

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Officer Decision Record

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Director of Children's Services
<b>Date:</b>	20 April 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Increase in school meal price for HC3S schools
<b>Report From:</b>	Head of Business Operations

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### 1. The decision:

- 1.1. That the meal price for schools where HC3S provides the catering will increase from £2.80 to £3.00 per meal with effect from Monday 5 June 2023.
- 1.2. This price relates to all meal types.

### 2. Reasons for the decision:

- 2.1. Rising costs in terms of the price of ingredients and staff salaries require the meal price to increase in 2023 beyond the expected levels.
- 2.2. Hampshire County Council remains committed to ensuring school meals are compliant with the School Food standards and that food quality is maintained.
- 2.3. HC3S will continue to provide Red Tractor accredited UK meat and sustainably sourced fish (MSC approved) for example.
- 2.4. The over budget pay award offered in February 2023 has been rejected by the Unions which may lead to a higher award, backdated to April 2023. HC3S is required to recover the cost of this pay award as a self-financing business unit and a meal price of £3.00 is more likely to achieve this than a lower amount.

### 3. Other options considered and rejected:

- 3.1. Increasing the meal price to the lower amount of £2.90 as previously approved (with the price increase from 17 April 2023), would lead to a financial deficit for the year, which would increase if the price was not changed until 5 June. Hampshire County Council does not regard this position as acceptable for a self-funding business unit.
- 3.2. Increasing the meal price to £2.96 was regarded as a viable option but would achieve a lower surplus than budgeted, providing little contingency for any further unexpected increase in costs. The Executive Members consulted did not want to increase the meal price again during the current financial year and the higher price provides mitigation of this risk (see 2.4).

**4. Conflicts of interest:**

- 4.1. No conflicts of interest were declared by the decision-maker.
- 4.2. No conflicts of interest were declared by other Executive Members consulted.

**5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel:**

Not applicable.

**6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent:**

- 6.1. The meal price was scheduled to increase from Monday 17 April 2023, however the impact of the pay award led to a review of the pricing.
- 6.2. The County Council needed to give schools sufficient notice of the price increase, and due to the impact of the pre-election period on the content of communications and discussions with the Executive Member for Education, the implementation date of the price increase was deferred until Monday 5 June 2023.
- 6.3. Further delay in increasing the meal price may impact HC3S's ability to breakeven for this financial year as noted in 3.1.
- 6.4. To achieve this date and comply with the pre-election communications, schools must be advised of the price change on Tuesday 9 May 2023.

**7. Statement from the decision maker:**

- 7.1. Approval given for HC3S to increase the meal price with effect from 5 June 2023.
- 7.2. It was noted that this will impact school budgets due to the Government's underfunding of Universal Infant Free School Meals, and Hampshire County Council continues to lobby the Government to increase this.

**Approved by:**



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Stuart Ashley  
Director of Children's Services

**Date:**

20 April 2023