

## November 2020

### Response to Cllr Michael Jones' Notice of Motion on the Provision of Free School Meals in School Holidays to County Council on 6 November 2020

1. The Chairman of the County Council referred the notice of motion on the provision of free school meals in school holidays (see Appendix) submitted by Cllr Michael Jones to the County Council on 6 November 2020, to the Cabinet for consideration.
2. The motion called on the Cabinet to provide free meals for children entitled to free school meals during future school holidays during the current pandemic.
3. Cllr Jones attended the meeting of the Cabinet on 24 November 2020 to discuss the motion. During the discussion it was explained that the Government had, on 8 November 2020, announced extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The County Council is set to receive almost £2m (£1,989,591.80) from this COVID Winter Grant Scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions.
4. Designed to provide direct assistance to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals this grant covers the period from early December 2020 until the end of March 2021. Plans are being developed, in partnership with Schools, to provide children and families in receipt of free school meals with financial support during the upcoming Christmas Holiday and February half term.
5. Final details are being worked up to allow sufficient time to disseminate information to parents ahead of the end of term. Given that Christmas is a two-week holiday the support will be in the form of vouchers, as was used during the summer holiday, giving families choice as to which supermarket they may wish to use. Each weekly voucher will be for £15 which is commensurate with the term time provision.
6. Included in the same government announcement was confirmation that the Holiday Activities and Food programme will be expanded to cover Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. It will be available to children in every local authority in England and therefore enable provision of free school meals support for children across West Sussex during the next calendar year. Cabinet will receive updates as requested. If additional support is required beyond this free school meals provision, families are encouraged to contact the Community Hub where telephone lines are open from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week supported by the [Community Hub](#) website page and a series of e-forms to provide digital access.
7. The Cabinet confirmed that Cllr Jones would receive a further written briefing on final details following the Cabinet meeting on 24 November 2020, and invited him to withdraw his motion on the basis that the Government was now providing funding for meals during school holidays.
8. For these reasons, Cabinet is unable to support the motion and proposes to recommend that members do not support it at the County Council meeting on 11 December 2020.

**Tony Kershaw**

Director of Law and Assurance

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**Appendices**

Appendix – Notice of motion on the Provision of Free School Meals in School Holidays

**Background papers**

None

### **Notice of Motion on the Provision of Free School Meals in School Holidays**

This Council expresses disappointment that the Government has voted against providing free meals for children entitled to free school meals in the October 2020 half term and during future school holidays. This Council also expresses disappointment that none of the West Sussex Members of Parliament who took part in the Parliamentary vote supported the proposal to provide meals during future school holidays, with seven of the eight actively voting against.

This Council recognises that the on-going pandemic is causing hardship and poverty for many families within West Sussex and calls on the Cabinet to follow the example of other councils around the country to step in and provide free meals for children entitled to free school meals during future school holidays during the current pandemic.