

People Scrutiny Committee – 10th April 2018

Public Questions

Question from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Children & Learning

Question 1

“Does the portfolio holder agree with Robin Bevan, Headteacher of Southend High School for Boys statement after the academy accounts were studied by Southend Council’s Education Board. He claims that Southend Schools remain underfunded by the Conservative Government new school funding formula for schools leaving reserves are exceptionally low and I am concerned. He argues that every pupil, boy, girl should have access to a broad curriculum and quality of teaching?”

Answer

Thank you for your question Mr Webb.

No.

Firstly I think it should be recognised and commended that the Education Board is undertaking detailed scrutiny of all schools finances, both maintained and academies, in order to raise such questions, but also to take action where necessary, in this case it felt that writing to the Regional Schools Commissioner was the most appropriate course of action.

The Education Board is the democratically elected extension of the previous statutory Schools Forum, consisting of Headteachers and Governors from a range of schools, along with other representation from Early Years and Post Sixteen providers.

We have a rich mixture of education and curriculum available across the town.

You ask by inference do I agree with the Conservative Government on the matter of school funding. You may recall that when the initial National Funding Formula was announced, I campaigned hard with both Sir David Amess MP and James Duddridge MP to ensure that Southend schools did not lose out. Sir David secured a meeting with the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, for me and a delegation from the Education Board to argue our case. I was delighted that, following this meeting, the government have now guaranteed that no Southend school will lose out, every Southend school's position has improved since that meeting. I

have no difficulty in speaking out against a government of whatever party/parties, where Southend's residents need me to do so. In my role as Executive Councillor for Children and Learning I will do everything that is required to ensure that this Administration's ambitions for education can be achieved.

Mr Bevan is of course free to express his view.

Question from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Health & Adult Social Care

Question 2

“What is the different age’s participation in physical activity from 2015, 2016, 2017 to 2018 and what actions and initiatives to which certain groups will the Conservative Council put into place to increase the wide range of ages to and numbers of residents taking physical activity and what are the benefits of taking physical activity?”

Answer

Physical Activity Participation by age:

The percentage of adults that met the Chief Medical Officer’s recommendations for physical activity (150+ moderate intensity equivalent minutes per week) in Southend 2016/17 was 63% which was similar to the figure in the previous year. 24% of adults were classified as physically inactive (i.e. experiencing less than 30 minutes moderate intensity exercise per week). Again this figure was similar to the 12 month period preceding it. These two indicators suggest that Southend has similar levels of physical activity and inactivity to the England average.

For 15 year olds, the percentage who were physically active for at least one hour per day, seven days per week was significantly better than the national average (18%) for the latest available data. However, the percentage of this age cohort in Southend who were classified as sedentary is worse than the national average (74%).

In addition, we are able to look at national data from the Active Lives survey to gain an understanding of how age impacts physical activity levels. Inactivity levels generally increase with age, but the sharpest increase in inactivity comes between ages 75 and 84 and age 85+.

Benefits of physical activity:

There is a wealth of evidence which demonstrates that an active life is essential for physical and mental health and wellbeing. Being active at every age increases quality of life and people's chances of remaining healthy and independent. Being physically active helps to prevent and manage over 20 common serious medical conditions including Type 2 diabetes, several cancers, depression and dementia. Physical Activity also reduces the risk of falls in older people.

Being active plays a key role in brain development in early childhood and is also good for longer-term educational attainment. Increased energy levels from physically active lifestyles boost workplace productivity and reduce sickness absence. An active population can even reduce levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Actions to increase physical activity:

The Southend-on-Sea Physical Activity Strategy provides a framework and action plan to support the long term vision for Southend to be a healthier, more active borough. This will be achieved through making the participation in an active healthy lifestyle a social norm for people who live or work in Southend.

The action plan seeks to increase physical activity across the life-course through a range of interventions delivered across Council teams and through close partnership working. These interventions range from specific services for certain populations (e.g. Falls Prevention Classes) through to embedding active design principles into future developments within the Borough. There is some community insight work being delivered currently that, upon completion in May, will identify key target populations who are most at risk of poor outcomes as a result of being inactive in Southend. This work will inform future physical activity communications campaigns and intervention design.