensure service delivery of safe, quality school meals and continuity of provision. It will also transfer responsibility for the management of meal ordering from schools to the provider, releasing schools from the burden of administrating this. The service provision will be in two lots:

1.            Cook on site

2.            Cook chill meals that are delivered in for regeneration.

Within each of the two lots there are also two different models of service management:

a.            Where the catering staff are employed by the individual school; or

b.            Where the service is fully managed and staffed by the provider.

Once the framework is in place, individual contracts will be called off for each school as required and they will then hold a contract directly with the new provider. As agent and administrator NELC will continue to contract manage and monitor the service provision on behalf of schools throughout the framework’s lifetime.

1. **Consultation with Schools**

A number of meetings have been held with schools and Head teachers through attendance at the Primary Heads meeting and the establishing of a working group to define and comment on the proposed specification plus consider other issues such as staff transference issues. Sample consultations have been carried out with children at the working group representatives schools to gain their views on the school meals.

A market day was held with interested providers on 18th March 2015 and was attended by 6 organisations being a mix of large organisations, SMEs and other local authorities.

1. **Time line for procurement**

The indicative date for the award of the new contract is November 2015 with a planned date for contract commencement of Easter 2016.

1. **Schools Forum action**

Schools forum is requested to give a view on the proposed tender details.

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