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Sent via Email
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URGENT

Our ref: BS/CCW
Your ref:
27 October 2020

Contact: Cllr. Bridget Smith
Direct dial: 01954 713130
Email: cllr.bridgetsmith@scambs.gov.uk

Dear Steve,

Free School Meals

Dear Steve,

Thank you for arranging for your press release on Free School Meals to be circulate prior to release yesterday.

I appreciate the huge efforts your council is making to ensure that children in greatest need have access to sufficient food during this half term. South Cambridgeshire District Council will do everything it can to help with communications and distribution, alongside the enormous efforts that officers and community groups in the district are making to support the most vulnerable.

It is a sad fact in my view, that the government, whose responsibility it is to feed children in need for most of the year are still not grasping the nettle and providing much needed food vouchers to cover all school holidays during the pandemic. They are putting local government and community groups in the appalling situation of having to fill the gap with few resources.

I am fearful that despite all of our best effort's children will go hungry over the school holidays and that the very fact that they have to ask for help means that some will slip through the net.

This coming Christmas, families will be facing even greater financial pressures than usual thanks to Covid-19. Hard choices will have to be made by some between buying gifts for their children, heating their homes and buying food.

My feeling is that the best way to ensure that the children in greatest need get fed is to extend the Free School Meals voucher scheme, which worked well on the whole during the summer, to cover this exceptional holiday period.

It is my hope that the Government will step in, as they quite clearly should, but I think we have to prepare to act now if they fail to do so. I fully acknowledge the enormous financial pressures that you are under but would like to offer to match fund, up to a maximum of £25,000, the cost of vouchers for South Cambridgeshire Children in receipt of Free School Meals for the duration of this 2-week Christmas holiday period. If we start planning now, we can ensure all the relevant

approvals of budgets can be carried out and have in place a well-organised scheme that works with all the schools in the area.

I am of course very happy to discuss this with you at your convenience.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bridget Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bridget Smith

Leader South Cambridgeshire District Council (Liberal Democrat)