

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date:	24 November 2020
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
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Item Title:	Primary, Special and All-Through School Meal Price January 2021

1. DECISION SOUGHT

Not to raise primary, special and all-through school meal price in January 2021.

2. REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

If the department do not raise the meal price in line with inflation in 2020-21 it will create a deficit in the budget of £48,700. Therefore, it's appropriate to obtain the Cabinet's formal confirmation that not raising the school meal price this year is a priority for the Council.

3. INTRODUCTION

The primary school catering service budget relies on generating income by selling primary school meals. There is a need for income generated from primary school meals to keep up the inflation of the catering service costs.

Primary school meals income target has risen 2.56% in 2020-21 which would increase meal price from £2.50 to £2.56. In rounding up this would be £2.60 (equivalent to 4%).

However, when considering our relative position and priority we have in terms of reducing inequality, the Cabinet may wish to consider the price of school lunches in this context.

4. REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

When comparing Gwynedd's primary, special and all-through school meal price of £2.50 with other Council's in Wales (appendix 1), 4 charge a higher price, 4 charge same price as Gwynedd and 13 charge a lower price.

See attached (appendix 2) results of a questionnaire sent to primary school parents October 2019, 134 noted that schools meals were too expensive and 142 would chose a school meal if cheaper.

Increasing the meal price would mean increasing the price from £2.50 to £2.60.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

Meal price will be operational from January 2021.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION **Statutory Officers opinion:**

i. Monitoring Officer: Because of the consequent financial implications stemming from the recommendations I agree that it is appropriate that setting the fee level for school dinners comes before the Cabinet.

ii. Head of Finance: The results of the questionnaire referred to in part 4 of the above report highlight the risk of a further reduction in the demand for school meals should there be an increase in the price this year.

As reported to the Cabinet in the Revenue Budget Review on 13th October, there will be sufficient flexibility (£311k) in the Education Department's 2020/21 budget to cope with the cost (£49k) unaided from the 'central funds' which is the decision sought for here.

However, if consideration is given to a longer term policy for the price of school meals, we will need to adjust the relevant income level appropriately when drawing up the 2021/22 budget.