

<b>Decision taken by:</b>	Cllr Gill German: Lead Member for Education, Children and Families
<b>Date of decision:</b>	04 April 2024
<b>Decision:</b>	That there is a 30p increase in the price of a school meal in Denbighshire secondary schools, from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024

## What is the decision about?

That there is a 30p increase in the price of a school meal in Denbighshire secondary schools, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and that this is progressed via a Lead Member Delegated Decision.

## What is the reason for making this decision?

The principal was established (via a Lead Member Delegated Decision report on 2nd June 2021) that the service is authorised to automatically increase school meals by up to £0.05p each financial year to keep up with the food market prices. Any proposed increase above £0.05p would be subject to a Lead Member Delegated Decision Report.

The budgets and pricing mechanisms for school catering are complex. This has become more complex following the introduction of Universal Free School Meals (FSM) for Primary Schools. There are different funding mechanisms for “universal” FSM and “real” FSM (i.e., those pupils who would qualify for FSM due to their financial circumstances).

The funding for Universal FSM currently covers the cost of providing the service. WG currently provide £3.20 per Universal FSM provided in Primary Schools, and the true cost has been calculated at c.£3.17.

The funding for Real FSM comes from the RSG, and DCC Finance have committed to providing the service with funding to cover the true cost of providing those meals.

Therefore, as primary school meals are now all either Universal or Real FSM, the service receives funding to cover the cost of delivering all primary school meals. This

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includes a £250k budget for maintenance and equipment. It will be important that the service is able to put any end-of-year surplus from the catering budget into a reserve for future use to replace equipment in order to avoid a significant pressure in future years. The roll-out of Universal FSM has involved a large investment in new equipment which will all need to be replaced in future years, possibly all at the same time.

There are essentially two categories of meal in secondary schools: FSM (for those who qualify) and meals paid for by pupils. Again, DCC Finance cover the true cost of providing FSM in secondary schools. However, this is not like primary schools, where the pupil is provided with a set meal. In secondary schools, FSM pupils can use their FSM “allowance” to purchase a set 2-course meal (which is the value of the daily FSM allowance), or they can purchase separate items throughout the day to the value of the FSM allowance. That is why we need to set the price of a meal in our secondary schools. Currently, that “price” is £2.65. We intend to increase that by £0.30 to £2.95 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Because we need to offer a set 2-course meal, we will need to ensure that the individual prices of everything sold in our secondary schools will still enable pupils to buy a reasonable and nutritious meal for £2.95.

The service believe that the individual prices of all items can be increased to enable the cost of a school meal to increase to £2.95. This will not only cover inflation, which is still running very high for food and drinks, but it will also enable to service to deliver a £300k saving for 2024-25. This £300k would form part of the £1,347,000 that Highways & Environmental Services is required to deliver as part of the Council Budget for 2024-25.

The table below shows current and proposed prices in Denbighshire compared to other local authority areas in North Wales. This demonstrates that, even after the proposed 30p price increase, a school meal in Denbighshire will still cost less than in other areas in the region. It should be noted that all other Local authorities are currently likely to be reviewing their process, and they are also therefore to increase from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Adult</b>
Anglesey	£2.20	£2.60	£4.44 (including VAT)

(Awaiting 2024/25 increase)			
Conwy (Awaiting 2024/25 increase)	£3.10	£3.20	£3.63 (including VAT)
Denbighshire (current)	£2.50	£2.65	£3.96 (including VAT)
Denbighshire (proposed)	£3.20	£2.95	£4.22 (including VAT)
Flintshire (Awaiting 2024/25 increase)	£2.80	£3.05	£4.11 (including VAT)
Gwynedd (Awaiting 2024/25 increase)	£2.50	c.£3.10 (varies)	£3.60 (including VAT)
Wrexham (Awaiting 2024/25 increase)	£2.40	£2.65	£3.84 (including VAT)

## Interests declared

No interests to declare.

## What consultations have been carried out?

Discussions have taken place with the Lead Member, who understands the need to increase prices and is supportive of the proposal.

Discussion has taken place with CET who have approved the proposal.

## Power to make a decision

The Councils Constitution delegates authority for officers and lead members to make certain decisions. The extent of that delegation is set out in Section 13 of the Constitution, which accordingly covers this Lead Members Delegated Decision. Appendix 2 (b) to Section 13 of the Constitution sets out the Scheme of Delegations to Lead Members.

## Authority for delegation of the decision to the Cabinet Member / Chief Officer:

The decision was taken by the Lead Member for Education, Children and Families in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.