

Item 4

27th August 2015



Glasgow City Council

Children and Families Policy Development Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education

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BREAKFAST CLUB SERVICE

Purpose of Report:

To advise Committee of the findings of a consultation undertaken to gather views on options for efficiencies in the delivery of Breakfast Clubs

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to consider the outcome of the review of Breakfast Clubs

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1 Background

- 1.1 A review of Breakfast Clubs was undertaken to identify options for efficiencies in the delivery of Breakfast Clubs. Glasgow City Council currently spends £2 million per annum on the service that is currently accessed by around 10% of Primary School children.
- 1.2 The current financial position of public services means that non statutory services, such as the breakfast clubs, require a best value review to be undertaken to ensure that they are continuing to meet the intended aims and are achieving best value.
- 1.3 A report on the findings of the review was presented to the Children and Families Policy and Development Committee on the 19 March 2015. The Committee asked that Education Services conduct a consultation exercise with parents and carers before making any recommendations on breakfast club efficiencies.
- 1.4 Options identified in the report were open for consultation to parents, carers, Parent Councils and other interested parties from Wednesday 22 April to Friday 8 May. The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that Education Services consider the views of parents and carers prior to recommendations on the future delivery of the breakfast service being made.

2 Scope and Approach

- 2.1 An online survey was developed to consult on the options identified as potential service efficiencies detailed in the previous report. This was published on the Glasgow City Council website accompanied by supporting information. This was sent out to Primary School Head Teachers to be circulated to the chairs of Parent Councils. Questions were designed to measure the strength of opinion on the possible options to be considered for implementation.
- 2.2 A short briefing paper was published on the Glasgow City Council website and the full Breakfast Service Report submitted to the Children and Families Policy and Development Committee was also accessible to the public.
- 2.3 The options under consideration were:
 1. Clustering of breakfast clubs with schools adjacent to each other
 2. Increase cash breakfast charge
 3. Thresholds below which we would not provide a Breakfast Club e.g. attendance rates

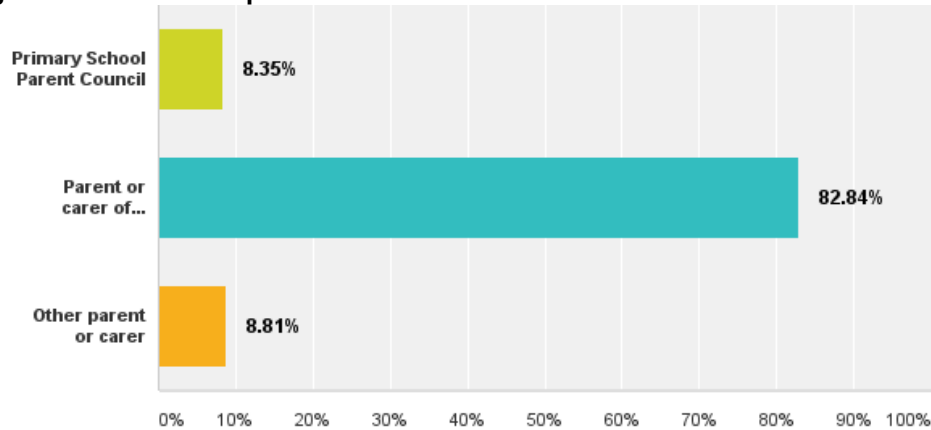
3 Findings

- 3.1 There was a high response rate to the survey with 1808 responses. It should be noted that not all questions were completed by all respondents. The percentage results detailed in this section of the report are based on the total

number responding to each question rather than the total number of returns to the survey.

3.2 Respondents were asked in what capacity were they responding to the survey. The majority of responses came from parents/carers of primary school children as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Status of Respondents



Those responding in the other parent or carer category included:

- Grandparents - 15
- Other family relatives/friends - 6
- Parents of pre-school children likely to use the service in the future - 49
- Organisations with an interest in family and child welfare – 8
- Out of school care clubs/representatives - 9
- Did not specify – 22

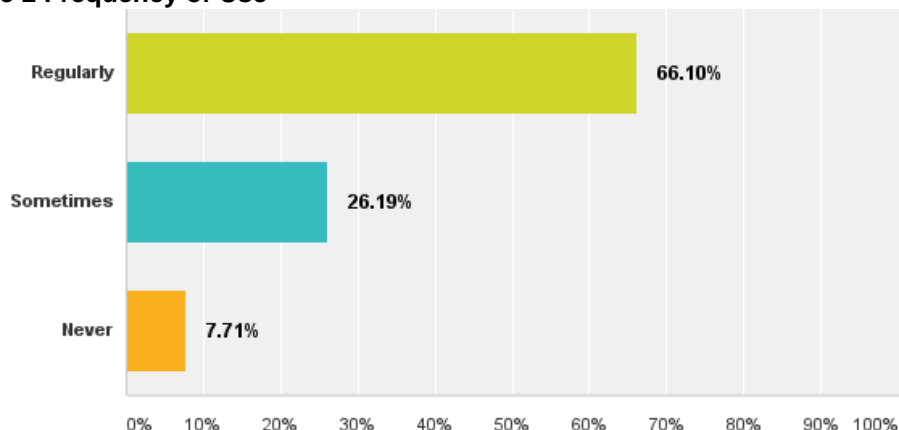
3.3 The survey asked those responding if they or their organisation reside in or operate in Glasgow with the following results from those that responded to the question:

- 1701 (95.6%) yes
- 79 (4.4%) no

Of those residing outwith Glasgow 56 indicated that their child or children attend a Glasgow school.

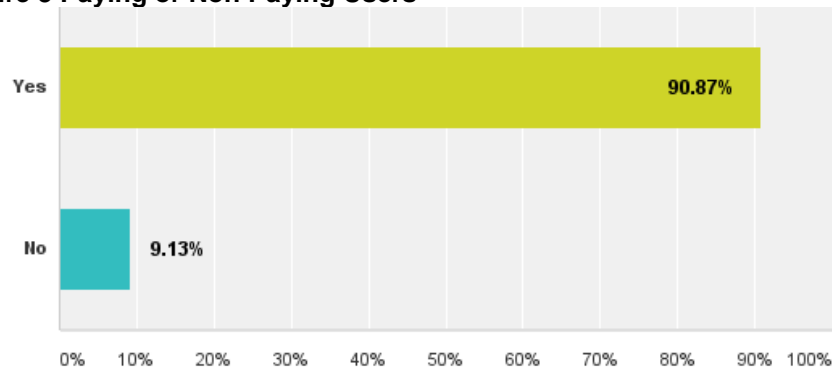
3.4 Respondents were asked how frequently they use the breakfast club. The majority of respondents answering the question use the service on a regular basis and only a small number never use the service as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Frequency of Use



3.5 The most significant number of responses was from the parents that pay for the service as shown in Figure 3.

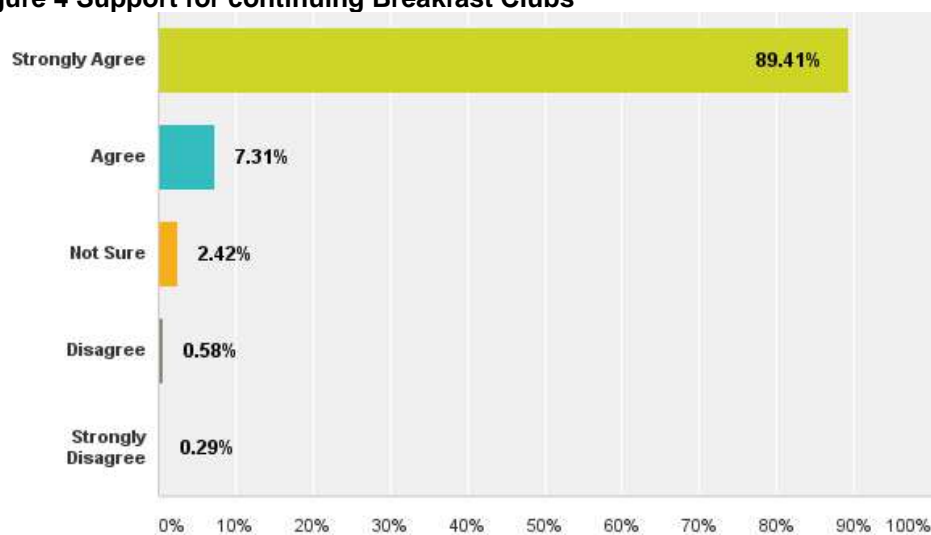
Figure 3 Paying or Non Paying Users



3.6 1423 respondents pay for breakfast club which is a significant response rate when taking into consideration the number of paying children on average attending breakfast club each day is around 2046. 1423 represents around 70% of all paying children.

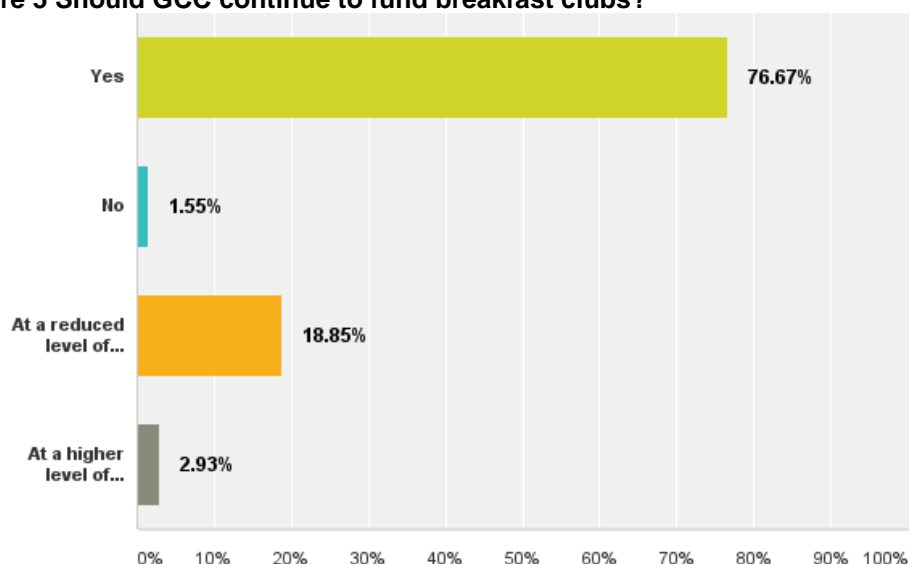
3.7 There is overwhelming support from respondents for Glasgow City Council to continue operating breakfast clubs with responses shown in Figure 4 with 1681 agreeing or strongly agreeing that breakfast clubs should continue.

Figure 4 Support for continuing Breakfast Clubs



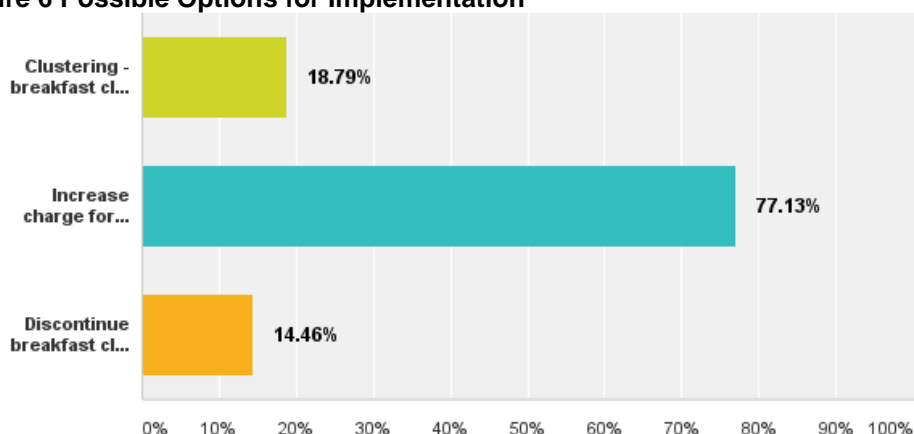
3.8 The survey tested the opinion of responses to the continued level of subsidy currently in place for breakfast clubs. The majority of responses (1713) indicated a preference for Glasgow City Council to continue to fund breakfast clubs of which 328 indicated that this should be at a reduced subsidy and 51 at a higher level of subsidy.

Figure 5 Should GCC continue to fund breakfast clubs?



3.9 The possible options that could be considered for implementation for the Council to achieve best value and to ensure resources are targeted at those most in need was then put to respondents. Of the options outlined the majority (1211) of respondents favoured an increased charge rather than a clustering approach or discontinuing those clubs that do not meet certain criteria. In some cases respondents did not answer the question as they did not agree that any of the options should be considered and that the status quo should remain in place.

Figure 6 Possible Options for Implementation



3.10 Respondents were permitted to choose more than one option to be considered and several did as follows:

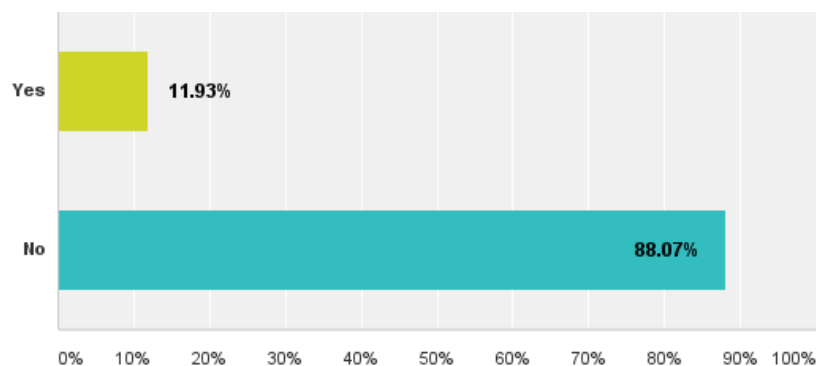
- Clustering and increase charge – 90
- Clustering and discontinue below a certain threshold – 31
- Increase charge and discontinue below a certain threshold – 57
- All three possible options – 16

Specific questions relating to the three options under consideration were put to respondents to gauge the opinion of each.

3.11 Clustering

Respondents were asked if it is reasonable to expect children to attend a breakfast club in another local school. The committee paper outlined the measures that would be required to be put in place to ensure the safety of children travelling between the breakfast club school and their home school.

Figure 7 : Is it reasonable for children to attend a breakfast club in another local school?



The majority of those responding (1439) did not agree that this is an acceptable proposition. Those that did not agree were concerned for the safety of children travelling between schools and those that agreed found it acceptable as long as measures were put in place for the safe travelling of children between schools in close proximity of each other. 869 individual comments were received for this question.

Typical comments received were:

“around our school there are too many busy roads to try and get across.”

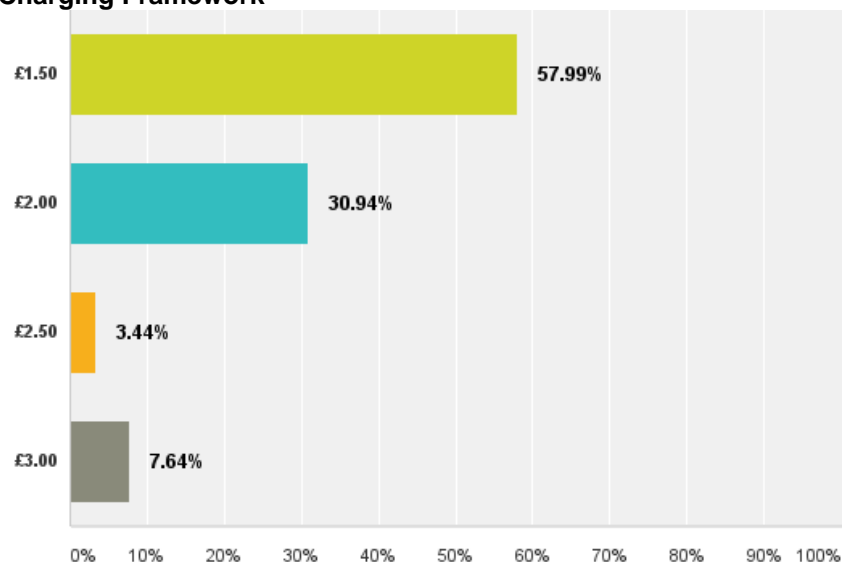
“you cannot expect children as young as 5 to make their own way to another school.”

“only if children can be supervised walking to the other school”

3.12 Charging Framework

The current average cost to the Council for breakfast per child per day is around £3.00 and the current charge is £1.00 per breakfast. In the event of an increased charge being implemented respondents were asked what a reasonable charging framework for breakfast clubs would be for those eligible to pay.

Figure 8 Charging Framework



There were 1571 responses to the question. In the additional comments section some respondents stated they did not answer the question as they did not agree with any of the suggested costs. Of those that did respond the majority, 58%, opted for the lowest cost suggested of £1.50 and 42% opted for £2.00 or above as a reasonable charge.

Some respondents questioned the increase as this could bring the cost of Breakfast Club as high as lunch charges. Parents/carers may not be aware that the charge for lunch is also subsidised by the Council and that the higher attendance at lunch is more cost effective than breakfast service.

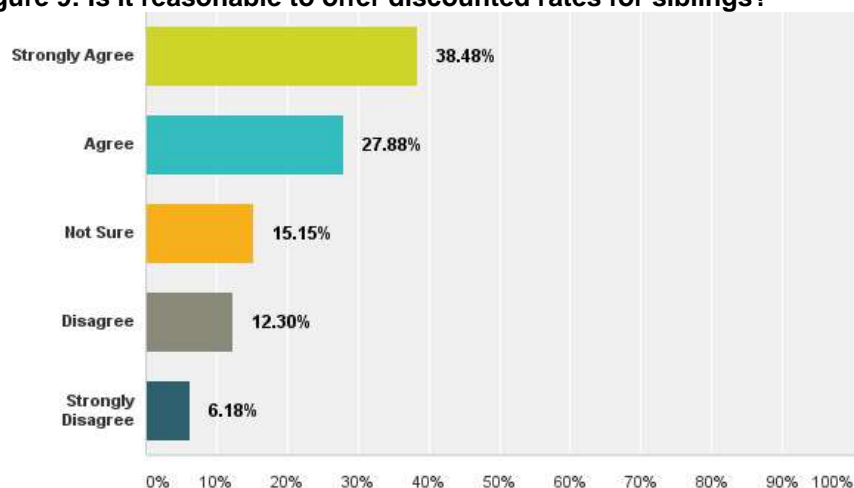
The average cost of a breakfast of £3.00 was questioned by many respondents as this cost was considered very high. The average cost takes account of:

- Full subsidy for those eligible for free breakfast (around 1650 per day)
- Minimum of 2 breakfast assistants regardless of the number of children attending
- Breakfast produce

The main cost incurred in running breakfast clubs is staffing costs rather than the cost of the produce.

3.13 In the event of an increased charge respondents were asked if it is reasonable to introduce discounts for families with more than 1 child attending breakfast club. 1095 (66%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to this approach and 305 disagreed or strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Is it reasonable to offer discounted rates for siblings?



There were 268 comments noted. Most comments received were from respondents that did not agree with discounted rates for siblings. Typical comments received were as follows:

“It should be a flat rate for all.”

“Even at an enhanced rate breakfast club is still significantly cheaper than alternative childcare so no, I don't think a multiple child discount is appropriate - this isn't the case in afterschool club for example.”

“If this was possible but if funds are needed then discounts should be limited to say the 3rd child. Having access to the club is more important to me then getting a discount.”

“An increased cost in breakfast club would significantly impact on families attending with more than one child who are at the margin of eligibility for free school meals/breakfast club”

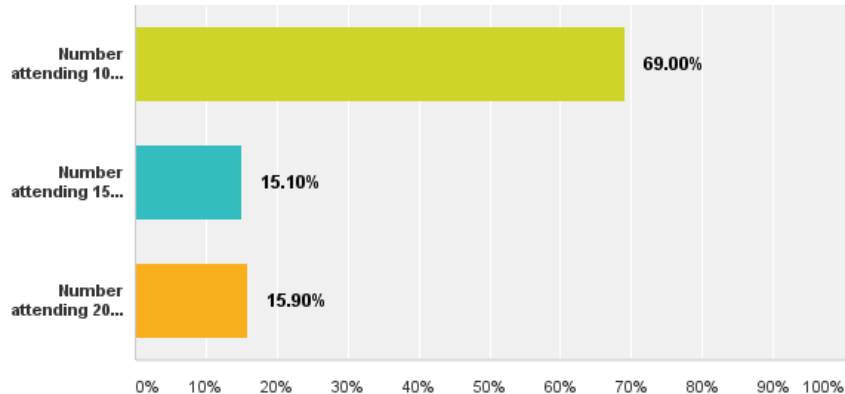
3.14 Closing Breakfast Clubs

Two key criteria were raised in the survey that can be used to assess viability for Breakfast Club efficiency

- attendance rates
- unit cost.

Respondents were asked to consider the attendance level below which a breakfast club should be discontinued. As can be seen in Figure 10 above the majority of respondents opted for the lowest number suggested.

Figure 10: Attendance threshold below which a club would discontinue



Comments received relating to the implementation of an attendance threshold for closure included:

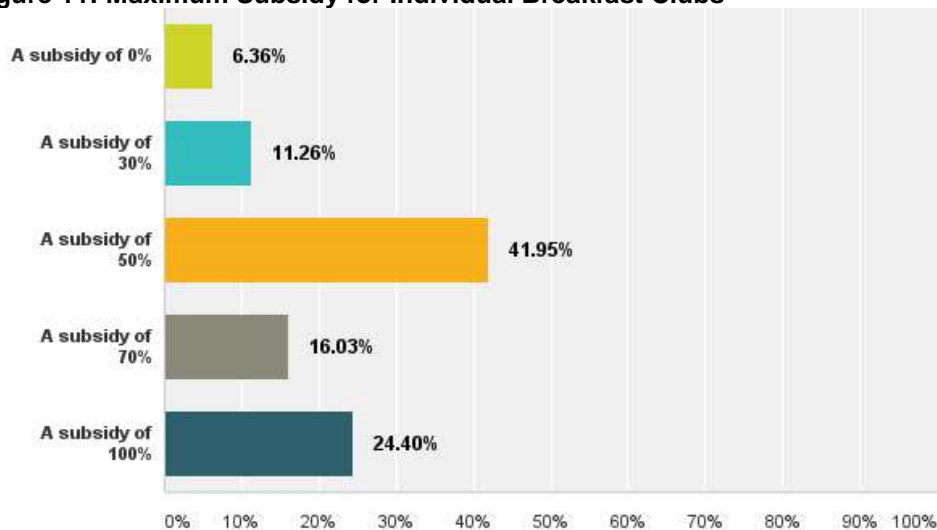
“I am significantly opposed to some breakfast clubs being discontinued. It would lead to inequitable access to the service and a post code lottery as to whether your child could or could not attend a breakfast club.”

“This decision really ought to consider the overall level of deprivation within a particular catchment area rather than purely on level of subsidy alone.”

3.15 Respondents were asked what they believed to be the maximum subsidy the Council should provide above which a breakfast club would be discontinued.

As can be seen from Figure 11 below the majority of responses suggested a subsidy of 50% or more prior to any closers being considered.

Figure 11: Maximum Subsidy for Individual Breakfast Clubs



In some cases respondents noted in the comments section that they did not understand the question.

The following comment is representative of general comments provided:

“Breakfast Club is a service and, as such, the costs should be spread between those that are less financially viable and those that are more so.”

3.16 Additional Comments

There were 736 additional comments noted by respondents. The most frequently repeated comment, at around 73%, was that the Breakfast Service is used by working parents/carers to enable them to attend work on time. The comments below are representative of the remarks made.

“We have no other child care options so using the breakfast club is the only way we can manage our working week.”

“This is an important service for vulnerable children and working parents. It should be retained and funded- especially given the context of children increasingly experiencing food poverty in Glasgow.”

“If the breakfast club was to be discontinued I personally would have to give up work.”

“Please consider parents who work. We are always penalised.”

Breakfast Clubs were not set up to meet the childcare needs of parents/carers though it is clear that many parents/carers rely on the service to make sure their children are safe while they travel to work.

Some responses from individuals, Parent Councils and charitable organisations indicated concern about any change to the current model due to the links a nourishing breakfast has to wellbeing and attainment.

There were a number of submissions and responses that argued for a free service for all children in view of the level of child poverty in Glasgow, however, the survey responses show that only 51 (3%) respondents indicated support for a higher level of Council subsidy.

A small number of concerns were expressed about the publicising and timescale of the survey. The high response rate of 1808 reassures the Council that survey provides a representative sample of parents/carers and Parent Councils.

The additional comments section included suggestions for other ways to reduce the cost of the breakfast service to the Council. Consideration has been given to some of the suggestions with the conclusions noted against them below.

- Allow children to take their own breakfast to the club
- Allow children to have breakfast at home then attend breakfast club

- Reduce the breakfast choice offered to children

Breakfast needs to be offered at all clubs otherwise the service would be viewed as childcare. The cost of providing a childcare service would be at a much higher level than the current arrangements. This would result in parents/carers paying a higher charge for the service than is currently the case.

- Prepayment of breakfast – this is a process that may be considered when systems are in place to facilitate it.
- Reductions for regular attenders and increased charge for ad hoc attenders – at the moment this would be difficult to implement as new processes would be required to be put in place.
- Increase attendance at Breakfast Clubs – there is some work on-going to look at ways of encouraging greater uptake at breakfast clubs. In some cases responses indicated how individual schools could achieve greater numbers attending at next session's intake. This will be encouraged across all schools, particularly those with low numbers.
- Save money from other sources – Education Services is continually reviewing ways in which savings can be made that have least impact on parents/carers and children.
- Parents could assist/volunteer in the breakfast club as a rota – this has been considered and would require an administrative system to support it in each school and currently resources are not available to facilitate this. Parents volunteering would require PVG checks which incur a charge.
- Offer a childcare service to enable parents eligible for subsidised childcare to make a claim to cover some of the cost of breakfast club. This would only benefit parents/carers entitled to make a claim. Working parents who do not qualify would need to pay a higher cost for a childcare service which would have an effect on their disposable income.

4. Conclusion

4.1 There is overwhelming support for the continuation of the Breakfast Service in Glasgow Primary Schools.

4.2 Clustering

The majority of respondents agreed with the Council's view that clustering of Breakfast Clubs should not be considered.

4.3 Increase cash breakfast charge

This option gained most support from respondents with 77% indicating that if a change is to be made this is the preferred choice.

There is concern regarding the ability of some working families on low incomes to pay a higher charge and to keep any increase in charges in the future as low as possible.

There is support (66%) for the introduction of discounted rates for siblings attending breakfast club that may help to alleviate an increased charge to larger families.

4.4 Closing Breakfast Clubs

Discontinuing some breakfast clubs was the most unpopular of the three options suggested with support from 227 (14.5%) respondents. The main concerns were similar to those noted previously by the Council and include:

- A standard service provided across all schools would change to a selective service
- Some pupils currently eligible for free breakfasts would no longer benefit
- Working parents using the service would need to find alternative provision
- Once a breakfast club has closed it would be difficult to build a case to reopen unless there is good evidence of increased demand

5 Other considerations

There are other factors which may be worthy of consideration in arriving at a recommendation.

5.1 Other local authorities

Breakfast clubs are not universally provided. Comparative charges across available authorities are set out below

Authority	Charge	Comment
East Renfrewshire	£4.25	Commercially operated. Daily rate includes activities.
	£2.00	Subsidised rate for Barrhead schools
North Lanarkshire	£0.90	
East Ayrshire	£0.90	£0.70 for additional siblings
Edinburgh	Free	Limited provision only for 26 establishments
Fife	£1.50	
Highland	50% subsidy	Charge varies between £0.80 and £3.25
Moray	£1.50	
Scottish Borders	£0.50	
South Ayrshire	£0.90	Targetted – only 7 establishments

5.2 Partner / private / third sector provision

Broad reference has been made to opportunities for provision across other organisations as a means of maintaining service. Whilst the market in this area is not mature and does not offer a sustainable solution at the present time, the prospect of a mixed economy of provision may merit future consideration as opportunities emerge.

5.3 Promotion of the Service

Consideration may be given to continued effort in the promotion of uptake for both paid and free provision. Education Services will continue to work with Cordia to promote breakfast clubs and encourage attendance. This is particularly important at the start of the term to make sure that all parents are aware of the service. Cordia provides information to parents/ carers as part of the Primary 1 intake information pack. Ways to increase attendance suggested by survey respondents will also be considered.

The Council's Customer First development includes migration to on-line payments This should present an opportunity for ease of uptake, particularly if coupled with block payment.

5.4 Cost of the School day

Concerns were expressed that an increase in charge would have the greatest impact on low paid working families who may already be struggling with the current charge.

6 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: The review of breakfast club provision contributes to budget savings 2015/16.

Legal: None

Personnel: Potential reductions in Cordia Staffing levels

Procurement: None

Council Strategic Plan: Contributes to the Vulnerable and securing best value services

Equality Impacts:

EQIA carried out: Yes

Outcome: The EQIA screening assessment recognized the need to retain capacity to meet the needs of the

most vulnerable.

Sustainability Impacts:

Environmental: None

Social: None

Economic: Breakfast club provision supports employment capacity of parents.

7 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the outcome of the consultation on Breakfast Clubs.

The Executive Member for Education will, thereafter, make recommendations to the Executive Committee as part of the Council's support for Cost of the School Day.