



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2023

Report of the Director - Legal and Democratic Services

Petition Debate: Stop 41% School Meal Price Hike

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present a petition for consideration by Council.

2. Information and Analysis

- 2.1 On 15 September 2023, a petition was submitted to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in accordance with the Council's published Petitions Scheme. The petition had a total of 7257 online signatures and 1799 paper copy signatures. This gave a total of 8888 signatures which has exceeded the 7500 signature target to trigger a Council debate.
- 2.2 The petition is entitled "Stop 41% School Meal Price Hike" and the full wording of the petition is included at Appendix 2 to this report. The petition organiser is Councillor Joan Dixon.
- 2.3 The Council's agreed Petitions Scheme (Appendix 2 to the Constitution) states the following:
- If a petition contains more than 7,500 signatures it will be debated by the Full Council.
 - The petition organiser (or their nominee) will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting.
 - The petition will be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes.

- The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. Council may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter.
- Where the issue is one on which the Cabinet is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
- The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the decision, which will also be published on the Council's website.

3. Consultation

3.1 There is no specific consultation required in respect of this report.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Not to consider the petition received, however this would not be in accordance with the Petitions Scheme.

5. Implications

5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

6. Background Papers

6.1 None identified.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

7.2 Appendix 2 – Copy of the Petition subject matter

8. Recommendation

That Council discusses the petition and determines how to respond.

9. Reasons for Recommendation

9.1 To ensure that a petition with excess of 7,500 signatures is dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Petitions Scheme.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The debate at Council will have no direct financial implications. If the petition subject matter is reconsidered by Cabinet, financial implications would be considered at that point.

Legal

- 2.1 The Petitions Scheme is set out at Appendix 2 of the Constitution. The petition received has been duly accepted by the Council and this report is in accordance with the scheme.

Human Resources

- 3.1 No implications directly arising from this report.

Information Technology

- 4.1 No implications directly arising from this report.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Although the subject matter of the petition does have equalities implications, there are no direct implications relevant to the petition debate itself.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 No implications directly arising from this report.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental, Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 No implications directly arising from this report.

Stop 41% School Meal Price Hike (This petition has now closed)

Families are struggling enough already, so to hike school meal prices by 95p per day for each child will make school meals unaffordable for many families. A healthy nutritious meal is very important to help children learn, so they shouldn't be priced out of school dinners.

Derbyshire's proposed increase to £3.25 is far higher than other councils, where the average cost of a primary school meal is due to rise to £2.65p. Neighbouring councils such as Cheshire East charge just £2.30 and in Nottinghamshire schools charge between £2.30 and £2.58.

The cost increases that Derbyshire cites don't justify such a huge increase which is unfair on families and risks our excellent in-house catering service becoming unviable if not enough families can afford school meals.

This petition wants the proposed increase to be delayed and in the interim, introduce a charge of £2.65 which is in line with the national average. The proposed price rise should be referred to the Health Improvement and Scrutiny Board at DCC to look at look at the wider impact that it could have on children's health if they cannot afford school meals, and also to scrutinise the price rise and explore the reasons behind it. It should also be debated at Full Council.

Stop the 41% School Meal Price Hike and Limit costs to the average £2.65p

Derbyshire County Council have proposed raising the cost of primary school meals by 95p from £2.30 to £3.25 a day. This is far above the national average cost of £2.65p.

The price hike will be unaffordable for many families, who are already facing a cost of living crisis, so fewer Derbyshire children will benefit from a nutritious hot meal at lunchtime which helps their health and learning.