

Agenda Item	7
Report No	RDB/09/26

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 27 August 2026

Report Title: Food in Schools Project

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of the Food in Schools 10-point Action Plan.

The working group continue to meet regularly to discuss and scrutinise the activity, with the more recent focus being linked to ensuring the Action Plan is refined and delivery dates still applicable to deliver this activity within the overall Project deadline of the end of this financial year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is invited to:
- i. Note the progress to date
 - ii. Note the detailed Food in Schools Action Plan at **Appendix 1 and 2** of this report

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** There are no resource implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no legal implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.
- 3.3 **Risk:** There are no risks arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no immediate health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic:** There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required. As actions are progressed these will be assessed for impacts accordingly.

5. Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability

- 5.1 The cross-service Working Group membership comprises Councillor M Reid, Councillor B Jarvie, and officers from Commercialisation, CCFM, Waste and Education.

The supporting actions for the plan have been reviewed and revised to ensure the overall delivery of all the plan actions by the end of the financial year.

- 5.2 The Working Group, whilst focussed on delivery of the ambitions of the plan, is also minded to ensure the continuation of activity beyond project closure with services embedding activity beyond the end date and with legacy activity moving to the likes of Good Food Nation and Value for Money/LFRs.

Appendix 1 details the original plan actions and updated planned completion dates, with **Appendix 2** providing greater detail of the supporting activity to deliver these actions within the timescales.

The following sections summarise the main points in the action plan

- 5.3 Action 1 - Review of School Menus

Comprehensive review of school menus is being undertaken, informed by pupil, parent and staff feedback, alongside analysis of sales, costs and food waste data. Aim is to improve pupil satisfaction levels, reduce waste and increase uptake.

- 5.4 Action 2 - Review nutritional guidelines to identify opportunities and barriers to matching local preferences

The service is reviewing the application of nutritional standards to identify opportunities for greater flexibility while maintaining compliance with national guidance.

- 5.5 Action 3 - Improve integration/collaboration between Catering and Education Services

Partnership working between Catering and Education Services has been strengthened through ongoing collaboration and joint governance arrangements, ensuring school meals are better aligned with wider educational priorities.

- 5.6 Action 4 - Develop and implement a strategic framework for enhancing school catering services

A strategic improvement framework is being developed to support performance monitoring, benchmarking, quality assurance and the sharing of best practice. This will provide a stronger evidence base for decision-making and continuous improvement.

5.7 Action 5 - Develop a "Food in Schools" parental engagement strategy

Work has been completed to identify a school meals app for use by pupils and parents to track menu choices. Ongoing parental engagement activity is aligned to the parental engagement strategy currently being implemented by Education service.

5.8 Action 6 - Review and action quality assurance arrangements

Supporting work is progressing through the strategic framework and performance monitoring activities, with formal quality assurance arrangements under development. Work remains to establish monitoring processes, staff guidance, customer feedback mechanisms and continuous improvement arrangements.

5.9 Action 7 - Review current supplier contracts and explore opportunities for mixed procurement models balancing central cost savings versus local flexibility

Work is underway to review existing supplier contracts and identify opportunities for more flexible procurement arrangements. Consideration is being given to increasing the use of locally sourced products, including venison, while maintaining compliance with procurement requirements.

5.10 Action 8 - Establish a waste tracking process for school meals

Expansion of food waste collection arrangements is underway and provides a strong basis for future monitoring arrangements. Work is continuing in a number of areas including baseline setting, enhanced data capture and integration of waste reduction learning into school activities and curriculum delivery.

5.11 Action 9 - Research and assess opportunities for in-house distribution model

This action is currently at the scoping stage. No formal activities have yet been recorded as complete or in progress. Significant analysis is required to understand existing supply chain costs, identify potential partners and assess whether an alternative distribution model could deliver operational or financial benefits.

5.12 Action 10 - Explore opportunities for enhancing overall dining experience

Finally, work is progressing to enhance the overall dining experience for pupils through improvements to dining environments, supervision arrangements and lunchtime service models, with the aim of creating more positive experiences and increasing school meal uptake.

6. Next Steps

6.1 Officers continue to collaborate on the delivery of the Action Plan. The new school year will provide clarity on the timescales for implementation of the actions directly impactable on schools and the school calendar and officers will continue to collaborate to ensure that actions are progressed appropriately. In particular the new academic year provides opportunities for updated communications and the launch of the School Meals app.

The next Working Group date is set for 13 August 2026.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate

Date: 05 August 2026

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Appendix 1 Approved Plan with updated estimated completion dates

Appendix 2 Detail of supporting activities for delivery of the Approved Plan

Appendix 1 - Approved Plan with updated estimated completion dates

Food in Schools High Level Action Plan					
	Action	Outcome(s)	Responsible Service	Est Timeline	Theme(s)
1	Undertake a comprehensive menu review	Increase pupil satisfaction levels, reduce waste, increase uptake	Catering / Education	December 2026	Take up rates (FSM)
2	Review nutritional guidelines to identify opportunities and barriers to matching local preferences	Increase pupil satisfaction levels, reduce waste, increase update	Catering	December 2026	Take up rates (FSM)
3	Improve integration/collaboration between Catering and Education Services	Improve nutritional and waste understanding for all pupils, reduce waste, increase uptake	Catering / Education	December 2026	Take up rates (FSM), Income Generation
4	Develop and implement a strategic framework for enhancing school catering services	Improved quality and consistency, increased update, enhanced dining experience for pupils, reduce waste, more efficient and sustainable operating models	Catering / Revenues	March 2027	Income generation, operating model, cost of food
5	Develop a "Food in Schools" parental engagement strategy	Engage key stakeholder group, increase update, reduce waste	Catering / Education / Communications	June 2026	Take up rates (FSM), operating model, cost of food
6	Review and action quality assurance arrangements	Improve quality and consistency, increase uptake, reduce waste	Catering	December 2026	Take up rates (FSM), operating model, cost of food
7	Review current supplier contracts and explore opportunities for mixed procurement models balancing central cost savings versus local flexibility	Diversify supply chain, improve quality, reduce waste	Catering / Procurement	Decembe 2026	Take up rates (FSM), operating model, cost of food
8	Establish a waste tracking process for school meals	Reduce waste	Catering / Waste	December 2026	Cost of food
9	Research and assess opportunities for in-house distribution model	Diversify supply chain, improve quality, reduce waste	Catering / Fleet / Logistics	March 2027	Operating model, cost of food
10	Explore opportunities for enhancing overall dining experience	Increase uptake, reduce waste	Catering / Properties	March 2027	Operating model, cost of food

Appendix 2 - Detail of supporting activities for delivery of the Approved Plan

1	Undertake a comprehensive menu review		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
		• Secondary Schools – deliver Focus Groups to school colleagues & Pupils • Primary Schools – develop resources for delivery of activities for pupils linked to Food in Schools and Waste • Hold Annual Cook Workshops and capture feedback to inform further design • Use data to review menu choices, tracking costs as well as sales, uptake and waste data • Develop feedback opportunity for further parental engagement/feedback.	
2	Review nutritional guidelines to identify opportunities and barriers to matching local preferences		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
• Consider researching and writing a position paper regarding fuel vs food argument. • Review the level of flexibility used when applying the regulations and learn from existing good practice and learning from others.			• Optimise membership of industry groups as a means to influence national nutritional guidance – ensure strategically agreed position for this.

3	Improve integration / collaboration between Catering and Education Services		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Maintain post-project links with the Education Rep - Agree a schedule of meetings with standing items for discussion.			Co-opt a member of Education to the Working Group
4	Develop and implement a strategic framework for enhancing school catering services		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Review use of the Quality Assurance Framework and other activities to ensure these are providing appropriate feedback loop. - Develop a metrics dashboard as part of performance monitoring		- Consider workarounds to overcome the Term-time only challenges for employee development - Start a benchmarking project and establish criteria for benchmarking	- Establish a mechanism for staff to share and view best practice - Embed Performance Monitoring to support staff and feedback on performance, uptake and other metrics - Develop checklists and standard reports and documentation to assist in tracking, monitoring and to support learning
5	Develop a “Food in Schools” parental engagement strategy		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Review and implement communications plan actions - Use feedback from school meals app to target interventions at parents evenings - Discuss app with Education to consider the potential for a single interface to make engagement easier for parents - Work with Education/ CLD to design kitchen taster teaching sessions for parents		Review webpage content and update as required	- Research and assess options for school meals app - Liaise with Education at earliest possible stage to integrate FiS proposed strategy within the context of broader THC Parental Engagement Strategy

6	Review and action quality assurance arrangements		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
• Develop a process to ensure output from Action 4 (strategic improvement framework) is tracked and monitored • Use the feedback to review delivery model options and processes accordingly – cognisant of Actions 7 & 9 and other strategic opportunities and plans within the Council. • Draft quality assurance (QA) guidelines for all kitchen staff • Revisit overall QA monitoring processes • Explore options for ongoing pupil satisfaction feedback timing to fit with menu planning process and making good use of existing data to then survey accordingly • Use feedback to identify emerging quality issues			
7	Review current supplier contracts and explore opportunities for mixed procurement models balancing central cost savings versus local flexibility		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
• Schedule regular contract meetings with existing suppliers as part of contract management • Establish an agreed monitoring/escalation process internally for contract management that can be used to inform the formal contract meetings • Conduct pulse survey of supplier considerations among senior catering staff		• Review current supplier contracts • Explore opportunities for procuring local venison in rural school locations, and potential to mainstream this as part of contract process • Consider other opportunities for mixed procurement and share guidelines on mixed procurement options for kitchen staff	

8	Establish a waste tracking process for school meals		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Establish school waste tracking baselines - Work with Waste to widen data capture for waste tracking to target activity - Use the “Cannich” model to broaden learning and embed in the curriculum - Better understand the eco/green flags network and opportunities for Waste reduction embedding in the longer term. - Review bin provision to develop an optimum model linked to school roll/collection models (based on Waste audit data) - Use data to monitor the effectiveness of waste reduction interventions		Expand Food Waste collections to further schools annually	
9	Research and assess opportunities for in-house distribution model		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Use data from Action 7 plus financial analysis of procurement costs to baseline current distribution costs (real and opportunity costs) - Explore, identify and engage with potential partner organisations with a shared interest in developing supply chains (Partnership consideration - NHS / Good Food Nation links) - Analyse current use and potential uses for production kitchens - including opportunities for income generation (jams, shortbread/ baking products etc) - Review existing contracts and pinch points - Analyse choices between smaller and larger-scaled supply contracts - Develop analysis matrix to explore benefits of breaking bulk centrally			

	Liaise with property, fleet and logistics to explore potential for hub and spoke distribution model		
10	Explore opportunities for enhancing overall dining experience		
TO COMPLETE		IN PROGRESS	COMPLETED
- Capture data from Catering to understand queues / multiple services to help inform opportunities - Set up short life working group (Catering, Education and Property) to consider options in some schools for alternative dining spaces - Use same short life working group to agree minimum standards for dining room supervision - Arrange pilots in a small number of schools to test alternative approaches to staggering lunch breaks - Identify best practice in dining hall design and seek opportunities to replicate in a small number of pilot schools		Using local data, map uptake in schools against supervision in dining settings to inform the short-life working group below re supervision opportunities	