

This matter is being dealt with by:
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
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13.09.23

Dear Ms Toward, Councillors Bradley, Cottee, Elliot and Gilfoyle,

RE: Pre Call In - Price Review of Charges made for School Meals.

I am writing to inform you that it is the intention of the signatories of this letter to initiate the Council's pre-call-in procedure regarding a Delegated Decision published at 2.46pm on 11th September relating the Price Review of Charges made for school meals.

The purpose of this letter is therefore both to begin the pre-call-in procedure, as per section 51 of the Constitution, to outline our areas of concern, and to indicate our intention to proceed with a Call-In, should the outcome of the pre-call-In process leave these concerns unresolved.

The decision to increase school meal prices by 40p a day comes amid a cost-of-living crisis. According to the charity - the Child Poverty Action Group, it is estimated that according to the current rules, 800,000 children are living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals. This is because to be eligible for free school meals, a household on universal credit in England must earn less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including benefits), regardless of the number of children in the family. This low threshold means that many children from working families in poverty aren't entitled to free school meals, despite being unable to meet the costs. These are the very pupils who will be adversely impacted by this decision and this point was not detailed in the sector equality duty section of the report. We have no evidence that it was considered by the decision-maker and we believe it will have a disproportionate impact on children from households who just lose out on free school meals.

We believe that the Key Decision Report is misleading. It states, "...for context, it is understood that Derbyshire County Council will be increasing its paid school meal price to £3.25." It doesn't point out that our nearest neighbour Nottingham City Council charges £2.50 a meal, North Yorkshire County Council charge £2.58 a meal and Leicester City Council charge £2.30 a meal.

The rise in school meal costs is also contrary to the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031 – "A healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone." How, charging parents more for free school meals can lead to a prosperous future is preposterous.

There is no evidence in the report that there was any consultation with schools over the price rise – with Councillor Tracey Taylor, Nottinghamshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Families telling the press, "We have contacted all of the schools we provide meals to since the beginning of the new term, this includes emails and letters, as well as speaking to the majority of schools via phone to ensure they are aware of these changes and can pass on this information to parents and guardians where relevant." This is not consulting with schools, it is informing them of the decision. Unbelievably, Nottinghamshire County Council waited until after the start of the academic year to announce the rises.

Further to this, paragraph 21 of the report states, "The proposed recommendations represent a careful balance between recovering as much cost incurred by the Council as possible, while seeking to provide high quality, value for money services to meet the needs of users and customers." We do not believe that a 15.7% increase in price is value for money – especially when you consider that inflation is dropping and according to Bank of England estimates, inflation will be down to 5% by the end of the year.

Nottinghamshire County Council, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

Based on this – we invoke our constitutional right to call this decision in for further scrutiny,

Your faithfully,



Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan

Additional Call-In Signatories:



Councillor Andy Meakin



Councillor John Wilmott



Councillor Elizabeth Williamson



Councillor Steve Carr



Councillor Debbie Darby



Councillor Jason Zadrozny