

## **Briefing Note in respect of Motion on Holiday Hunger – 15 November 2017**

The Council is concerned at reports by teachers' unions and others concerning the growth of "holiday hunger" amongst children.

Holiday hunger occurs when families who are usually entitled to free school meals during term time have that provision taken away during school holidays. This is most acute during the long summer holidays with an extra cost to families affected of an average of £30 to £40 per week to feed their children.

### **This Council notes:**

1. A survey led by the NUT (National Union of Teachers) found that as many as four in five staff reported a rise in "holiday hunger" over the past two years. 78% of teachers polled said that they recognised children arriving at school hungry. More than a third went as far as to say that pupils were returning after the school holidays showing signs of malnutrition.
2. That Mark Hendrick MP has sponsored a Private members' Bill by Frank Field MP which places a legal duty on local authorities to ensure the provision of free meals and activities during school holidays. This would be paid for by earmarking 10p from every pound raised from the sugar tax on soft drinks.
3. It has been reported that the Bill has received a certain amount of cross party support with 14 Conservative MPs publicly backing the Bill, which means that more Private Members' Bills are likely to become law if the government gives support to them.

### **This Council resolves:**

1. To support the Bill and asks the Chief Executive to write to our two MPs namely Cat Smith and David Morris to explain the Councils support and request that they also offer their support and actively persuade the Conservative led government to put Mr Field's Bill into law.
2. The Chief Executive writes to all Council Leaders across Lancashire asking them to support the Bill and requesting them to write to their own Members of Parliament to offer support for the Bill.
3. The Chief Executive writes to Mark Hendrick thanking him for sponsoring the Bill and making him aware it has the support of Lancaster City Council. The Council should also publicise its support for the Bill.

### **Officer Advice**

In addition to the national evidence about holiday hunger, Lancaster Citizens Advice Bureau have reported that local food banks have experienced a huge rise in requests for food parcels over the last year. (Over 80% in Lancaster) Whilst this is not all related to children in school holidays, nonetheless it presents a picture of families struggling to cope especially those affected by the change to Universal Credit.

The Bill aims to place a legal duty on local authorities to facilitate the delivery of programmes that provide free meals and activities for children during school holidays. It is envisaged that the duty will fall to upper tier authorities as the Education Authority but the detailed content of the Bill has not yet been published. The financial implications to the city council are therefore unknown at this stage.

The Bill is due to have its second reading debate in the House of Commons on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

Chief Officer (Health and Housing)

**Monitoring Officer Comments**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**Section 151 Officer Comments**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.