

AGENDA ITEM 11(c) - Free School Meals

Amendment

Delete after Paragraph Six ('the very welcome') and replace with

That the government has decided to provide a £400m package of support for poorer children and families, including a £170m COVID Winter Grant Scheme to be distributed by local authorities.

That the 2020 public sector deficit in Britain is forecast to be 18.9% of GDP, the highest of any major economy in the world.

That the economy is forecast to shrink by 10.6% this year and that while a recovery is expected next year, it will be some years before the country is back to where it was at the start of 2020. This will necessarily mean fewer jobs, higher taxes and lower public spending over the medium term.

That in spite of the financial challenges, the government has increased Universal Credit rates.

While this council is concerned about the state of the public finances, it believes the poorest should be protected. It therefore puts on record its support for the government's actions.

This Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask that they consider the future financing and support of benefits for children and families including free school meals and to develop a balanced package of support for the poorest and to consider options for the future, including during any further periods of lockdown. This may include consideration of eligibility for migrants without access to public funds, although only if this can be done without creating further incentives for illegal migration.

Proposed by (Name) Councillor Luke Stubbs

Seconded by (Name) Councillor Donna Jones

The Motion to therefore read (see overleaf):

This Council notes:

That numbers of pupils entitled to Free School Meals are rising fast in Portsmouth with over 1000 additional children since the start of the pandemic. That means over 7000 children.

That every child who is entitled to Free School Meals is a sign of a family under significant financial pressure.

That this picture of increasing child poverty is supported by the rapid rise in the number of families dependent on food banks.

The Trussell trust reporting an 81 per cent increase in food bank dependency in March 2020, and other food banks reporting similar increases. The number of children relying on food banks more than doubles during lockdown and Portsmouth figures reflect this trend with one foodbank reporting over 100% increase in demand the weeks before half term.

That children who are hungry are less able to learn and thrive at school.

That the extension of the school meals voucher scheme (campaigned for by Marcus Rashford) to cover the period of the summer holiday was incredibly important and valuable to families in food poverty.

The very welcome commitment from Liberal Democrat Education Minister in the Welsh Assembly, Kirsty Williams, to guarantee free school meal provision for children in Wales for school holidays until at least Easter 2021.

That the government has decided to provide a £400m package of support for poorer children and families, including a £170m COVID Winter Grant Scheme to be distributed by local authorities.

That the 2020 public sector deficit in Britain is forecast to be 18.9% of GDP, the highest of any major economy in the world.

That the economy is forecast to shrink by 10.6% this year and that while a recovery is expected next year, it will be some years before the country is back to where it was at the start of 2020. This will necessarily mean fewer jobs, higher taxes and lower public spending over the medium term.

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