

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting: 03/10/2017
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Thomas
Contact Officer: Owen Owens
Contact Telephone Number: 32169
Title of Item: Realising the Breakfast Club Scheme

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 Following a consultation period, it is recommended to charge a fee of £0.80 for the childcare element before the breakfast club, giving a discount to families with three or more children, with these arrangements to commence on 6 November 2017.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Due to the enormous financial pressure that Gwynedd Council faces as a result of financial cuts from the Government, reducing the money spent on pre-school childcare arrangements was one of the options submitted as part of the Gwynedd Challenge public consultation.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Full Council on 3 March 2016, it was decided that £100,000 should be cut from the breakfast budget.
- 2.3 The budget for the 'Free Breakfast' scheme before implementing the cut is £557,300, which is mainly used for staffing costs and food costs.
- 2.4 Currently, 75 primary schools in Gwynedd offer pre-school childcare between 8am* and 8.50am*. As part of the process, Welsh Government's free breakfast scheme is provided.
- 2.5 The two options under consideration were:
- a) to provide free breakfast between 8.25am* and 8.50am*, but to do away with the free pre-school childcare which is provided between 8am* and 8.25am*;
 - b) to provide free breakfast between 8.25am* and 8.50am* and introduce a fee for providing childcare to parents who are eager to receive it between 8am* and 8.25am*. Should this option be chosen, no fee would be

charged for the free school breakfast between 8.25am* and 8.50am*.

*illustrative times only

3 THE REASONING AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

3.1 The Council held a consultation on both of the above options to seek the opinion of the people of Gwynedd on the favoured option by asking residents to complete a short questionnaire - either through the Council's website or on paper form which was available at local libraries and Siopau Gwynedd. Letters were also distributed to parents in July to encourage them to participate in the survey. Residents had until 1 September 2017 to complete the survey (www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/clwb-brecwast) .

3.2 The main findings of the consultation are summarised below, and the full response to the consultation is noted in Appendix 1.

- 1,358 on-line responses were received and 30 responses on paper.
- Of the responses, 84% of the respondents were women and 50% were in the 30-39 years old age group.
- 46% were a parent / carer to one primary age child and 38% were a parent / carer to two primary age children
- The majority of the comments noted that the breakfast club was crucial in order to enable parents to go to work and that the club was a very valuable resource, and children enjoyed attending the club.
- In terms of the options that were consulted upon, 72.8% of the respondents favoured 'Not changing the hours of the existing breakfast club but to charge a fee for the childcare element between 8:00am* and 8:25am*' as a change in the hours would mean that the club would begin too late and would affect parents going to work / keeping a job.
- 73.6% noted that they would use the club if a fee was charged; of those who would not pay, this would be due to affordability and therefore would have to make other arrangements.
- With regards to the fee level, 43% were in favour of 50p per session, whilst 26% were willing to pay £1 per session.
- 55.4% felt that a discount should not be given to children who receive free school meals. The main reason that was noted was that these parents did not work therefore they did not the childcare club.
- 60.2% believed that parents with three or more children should receive a discount. Further comments were received, suggesting that single parent families and families with two children and more should also receive a discount.

3.3 The recommended fee of £0.80 has been set by considering:

- the required cut;
- the administration costs of collecting the parents' contribution; and
- the likely reduction in numbers attending the childcare element due to introducing a fee.

3.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been held (see Appendix 2)

which highlights the impact of charging a fee on poor families, especially single parent families and homes which include a disabled person. To this end, and considering the response to the consultation, a discount will be offered to families with three or more children to reduce the impact.

4 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

4.1 View of the Statutory Officers

4.1.1 The Head of Finance

“Having reviewed the relevant financial modelling, based on the information available, and taking into account a likely reduction in demand for the care provision, I confirm that it is reasonable to assume that charging an 80p fee will generate sufficient income to realize the required financial saving. Therefore, I support the decision sought.”

4.1.2 The Monitoring Officer

“Detailed consultation work has been undertaken on the options to move this matter forward and this is dealt with in detail in the report. According to the statutory guidance “Free breakfast in primary schools” it is required to provide the breakfast in a short period of time before the beginning of the school day. However, as noted in the report, the current provision provides a period of time which is greater than that which would address the guidance for providing free breakfast. This element is an extra provision which represents a period of childcare for the pupils.”

4.2 View of the Local Member

4.2.1 Not a local matter.

4.3 Results of any consultation

4.3.1 See Appendix 1

4.4 Background documents

4.4.1 Statutory guidance “Free breakfast in primary schools”

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/140627-free-breakfast-primary-guidance-en.pdf>

