

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date of Decision:	28 January 2011
Decision Title:	School Meal Prices from April 2011
Decision Reference:	2546
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide the information required by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services in order to agree the price of school meals from April 2011.
- 1.2. This paper sets out background information on school meals, including the Schools Lunch Grant, which is in the final year of a three year grant period, an assessment of the continuing pressures on catering finance, and a consideration of meal prices in comparable local authorities.

2. Background information

- 2.1. Each year the Executive Member is asked to review the price of free school meals (it does not need to be so but in Hampshire this has been taken as the price of a school meal) and consider if an increase should be applied.
- 2.2. Historically, Hampshire has applied the same price to paid meals in primary and secondary schools.
- 2.3. In April 2010 no increase was applied following 10p rises in each of the previous three years. This was possible in spite of the costs associated with the improved food and nutritional content of the meal and general cost pressures on catering services because of the availability of the School Lunch Grant (see below) and a steady recovery in the number of pupil meals taken. Decisions on price in previous years have been influenced by these factors and, recently, by the implementation of the County Council's corporate Pay and Benefits project and are shown in the table below.

Year	April 2006	April 2007	April 2008	April 2009	April 2010
New price	£1.70	£1.80	£1.90	£2.00	£2.00

- 2.4. Recognising the widespread downturn in school meal numbers that followed the introduction of standards requiring healthier school lunches, the Government established the Schools Lunch Grant for the period 2008/9 to 2010/11. Under the Grant, the County Council has been allocated £1,771,767 annually for three years. The grant is provided to support the direct costs of school catering services (particularly food and labour) during what is regarded as a transitional period until school meal take up is increased and services based on healthier meals are firmly established. In effect, the Government has recognised that changing the eating habits of children is a long process. The Government also expects the funding to be treated as additional to current levels of expenditure on providing school meals and it should not be used to replace funding already provided by the local authority or school. In Hampshire, the County Council does not subsidise the cost of school meals.
- 2.5. The school meals service plays an important role in the development of 'healthy eating' and supports the local economic development agenda.
- 2.6. A proposal to allocate the Schools Lunch Grant by formula based on the number of free school meals provided plus 25% of the schools number on roll was agreed by Schools Forum when it met on 11 December 2007 and has been confirmed annually since, most recently at the meeting of December 14th 2010. The free school meal and pupil numbers will be those collected in January 2011. As the largest provider of school meals within schools, the County Council's in-house service, HC3S, is allocated a large proportion of the grant funding. Any surplus funds generated during the Grant period are expected to be available to be reinvested in the service.

3. School Meal Prices

- 3.1. As the table below shows, Hampshire's current price is in line with other shire counties for primary school meals. However, it is common in other counties for there to be a higher price for secondary school meals

County	Primary free school lunch price – Sept 2010	Secondary free school lunch price – Sept 2010
Derbyshire	£1.85	£1.90
Hertfordshire	£1.90	£2.00
Lancashire	£1.90	£2.10
Cambridgeshire	£2.00	£2.15
Devon	£2.00	£2.10

Hampshire	£2.00	£2.00
Nottinghamshire	£2.00	£2.00
Surrey	£2.00	£2.10
Staffordshire	£2.10	£2.20
Southampton City	£1.80	£2.00

3.2. It has recently been confirmed that the Schools Lunch Grant will continue for 2011/12 at the same level as in the first 3 years. Discussion with HC3S has confirmed that this will allow the school meal cost for 2011/12 to remain at £2.00.

4. Performance

- 4.1 Nearly 6 million meals were served in the County Council's primary schools in 2009/10 and 21% of these were to pupils eligible for free meals. In terms of meal numbers in primary schools the overall picture for 2009/10 was positive and total numbers for the current year show an increase of around 8% over the same period two years ago. These increases have served to offset the withdrawal in February 2008 of paid meals for lunchtime supervisory assistants (staff employed and paid by schools).
- 4.2 School meal numbers are still lower than the levels achieved in previous years prior to the national reforms. The average number of meals provided each day remains some 5-10% below the level achieved between 2002 and early 2005. In a volume sensitive activity, this remains a significant challenge.
- 4.3 The budget delegation to schools for free meals is calculated using around 80% of the numbers eligible for free meals as at the previous January. There has been a strong increase in the take-up of free meals from January 2009 to around 85% of eligibility. The issues connected with this provision are being explored with the Schools Forum.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Provided that the new school lunch grant is passed on in full, there are no financial implications for 2011/12.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services agrees that the price of school meals is maintained at the current level of £2.00 per meal from April 2011, for a third consecutive year.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	Yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	Yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	No
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. No impact

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No impact

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

No impact

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No impact