



Subject Heading:

**School kitchen equipment
maintenance**

Report Author:

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Eligibility to vote:

All members

SUMMARY

This report summarises the proposals to support schools with the maintenance of school kitchen equipment as part of revised service level agreements and clarifies schools' financial responsibilities. These proposals have been considered by a working group of head teachers from primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consider the report prior to wider consultation with schools.

REPORT DETAIL

School Financial Responsibilities

Schools have delegated responsibility for maintaining the fabric of the school buildings which includes the kitchen i.e. walls, floors, ceilings, lighting, ventilation systems. Responsibility for kitchen equipment replacement and maintenance is the same as it is for other parts of the school i.e. PE equipment, science equipment, D&T and ICT infrastructure.

The schools designated catering company provides the school meals service and uses the schools kitchen facilities and equipment. The catering company supplies the staff and consumables (food, etc.) to provide the service.

Schools are free to enter into their own maintenance contracts for the kitchen equipment as they do for other school equipment, however HCS currently provide planned and reactive maintenance of kitchen equipment for maintained schools through the SLA.

Havering Catering Services

Havering Catering Services (HCS) is a Council run service which provides a school meals service to primary and secondary schools across the borough. As a non-statutory council service, HCS cannot be subsidised and has to operate on a cost-neutral basis i.e. the income generated by the service has to cover the operating costs. A recent internal audit also identified areas for improvement to meet internal compliance standards.

HCS has been through significant change during 2015/16 in order to make it fit for purpose and to move towards a cost neutral financial position. A restructure of the management team and investment in technology (Cypad) and in staff development has seen HCS transformed to meet the challenges of the future.

Further changes are planned during 2016/17 to comply with audit recommendations, drive efficiencies and meet a cost neutral financial target which will also provide better levels of customer service. Such initiatives include:

- Central staff restructure.
- Closure of loss making MOW service.
- Improved ICT for Area Team (remote systems access).
- Move to a Cashless operation (eliminate dinner tickets)
- Finalise SLA's for all schools

Some of the proposed changes directly impact the HCS customers and the early stages of consultation has begun in order to understand any barriers to change. A key aspect of this is the proposed changes to SLAs with maintained schools.

Contracts & Service Level Agreements.

Poor contracts and SLAs were a key criticism of a recent internal audit of HCS. The recommendation was that all contracts require clear, unambiguous SLAs outlining the responsibilities of both parties.

SLAs have been reviewed and renegotiated across secondary schools and the same process needs to be completed with the Primary estate. One of the key issues HCS is seeking to address within a new SLA is around asset management responsibilities which are required to reflect the school financial responsibilities as outlined above.

Proposed SLA changes for Asset Management

Under the new SLA proposals HCS will no longer undertake the following activities:

1. Refurbishment, repairs or alteration works to any of the schools' fixed assets (buildings or fixed systems which includes kitchen ventilation system).
2. Replace kitchen equipment (ovens, fridges, freezers etc.).
3. Unlimited reactive maintenance (breakdowns) of kitchen equipment.

The rationale behind this clarification in any new SLA is that HCS is not funded (or ever has been funded) for these types of works.

HCS would continue to provide the planned maintenance checks of kitchen assets to include Gas safety checks and PAT testing of all appliances. HCS can also accommodate annual duct cleaning of kitchen extraction system as these items are fixed annual costs and can be funded through the income of the contracts.

Support for Schools

The Local Authority and HCS recognise that this is a big change for schools based on what has happened historically. HCS has complicated its own matters by previously undertaking work for which it was not authorised or funded to undertake.

To assist schools with the transition the following support is proposed:

- HCS can signpost schools to the existing (discretionary) asset management capital fund for works >£5k to which schools can apply for support.
- HCS shall maintain procurement frameworks for schools to help obtain best value for money for maintenance and equipment for which they are responsible.
- HCS will provide schools an annual reactive maintenance budget (funded through contract income) to help fund reactive maintenance (0.7% of income or £500 (whichever is greater)).
- The Local Authority will invest capital in 2016/17 to replace unreliable equipment to ensure all schools in the maintained sector are on an equal footing.
- HCS will continue to work with the schools expansion board to ensure kitchen expansions remain on the agenda as with refurbishments at Harold Wood, Engayne, Scotts, a new facility at Brady and proposals for a new facility at Crownfield infants.

The package of support is designed to limit costs to schools for the short term and allow sufficient time to plan for future expenditure that may arise from maintaining and replacing kitchen equipment.