

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DECISION RECORD

Re: School Meal Prices – September 2007

This record is produced in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000.

This form should be used to record:

- EXECUTIVE decisions (key or otherwise) taken by an individual Executive MEMBER; and
- KEY decisions taken by an OFFICER (either alone or in consultation with an Executive Member)

(One form per decision)

The following executive decision has been taken: -

1. The price of primary school meals be increased, to cover the proposed increase in meals costs from September 2007, by 18p (11%) from £1.62 to £1.80 (£9.00 per week).
2. Alternative methods of provision be considered as part of the recovery strategy for the Catering Service.

By whom: Cynthia Welbourn in consultation with County Councillors John Watson OBE and Caroline Patmore

On: 6 July 2007

Reasons for decision: -

School meals form part of a delegated responsibility for schools but the Local Authority continues to have responsibilities to, at a minimum, fix a “guide price” for school meals. Furthermore, it is a condition of participating in the contract, arranged by the County Council, for participating primary schools to adopt the North Yorkshire guide price. In practice, all primary schools use this tariff including those who have chosen to self operate.

The price currently charged is £1.62 per meal. This is lower than the average charged by other Local Authorities. In September 2006 the charge was increased by 5% from £1.54 to £1.62.

In reviewing price changes for 2007/8 it was necessary to take account of the increase in costs including the impact of job evaluation which has increased the pay rates for cooks by 32% to 54%. This has added 20% to labour costs and 10% to the overall costs of the service. Whilst a contract for the purchase of fresh food has been arranged with savings as compared with the previous arrangement, there are also increasing inflationary trends on food prices together with need to cover annual pay increases.

The increase of 18p covers increases in costs and, in part, addresses the impact of job evaluation. It forms part of a “recovery strategy” which also includes the economics of other options for the provision of the service such as the greater use of transported meals, the use of “cook chill” systems and the option of meeting minimum nutritional standards by a cold “sandwich type” meal. These options will be examined in further detail during the Autumn Term involving the Catering Board, Children and Young People’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee and schools.

It is intended to have a significant marketing campaign to seek to minimise the impact on take up arising from the increase. Maximising take up is essential both financially and in meeting the healthy eating agenda.

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected: -

1. Inflation linked increase
An increase of 8p (5%) in charges would fail to recognise the impact of job evaluation or the basis of the agreement with the County Council regarding its short term financial support for the Catering Service.
2. Increase to recover costs of job evaluation and to cover inflation
An increase in the order of 36p would be required to cover, in full, the extra costs of job evaluation and the other cost issues detailed in the report. An increase of 36p would increase the current charge to £1.98. A more "rounded" charge (to assist school staff in cash collection) would be £2.00 per meal, an increase of 38p (23%). This option is likely to have given rise to a significant reduction in take up and may not be necessary if the review of the options for the service provide the opportunity to recover, albeit in part, the impact of job evaluation.

Conflicts of Interest

Please record below details of any conflict of interest declared by a Member or Officer regarding the decision and any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee in respect of that conflict.

| Conflict | Dispensation? |
|----------|---------------|
| | |

Signed
County Councillor John Watson OBE

Publication Date: 6 July 2007

Signed
County Councillor Caroline Patmore

Signed
Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director

Note: This decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 clear working days after publication, unless any 6 members of the Council object to it and call it in by notice in writing (including e-mail) to the Head of Committee Services.

Directorate: Children and Young People's Service

Contact for further information: George Bateman, telephone 01609 532118

Contact for copy of report considered: marion.sadler@northyorks.gov.uk

To: **Alison Jones**, Committee Services – for onward circulation to:

- all Members of the Council
- Martin Thomas – Conservative Group Research & Communications Officer
- Richard Ormerod - Lib Dem Group Research & Communications Officer
- Deborah Hugill, - Labour Group Research & Communications Officer
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