

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
18th October 2018**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Learning and Welsh Language

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor James Gibson-Watt

From the 1st October 2018 Powys County Council is withdrawing from the School Milk Subsidy Scheme and will no longer be making claims to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) for the school milk subsidy on the county's primary schools' behalf. From that date the primary schools will have to administer the scheme and claim the subsidy themselves if they wish to remain in the scheme.

On the assumption that she was the decision-maker, could the Portfolio Holder confirm or otherwise whether she carried out a full Impact Assessment to determine the effect this change will have on the take up of the school milk subsidy and the provision of free milk to Powys primary school pupils before taking this decision?

Response

The decision to devolve the Free School Milk Subsidy administration to the individual primary schools was made by the Professional Lead for Catering & Cleaning, with a business case to the L & R Head of Service and the Interim Head of Learning.

There was no impact assessment completed for this as the business case details the rationale for this decision. The schools are already completing 70% of the process by submitting their weekly orders to the milk suppliers and returning their monthly claim figures to the catering service for consolidation. The additional tasks that will be devolved to the schools is to pay for the milk suppliers for any milk received and to submit claims to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and the Nursery Milk Reimbursement Unit (NMRU) also along with any administration costs to be claimed (admin time, refrigeration, electricity).

The Welsh Government have advised that, "milk is the recommended drink under the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations 2013, but schools are not obliged to participate in the school milk scheme. The decision is down to the individual school." Therefore, it is not statutory to provide milk, however all schools have been advised that this is a Welsh Government subsidy and the health benefits milk has for growing children has been emphasised. This is the impact to the pupils if the schools decide not to take up the scheme.

Due to the changes in the processing of the claims by the agencies over the past 12 months, primary schools have had to register individually to the NMRU and submit their monthly claim numbers to the NMRU also. The catering service is not allowed visibility of these claim numbers, although the catering service pays the suppliers based on the orders. Invariably the claim numbers have not matched the quantity ordered and the claim figure paid back to the catering service has consistently been at a loss. Therefore, it has been raised as a risk due to financial loss and could be audited by the WAO.

The catering service has and will continue to support the schools throughout this transition and beyond, already providing guidance documentation with FAQ's and contact details. Also the deadline for schools to register has been extended to the 1st November 2018, to allow schools to understand the process.