

Council

Meeting date: 12 December 2022

Motions (2 total)

Motion A

Proposed by: Councillor Wendy Flynn

Seconded by: Councillor Tabi Joy

Free school meals for all primary school children in England

4 million children are living in poverty in the UK.

For many children, living in poverty can mean going to school hungry, sleeping in a cold bedroom, and feeling worried and anxious about the stress at home. Poverty affects young people long into their future too - children growing up in poverty have significantly worse chances in life, poorer health and fewer opportunities.

Many professional education and health organisations, as well as individuals, are calling on the Government to extend Free School Meal provision including, but not limited to:

- Barnardo's - campaigning for Free School Meals for all Primary school children in England (they have a petition here <https://tinyurl.com/5dyp5hzv>) and have published a Cost of Living report which can be found here <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/impact-of-cost-of-living>
- The National Education Union - also calling for Free School Meals for all Primary School Children (<https://neu.org.uk/press-releases/food-insecurity-new-food-foundation-data>)
- The Food Foundation – advocating for an extension to the existing provision. They have an evidence pack that can be found here <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/superpowers-free-school-meals-evidence-pack> which cites research indicating that for every £1 invested, £1.38 would be returned, through social, health and educational benefits, resulting in £8.9bn in core benefits.

This Council notes:

- Free school meals for all primary-aged children would mean that every child would get at least one nutritious, healthy, filling meal a day, whatever they are facing at home.
- Around 800,000 children living in poverty are currently missing out on free school meals. Children in England are only eligible for free school meals if their families have net earnings below £7,400 per year.
- Free School Meals would relieve stress, anxiety for children at mealtimes, and relieve pressure for families living in poverty.
- Free school meals have been proven to reduce obesity and also to improve attendance and attainment rates at school.
- Scotland, Wales and some boroughs in London have already committed to extending universal free school meals to all primary children and are exploring options for expansion into secondary schools as well.

This Council calls on Cheltenham’s Member of Parliament, Alex Chalk, to support the Free School Meals for All Bill, which will be tabled in Parliament on Tuesday 13 December.

Motion B

Proposed by: Councillor Max Wilkinson

Seconded by: Councillor Angie Boyes

Voter ID proposals

Council notes with concern:

The Voter ID proposals, which are due to be enacted nationwide from 2023 and would apply to all elections in Cheltenham.

That people will be disenfranchised by this legislation, particularly those from certain groups, including less well-off families and younger people.

The bias in the proposals towards accepting forms of ID commonly held by certain demographic groups and against accepting forms of ID commonly held by others.

The lack of funding for councils administering elections to engage in awareness campaigns to prevent disenfranchisement of voters.

That the Gould Principle recommends electoral legislation should not be introduced within six months before a scheduled poll, but that unless an unscheduled election were to take place this would not apply to any election in Cheltenham.

That while the government is reportedly offering access to a Voter ID card to the 3.5million people without any form of photo identification, this still represents a barrier to voting for many.

Council further notes:

That in 2019, the most recent general election year, there was only one conviction for electoral fraud due to impersonation.

That the reported cost of administering Voter ID will be in the region of £180million, with some extra costs borne by local authorities already under significant financial pressure.

Council resolves to:

Ask the Chief Executive and/or Returning Officer to report to full council in March 2023 on this authority's proposals to minimise the risk of disenfranchisement.

Write to the appropriate Secretary of State and Cheltenham's Members of Parliament to:

- **express concern about the upcoming changes with a suggestion they are scrapped**
- **request that if Cheltenham's MPs are not minded to support the scrapping of the changes, propose an expansion of the range of forms of ID that will be accepted and request extra funding for local awareness campaigns**

This page is intentionally left blank