

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Committee: Educational Services Committee 19 March 2025**

Subject: Procurement of Online Payments System and Cashless Catering System**1 Purpose**

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:**

- i) 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;
- ii) Note that the cost of both new systems will come from the existing budget for the current systems being used in schools; and
- iii) 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.

- 3.3 A procurement exercise in 2021 allowed us to continue working with ParentPay under terms of a new contract. The existing contract was for a term of three years, with a one-year extension, taking us to June 2025.

4 Main Issues

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 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

- 4.3 Presently, we have existing provision for online payments and cashless catering. The cost of the online payments system provided by ParentPay for the years 2021-2025 is £102,846 with the cashless catering system from CRB Cunningham: Educational Solutions over the same period costing £150,195. The procurement of a new solution will be met by existing budget provision.

5 People Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct people implications arising from this report. The procurement of these systems will provide staff with improved and efficient technology in core areas of their job, with training to ensure they are best prepared and supported to use new systems.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 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

- 6.2.1 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.
- 6.2.2 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

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

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Procurement, Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services and Section 95 Officer have been consulted on the content of this paper.

10 Strategic Assessment

- 10.1 The procurement of the online payments system and cashless catering system is consistent with the Council's objective that our council is inclusive and adaptable.

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Date: 11 February 2025

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: EIA screening

Wards Affected: All