

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 1 December 2021**

Subject: Procurement of Online Payments System and Cashless Catering System

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report seeks approval from Members to tender for an online payments system for all establishments to allow parents and carers to make online payments to their children's school. Approval is also sought for a cashless catering system for use in the Authority's secondary schools which will work in conjunction with the online payments system.

2. Recommendations**2.1** Members are asked to:

- a. Note the plan for the replacement of the online payment system for all establishments and the replacement of the existing cashless catering system in use within West Dunbartonshire's secondary schools utilising the Scot Excel Framework for Online School Payments, Cashless Catering and Kitchen Management Systems.
- b. Note that the cost of both new systems will come from the existing budget for the current systems being used in schools.
- c. Approve the proposal to tender for the provision of an online payments system and cashless catering system. The award recommendation will be reported to a future Tendering Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1** In June 2017, WDC approved the procurement of an online payments system for parents to allow establishments to received online payments direct to both the schools' and Council bank accounts for meals, trips and other costs. The procurement of the system was part of the Council's Digital Strategy to maximize the proportion of digital transactions and reduce the need for cash handling in schools.
- 3.2** Initially, the online payments system, which is provided by ParentPay, was an option for parents and carers to use. The effect of COVID-19 in 2020 however required this option be reviewed in terms of safe cash handling and the potential spread of the virus. Consequently, a decision was taken to cease all cash handling and require all payments to schools to be made using ParentPay. The system has proved popular with parents and has resulted in a high take-up across the Authority.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The contract with ParentPay for the online payments system was scheduled to end in August 2021, however an extension was put in place to allow the Council to take advantage of a procurement framework which Scot Excel were developing and have recently released to Scottish Local Authorities in November 2021. The procurement framework is designed to assist Council's in the tender and purchase of online payments, cashless catering and kitchen management systems. A consequence of awaiting the release of the framework has meant the extension to the existing contract with ParentPay will continue into early 2022. This will allow WDC to take advantage of Scot Excel's research and their scrutiny of suppliers.
- 4.2** The cashless catering system in use in WDC secondary schools is provided by CRB Cunningham: Educational Solutions, and has been in use for a number of years with the maintenance contract operating on a year-to-year basis. The market for such systems has developed significantly since this system was acquired by WDC and it is felt wholly appropriate to bring this area of service provision within a contract framework to improve on best value and to take advantage of newer technologies which are available in this field.
- 4.3** The procurement framework developed by Scot Excel lists four separate systems which integrate to provide the payments service to parents as well as all aspects of cashless catering and kitchen management -
- a) Online School Payments
 - b) Cashless Catering
 - c) Kitchen Management System (to include nutritional analysis)
 - d) Nutritional Analysis System
- 4.4** Presently, we have existing provision for online payments and cashless catering. The cost of the online payments system provided by ParentPay for the years 2018-2021 is £61,548 with the cashless catering system from CRB Cunningham: Educational Solutions over the same period costing £128,484. The procurement of a new solution will be met by existing budget provision.

5. People Implications

The procurement of these systems will provide staff with improved and efficient technology in core areas of their job.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

It is anticipated that the revenue costs of running a newly procured system will be met within the existing budget provision as detailed at 4.4 above.

6.2 Procurement Implications

All procurement activity carried out by the Council in excess of £50K is subject to a contract strategy. The contract strategy for the online payments system and cashless catering system will be produced by the Corporate Procurement Unit in close consultation with Education, Learning and Attainment officers. The contract strategy shall include but may not be limited to; contract scope, service forward plan, the market, procurement model and routes – including existing frameworks such as Scot Excel, roles and responsibilities, risks, issues and opportunities and ongoing contract management.

The online payments system and cashless catering system will contribute to delivery of the Council strategic priorities through providing efficient and effective frontline services. Further opportunities to maximise the positive social, economical and environmental impact for West Dunbartonshire through the contract will also be explored, e.g. through the use of Community Benefit Clauses.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Failure to review and modernize the processes involved in the receiving, handling and management of school funds poses the risk that the Council will not fulfil the requirements of its Digital Strategy. These changes will contribute directly to efficient and effective frontline roles and provide easy and convenient methods of payment to parents and carers.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An equalities screening has been carried out for this report and there are no equalities issues identified.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The procurement of the online payments system and cashless catering system is consistent with the Council's objectives to make innovative use of information technology and provide efficient service delivery.

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16/11/2021

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Appendices: Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards