

Council 12 November 2020

Free School Meals

Labour Group to move:

Council notes:

- 1 That the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in many people losing their jobs and incomes, with an additional 75% of people claiming Universal Credit in B&NES between March 2020 and May 2020 alone. In January 2019 there were around 3184 children eligible for free school meals in B&NES. This number will have increased since then.
- 2 The huge campaign supported by local authorities, directors of public health, schools, food groups, parents, young people and children for free school meals to be extended into school holidays to help ensure that no child goes hungry this winter.
- 3 That many Councils including Kensington and Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Hackney, Portsmouth, Lambeth, Wigan, St Helens, North Tyneside and Redbridge have agreed to fund free school meals during the school holidays. Often this provision is in the form of a voucher equivalent to £3 per day. In the case of B&NES, the cost of providing free school meals to eligible children during the Christmas holidays is likely to be around £150,000.
- 4 That Bath and North East Somerset Council is not intending to consider the Food Poverty Steering Group's report into Food Poverty until its meeting in January 2021 which will be too late for many children facing hunger over the Christmas holiday.

Council believes:

- 5 That local initiatives to provide children with food show the very best of our community. However, families should not have to rely on goodwill to ensure that their children are fed.
- 6 That in the long term, the structural causes of poverty must be addressed. In the meantime, the government should be committed to funding free school meals during the school holidays. However, in the absence of this commitment, Bath and North East Somerset Council must act now to ensure that no child goes hungry.

Council agrees therefore:

- 7 To ask the Leader of Council to write to Secretary of State for Education asking the government to commit to funding free school meals during the school holidays.
- 8 To ask the Cabinet as a matter of urgency to identify the funding to ensure that eligible children are provided with food vouchers over the Christmas holiday.
- 9 To note that the January 2021 meeting of Council will consider Food Poverty, providing an opportunity to review the provision for February 2021 half term and beyond.

Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.

Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.