

Partnership - Notice of Motion

Cabinet

17 November 2020

Free School Meals

The Cabinet notes:

That numbers of pupils entitled to Free School Meals are rising fast. Torbay has witnessed a 29% rise in the number of children entitled to free school meals. Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic there were 3,963 children entitled to free school meals, this has risen to 5,114 this September. This figure does not include data for 2 year olds with entitlement, therefore the number could be even higher. Every child who is entitled to Free School Meals is a sign of a family under significant financial pressure. This picture of increasing child poverty is supported by the rapid rise in the number of families dependent on food banks.

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 Cabinet recognises the fears that the second lockdown is likely to lead to further increases in child poverty.

The Cabinet therefore supports the calls by the Child Food Poverty Task Force, supported by Marcus Rashford and many leading food suppliers and producers, which calls for:

The expansion of free school meals provision to every child whose family is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent, or with a low-income and no recourse to public funds.

That provision be made for food vouchers to cover school holidays and periods of lockdown for all families in receipt of Universal Credit or with low-income and no recourse to public funds.

That Healthy Start vouchers should be increased in value to £4.25, and expanded to be made available to all those in receipt of Universal Credit or with a low-income and no recourse to public funds.

This Cabinet resolves to request the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for:

1. An extension of the eligibility for free school meals to every pupil whose parents or guardians are in receipt of Universal Credit,
2. Food vouchers for every one of those pupils in every school holiday and during any period of lockdown,
3. An extension of the eligibility for free school meals to pupils from low-income families whose parents or guardians have no recourse to public funds and destitute asylum seekers under s4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Proposer: Councillor Long

Seconder: Councillor Morey