

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3234

Free Holiday Meals Programme Year 2

Executive summary:

This decision form seeks the Mayor's approval, subject to final approval of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, for expenditure of up to £4m of GLA budget in 2024-25 to deliver a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme, which aims to tackle the urgent issue of food insecurity in London through targeted interventions and capacity building.

The proposal set out in this document will complement the allocation, subject to final approval of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, of £140m from the GLA budget in 2024-25 to enable free school meals to be provided to all state-funded primary school children in London. It will do so by continuing to provide free meals to low-income families during the school holidays and at weekends, thus helping them to mitigate the worst effects of the continued rise in the cost of essentials, such as energy and food.

Decision:

That, subject to final approval of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, the Mayor approves:

1. expenditure of £3.55m in grant funding, to be provided to The Felix Project and the Mayor's Fund for London, to deliver a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme for Londoners as a partnership
2. expenditure of an additional amount, up to £450,000, in grant funding to be provided to the Felix Project to expand its operational capacity and enable weekend deliveries to community partners across London, with funding being used to cover the staffing and core operational costs associated with running its existing warehouses and distribution operations for an extra day a week.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

6/2/24

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. This decision form seeks approval, subject to final approval of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, for expenditure of £4m of GLA budget for 2024-25 to contribute to a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme, which is delivered in partnership by The Felix Project and the Mayor's Fund for London; and continue funding The Felix Project to make weekend deliveries to community partners across London.
- 1.2. Funding will enable the Mayor's Fund for London and The Felix Project to continue their project to deliver nutritious pre-prepared and recipe-based meals, and an increased supply of surplus food to local community partners including schools, faith settings, adventure playgrounds, libraries and leisure centres that are supporting families across London.
- 1.3. Previously, [MD3105](#) authorised expenditure of £3.6m to deliver the first year of the Free Holiday Meals programme. This enabled the Mayor's Fund for London and The Felix Project to work in partnership and increase the provision of free meals to low-income families during the 2023-24 school holidays. It also enabled The Felix Project to expand its operational capacity and make weekend deliveries for the first time. Funding was used to cover the staffing and core operational costs associated with running its existing warehouses and distribution operations for an extra day a week.
- 1.4. As of January 2024, the Mayor's Fund for London and The Felix Project had delivered more than 7.4m free holiday meals, surpassing the Year 1 delivery target of 6.9m meals during the penultimate Christmas delivery period. Delivery partners are on track to deliver more than 7.8m free holiday meals by the end of 2023-24. In Year 2, they will continue to increase the volume of ready-made and recipe-based cook-at-home meals to London families, and build urgent food distribution capacity in London to meet high levels of demand.
- 1.5. As of Quarter 3 2023-24, The Felix Project had delivered more than 3.3m weekend meals, meeting the Year 1 delivery target (between 3m and 4m). It is on track to deliver more than 4m weekend meals by the end of 2023-24. In Year 2, it will continue operating its warehouses six days a week in order to address urgent gaps in weekend food deliveries; scale up pan-London food distribution over the next 12 months; and meet heightened demand for food aid throughout the year.
- 1.6. The programme responds directly to the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. This continues to push people into poverty and homelessness, with thousands of London households unable to obtain an adequate and nutritious diet. The latest figures released by the Trussell Trust revealed food banks within its network distributed 1.5m food parcels to people facing financial hardship between 1 April and 30 September 2023: an increase of 16 per cent compared to the same period in 2022. Over 500,000 emergency food parcels were issued to children over this period in 2023, representing an 11 per cent increase from 2022.¹
- 1.7. In the [Mayor's Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#), he allocated (subject to the outcome of the normal budget setting process for 2024-25 and 2025-26) £140m to continue the Universal Free School Meals programme in the 2024-25 school year. This is helping to deliver meals for up to 287,000 children each day, and will save families up to £1,000 per child between 2023-24 and 2024-25. The Free Holiday Meals programme complements this initiative by plugging a gap in food provision for children and families during the school holidays and weekends. It also aligns with several Mayoral themes within the [Mayor's Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#), the details of which are set out in paragraph 4.4 of this decision.

¹ The Trussell Trust, [2023 mid-year statistics](#)

- 1.8. This programme has been designed to respond to families' acute, ongoing need in the 2024-25 financial year. However, the support offered over the next 12 months will also result in longer-term benefits to low-income families beyond the lifetime of the project, which will help deliver against long-term strategic priorities. For example, it is well evidenced² that the provision of affordable healthy meals contributes to better long-term health outcomes for families, by reducing childhood obesity, reducing rates of diabetes, and promoting better mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Meal provision will include resources and nutritional advice to support long-term health outcomes for families. Accompanying resources and support to maximise incomes will also help beneficiaries to improve their financial resilience, and reduce reliance on crisis support in the long term.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Free Holiday Meals Programme Year 2

Overarching objective

- 2.1. The overarching objective of this specific programme is to reduce the extent of holiday food insecurity in London. This will be done by increasing the supply of free meals to low-income families over the school holidays, whilst meeting the heightened demand for food aid throughout the year by enabling weekend food deliveries to community partners.

Delivery method

- 2.2. Subject to final approval of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, this decision seeks approval to provide grant funding to the Mayor's Fund for London (a charitable entity that is separate from the GLA Group) and The Felix Project. These organisations are collaborating on delivery of a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme. This will take place during the 13 weeks of school holidays across 2024-25, beginning with the two-week holiday in Spring 2024. The rationale for the provision of grant funding, in line with the requirements of the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code, has been set out in paragraph 4.9 below.
- 2.3. This programme will give London families more ready-made and recipe-based cook-at-home meals through the following delivery channels:
- Create and make – uses surplus and seasonal food alongside cupboard staples to complete a full recipe box for families.
 - Heat and eat – pre-cooked meals that can easily be heated up either at home or in community spaces; this recognises that many organisations, as well as families struggling to use fuel at home, can be limited in their ability to cook from scratch.
 - Take and make – combines food, nutritional education and family activities through recipe boxes designed to create a meal for four to six people, with high-quality ingredients that take into account allergies and dietary preferences.
 - Kitchen social – works through a network of local community hubs to help provide young people with a safe place in which to receive a free healthy meal, take part in cooking lessons and participate in fun wellbeing activities with their peers.
 - Food for families – London-wide food provision, free at the point of delivery, to a network of community organisations and schools. The organisations receive a weekly food order, tailored to their needs, that can be used to create meals on site, and provide snacks and refreshments; and can be offered to families to take home themselves.

² Child Poverty Action Group/Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, [Poverty and Child Health](#), May 2017

- Community distribution events – mass distribution events to meet heightened demand in school holidays, organised through schools, housing associations and other community-based spaces, to offer food via large-scale mass participation events.
- 2.4. The programme has been designed to capitalise on the success in Year 1 of the existing delivery models set out above. The programme is city-wide, with delivery taking place in every London borough. As now, there will no formal eligibility criteria for families to access the food supplied through this programme. The size and location of community organisations receiving food from delivery partners means that provision will not be weighted equally across London, but will continue targeting areas of highest need based on assessments and demand from community partners. GLA officers will also continue working with delivery partners to undertake assessments of need based on local rates of destitution; identify any ‘cold spots’ in provision; and engage new community organisations that are willing and able to access and distribute food (or register as a kitchen social hub).
 - 2.5. Food provision will be delivered alongside interventions that promote cooking skills, nutritional education and community wellbeing interventions in many of the settings receiving provision. Where possible, these interventions will also link beneficiaries into ‘cash-first’ support (such as advice or information about claiming benefits or other financial entitlements; and accessing help to deal with debt) that can assist in alleviating the underlying drivers of food insecurity.
 - 2.6. This programme is the initiative and activity of the Mayor’s Fund for London and The Felix Project. The proposed grant of £3.65m would also provide a contribution towards the partnership costs of the project, including an evaluation of the programme and administration/project management fees. The Mayor’s Fund for London is a charity that champions opportunities for young Londoners from low-income backgrounds. It provides free meals to low-income families and young people via more than 340 community partners, and more than 90 Kitchen Social hubs where families and young people can also benefit from other free enrichment activities or wrap-around support. The Felix Project is a charity using surplus from the food industry that cannot be sold, and would otherwise go to waste. It collects or receives food from more than 540 suppliers, including supermarkets, wholesalers, farms, restaurants and delis. This food is then sorted and delivered to almost 1,000 front-line charities. The Felix Project is the only voluntary and community sector organisation of this kind acting at a pan-London level, and which can therefore continue achieving the scale needed to operate effectively across all London boroughs.
 - 2.7. In addition to the funding for the second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme, this decision seeks approval to provide up to £450,000 funding to the Felix Project to continue making weekend deliveries to community partners by operating its depots six days a week. This funding will be used to cover increases to staffing and management costs, along with increased core operational costs (e.g. energy, fuel, vehicles etc) associated with running the charity’s existing surplus food rescue and redistribution operations for an extra day a week. This will help it to address urgent gaps in weekend food deliveries for a further 12 months, and to continue meeting the heightened demand for food aid throughout the year.

Expected outcomes

- 2.8. A flexible approach to delivering Year 2 of the Free Holiday Meals programme will be taken to ensure that the programme can respond to rising or emerging need during different holidays, and in different parts of London. However, the Mayor’s Fund for London and the Felix Project estimate that the £3.65m funding will result in the equivalent of around 7.1m additional meals being provided to families across London in 2024-25.
- 2.9. The Felix Project estimates that the £450,000 funding to increase its operational hours from five to six days a week will allow them to redistribute approximately 20 tonnes of additional food every weekend, which they estimate is equivalent to an extra 3m meals provided over the entire financial year.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2. Equality, integration and inclusion are the drivers behind these programmes. They support the realisation of the Mayoral 'Social Justice' theme within the [Mayor's Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#) by working to ensure that Londoners of all backgrounds feel welcome and can play a full and equal part in the life of our city by accessing nutritious food. These programmes also contribute to other themes, including commitments to ensure children and young Londoners in need have the right positive opportunities to fulfil their potential; they will also address health inequalities through the longer-term outcomes of work on improving access to healthy food.
- 3.3. Experiences of food insecurity often interact with other forms of marginalisation, such as disability and racism. Londoners from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by barriers in accessing housing, good work, secure healthcare and other entitlements that can increase vulnerability to food insecurity. Immigration policies, such as the 'no recourse to public funds' condition, often disproportionately impact families from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, limiting their access to a welfare safety net. This makes direct interventions ensuring access to good-quality food all the more important.
- 3.4. The GLA will continue working with delivery partners to ensure to ensure that the programme's food provision is diverse and celebrates dishes, ingredients and cooking skills that represent London's diverse communities, as well as meeting dietary requirements and preferences. This will include co-designing recipes/recipe boxes with a diverse range of young Londoners and low-income families, to ensure the offer is culturally appropriate.
- 3.5. To ensure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion are upheld, the GLA will also work with delivery partners to use outreach and engagement approaches to target activities at particular groups that are less able to engage, or that face greater barriers to engagement. This will enable them to participate, while ensuring that activities are open and accessible to all Londoners.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1. The key risks and issues are outlined in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation	Current probability	Current impact	RAG
Volatility of food prices impacts on the number of meals that can be delivered.	Using surplus food within supply chains significantly mitigates against inflationary pressures by achieving good value for money on the programme. Bulk purchasing of food further mitigates against inflationary pressures by achieving better value for money.	3	4	R

Volatility of food supply chains disrupts supply.	Maintain excellent connections with food supply chains to mitigate against short-term supply challenges; and to expand access to new food-sector markets to increase access to surplus edible food.	2	4	A
Speed of delivery required from partners puts pressure on services and risks delays.	Investment in distribution capacity alongside food provision to ensure that scale is achieved sustainably. Ensure robust partnership arrangements and governance are in place to track delays, and address issues to ensure work can progress at pace.	3	2	A
Food provision fails to reach communities with highest levels of need.	GLA officers and delivery partners agree monitoring and performance reporting process to ensure any 'cold spots' are identified, and actions agreed to boost provision in target boroughs.	3	3	A

Conflicts of interest

- 4.2. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.3. The extension of the Free Holiday Meals programme is consistent with the Mayor's commitment to help hundreds of thousands of Londoners struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, and the worst effects of the continued rise in the cost of essentials. The latest [YouGov polling](#) commissioned by City Hall found that more than a third (35 per cent) of parents or carers of children under 18 are buying less food and essentials, with 41 per cent using less water, energy or fuel to help them manage living costs. Three in ten (30 per cent) say they are 'financially struggling'.
- 4.4. The proposals set out in this decision document will contribute to the realisation of the following Mayoral themes set out in the [Mayor's Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#):
- Social Justice: working to ensure Londoners of all backgrounds feel welcome and can play a full and equal part in the life of our city.
 - Health: reducing London's health inequalities – that is, reducing the link between Londoners' health outcomes and their incomes or backgrounds – and working with partners to ensure Londoners have the best health outcomes.
 - Children and Young People: working so children and young Londoners in need have the right positive opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- 4.5. This proposal is primarily an intervention to help reduce the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on low-income families, which is a Mayoral priority and part of a programme to support Londoners, alongside £140m allocated (subject to the outcome of the normal budget setting process for 2024-25 and 2025-26) to continue the Universal Free School Meals programme in the 2024-25 school year.
- 4.6. The use of (primarily) surplus food throughout this project will also help London become a zero-waste city by 2050.

Considerations for the provision of grant funding

- 4.7. This programme has been informed by the first year of delivery of the Free Holiday Meals programme and ongoing consultation with local authorities and charities working to support Londoners

experiencing food insecurity. This ensures that it meets the most urgent needs of Londoners, and complements other regional and local initiatives to fill gaps in provision for families.

4.8. It is considered that the funding proposed in this decision constitutes the award of grant payment funding, rather than a contract for services under the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. This is because:

- it would support an existing third-party (rather than GLA) project that aligns with the Mayor's priorities, but is the initiative of the third party in question
- the GLA would not receive a direct or indirect benefit as a result; the benefits would instead accrue to Londoners.

4.9. The strategy of providing grant funding directly to the two organisations in question has been chosen for the following reasons:

- The Felix Project is the only supplier of surplus food that operates across London and in all London boroughs; and that has established mechanisms for delivery at a London-wide level.
- The Mayor's Fund for London is the only organisation that provides free, culturally appropriate food to families and young people through several established delivery mechanisms on a pan-London basis.
- Collectively, these are the only organisations with the existing infrastructure, delivery mechanisms and relationships with community partners that enable the delivery of holiday food provision according to the required scale and timeframe. The predominant use of free surplus food throughout this programme (which can only be provided at the scale required by The Felix Project) represents better value for money than other approaches that might rely more on purchasing food to provide meals.
- The cost-of-living crisis and, in particular, sustained increases in food insecurity, require an urgent response. Funding these organisations directly (rather than carrying out a lengthy competitive grant-application process that would be resource-intensive for both the GLA and bidding organisations) is the quickest and most efficient way to maintain and increase the scale of holiday food provision.

4.10. The Mayor's Fund for London and The Felix Project are the only organisations capable of delivering the programme objectives in a cost-effective way. They were identified as such via engagement and consultation with several strategic pan-London stakeholder groups, including the London Food Board, the London Food Board's food-aid sub-group, and the Boroughs Food Group. Research was also conducted to identify any other potential delivery organisations, and exploratory conversations were held with some. However, none had the reach, the established delivery mechanisms or the capacity to deliver a pan-London holiday food provision programme within the desired timeline.

Subsidy control

4.11. GLA officers have carried out an analysis of the proposal against the Statutory Guidance for the UK Subsidy Control Regime.³ They have assessed that the Subsidy Control Regime is non-applicable in these circumstances because the proposed financial assistance does not constitute a subsidy.

4.12. In particular, the proposed financial assistance fails to satisfy Limb B of the four-limbed test set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the "SCA"), as neither of the beneficiaries of the funding are classed as enterprises. The Mayor's Fund for London and The Felix Project are both charitable organisations; neither is engaged in economic activity to offer goods or services on a market. They provide free,

³ BEIS, [Statutory Guidance for the United Kingdom Subsidy Control Regime](#), November 2022

charitable support (in the form of food aid and activities) to low-income Londoners, and are entirely dependent on donations or ringfenced grants to fund their operations.

- 4.13. This proposal is consistent with the example set out in the Statutory Guidance in section 2.17, on page 26. This example states that “a ringfenced grant to a charity for its non-economic activities (even if the charity also provides some goods or services on the market)” is unlikely to meet the four-limbed test. As such, no further assessment of the proposal against the Subsidy Control Principles is deemed necessary.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. This decision seeks approval for the expenditure of £4m of GLA budget in 2024-25 financial year to deliver a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme for Londoners.
- 5.2. This is broken down as follows:
- expenditure of £3.55m in grant funding, to be provided to The Felix Project and Mayor’s Fund for London, to deliver a second year of the Free Holiday Meals Programme for Londoners as a partnership
 - expenditure of up to £450,000 in grant funding to be provided to the Felix Project to expand its operational capacity.
- 5.3. It is expected that the first milestone payment of the 2024-25 £4m budget which is estimated at £700,000 will be paid to delivery partners in 2023-24 financial year to ensure the GLA can deliver the Easter Holiday meals. This will be funded from in-year 2023-24 underspend and the 2024-25 budget of £4m will be reduced as an in-year 2024-25 budget adjustment for the 2023-24 spend.
- 5.4. Funding for future financial years will be subject to the annual budget-setting process and is subject to change. The expenditure of £4m for the Holiday Hunger Programme in 2024-25 financial year is assumed to be affordable and can only be confirmed when the budget allocation is formally approved in March 2024.
- 5.5. Any contracts that commit the GLA in future years are subject to appropriate break clauses.
- 5.6. The award of funding to delivery partners will be subject to satisfactory financial due diligence.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the Authority’s general powers and fall within the Authority’s statutory powers in section 30 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (GLA Act) to do anything which it considers will further any one or more of its principal purposes. Those principal purposes include furthering the promotion of social development in Greater London. Section 34 of the GLA Act also allows the Mayor to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any functions of the GLA exercisable by the Mayor. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA’s related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people (section 33(1) of GLA Act)
 - consider how the proposals are best calculated to promote the improvement of health of persons in Greater London, promote the reduction of health inequalities between persons in Greater London, contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom and contribute towards the mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change in the United Kingdom (section 30(5) of the GLA Act)

- consult with appropriate bodies or persons (section 32(1) of the GLA Act).

6.2. In taking the decisions requested of him, the Mayor must have due regard under the Public Sector Equality Duty to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

Grant funding

6.3. The proposed grants to The Felix Project and to the Mayor's Fund for London may be viewed as a conditional gift rather than a contract for services. As set out in paragraphs 1.1, 1.2 and 2.6, the Authority is funding projects, which are the initiative and activity of the grantees and not of the Mayor. Furthermore, the benefits of that activity inures to third parties; in this case low-income families based in Greater London.

Subsidy control

6.4. The SCA requires that grant funding be assessed in relation to its four-limbed test. The officers have made this assessment at paragraphs 4.11 to 4.13, above, and have concluded that the proposed funding does not amount to an unlawful subsidy.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Finalise grant agreement	March 2024
Easter holiday intervention	April 2024
May half-term intervention	May 2024
Summer holiday intervention	July 2024
October half-term intervention	October 2024
Christmas holiday intervention	December 2024
February half-term intervention	February 2025
Wrap-up activities	April 2025
Final evaluation	June 2025

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

Please defer until 30 April 2024 to allow for programme launch and comms activity in early April.

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Liam Weeks has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Tunde Olayinka has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Debbie Weekes-Bernard has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 5 February 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:**Date:**

05/02/2014

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:**Date:**

05/02/2014