



PRESS RELEASE

SCHOOL MEALS SCANDAL



over 20 of the larger Town and Community Council's attended a North and Mid Wales Association of Local Councils meeting. An organisation which represents approx. 35 larger Town and Community Councils ranging from Bangor and Llandudno in the north to Welshpool in the south.

At that recent meeting of the Association one Councillor raised the subject of school dinner provision in our senior schools. It was pointed out that in Denbighshire if there was no money on the payment card and the parents were in arrears by more than £20 then the meal was binned and the student given a cheese sandwich. Alongside this the student was put on a separate table.

There were many members who had first-hand experience of the issues raised. The issues around school meals appears to be a High School problem and not a Junior/Infant School one.

Following this Welshpool Town Council, as secretariat to the Association, has sought to ascertain the situation in Powys – we were told that there is a '0' tolerance policy – if there is no money on the card the meal is binned and the young person goes without.

Denbighshire confirmed in a press statement that they also took meals away if there was no money on the pupil's card. They also confirmed that a sandwich was provided.

A spokesman for the Association said 'this situation is obviously widespread over Wales and is a disgrace in 2019. It is as if we are in the dark ages. No young person should go without. How are they supposed to learn when they are hungry? The fact that finances come into it is a side issue. It is not the child's fault that this situation appears to be happening.'

The secretary to the Association Robert Robinson from Welshpool informed the meeting of his investigations into the subject and said 'the amount of debt by parents for school meals varies from County Council to County Council ranging from £20,000 through to £90,000 pa. This perhaps says that there is an affordability issue. Not everyone is able to pay for more and more whilst getting less and less.

The issues are not just about young people not getting a school meal but the waste created by throwing meals away. It is also about a duty to care for our young people and not penalise them for something outside their control. This is yet another instance of County Councils 'not caring'. There has to be a change in attitude with a positive solution sought as soon as possible – like January 2019!

The Association will be seeking to meet Welsh Government over these issues which needs to be resolved not just in one area but all over the Country.

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