

## Formal Council Questions and Responses

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**1 Question to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills: 2019/23 Plant Based Meal Options for Schools**

**Councillor C Evans asked:**

Dear Cabinet Member,

The Soil Association has recently called for pupils in schools to get 'healthier and more climate-friendly' meals, it has advised that all state schools should offer pupils a compulsory plant-based menu at least one day a week, the aim being to make school meals more environmentally friendly and reflect changing dietary advice and indeed tastes.

Given the wide acceptance that diets need to alter to address the climate crisis – including by eating less meat and more beans and pulses and with increasing numbers of pupils now striking over climate change food and diet as an issue of growing importance to young people and we have an opportunity to prepare future generations.

Will your administration show environmental leadership in Wales by agreeing to investigate with school meal providers, plant based meal options for our children at least one day a week and present your plans to scrutiny within 2 months for feedback and then to full Council within 3 months for debate with a view to introduce a plant based menu for the new academic year?

**Councillor G Giles responded:**

The current contractual arrangements in Newport schools operate in accordance with the Welsh Government Guidance on Healthy Eating that stipulates the requirement for a vegetarian main meal option to be available every day in every school.

Following my self-financed visit to Finland last year where I visited a number of schools and education departments of local government on a fact-finding visit I directed officers to develop a new and improved specification for the school meals service in Newport after observing the practice in this leading educational country. The tender will be advertised in the Autumn and implemented in September 2020.

The new service model will require the successful provider to work with the schools to make significant improvements to the healthy eating options, including less meat and more plant based meals, through consultation and menu innovation.

Young people are very engaged with the issues of climate change and understand the impact of human behaviour on the environment. As someone who does not eat meat I am pleased to note that there are already schools who have introduced 'vegetarian day'. Therefore, the opportunity to expand plant based menu options as a consensual choice does exist and the new service model will ensure that the provider develops the menu to reflect this new awareness.

Due to the aforementioned progress in this area, I have been advised that it is not necessary for this issue to be referred to Scrutiny or full Council.

