

People Scrutiny Committee – 15th July 2014

Public Questions

Questions from David Webb to the Executive Councillor for Children & Learning

Question 1

Can the portfolio holder confirm which strategies will be in place to ensure more pupils achieve more A – C grades in Maths, English & Science in our Comprehensive schools in September and how will these strategies be implemented to drive up standards.

Answer 1

We have a three year school improvement strategy which has been developed in partnership with all schools and is already being implemented. This strategy has three objectives:

- 1. to ensure every school is at least good as judged by Ofsted**
- 2. to ensure every school has outstanding leadership and governance**
- 3. to ensure that there are no inequalities in attainment between pupils eligible for Pupil Premium and those not eligible**

Pupils achieve better grades through a combination of good teachers who have high expectations of their students, good school leadership with ambition for being the best and a strong and effective partnership between home and school. These are all features of our successful schools.

It is true to say that this combination of factors has not always been present in some of our weaker schools. However, there are positive signs that they are present now and beginning to impact on student's motivation. Whilst it would be unrealistic to expect the improvements to be sufficiently embedded for this September, the schools concerned indicate they expect some improvements in these subjects from 2013 and that this will be the start of an upward trend.

Question 2

The previous Tory admission was going to close Youth Centres. In Shoebury there was a significant drop (in attendance?). Can the portfolio holder tell us how can Southend Council encourage the Youth and adults to use the Centres?

Answer 2

After a wide ranging cross-party Youth Service Review held in 2013 a paper on the Future of the Youth Service was approved in November 2013. This clearly outlines the direction of travel for the service which in summary is:

- To focus youth services on those young people and areas that need them the most**
- To keep one Council-run youth centre in Shoebury, with no reduction in current Council provision and an increased level of community-led provision. to make capital investment to remodel the Shoebury Youth**

Centre interior to both maximise the community letting potential and enhance the capability for other Council services to share the building.

- **That other your services be re-provided by working with existing providers in alternative locations, with the aim to extend, improve and increase their community youth work provision. In addition, work be undertaken with other community groups to develop additional voluntary sector provision, resulting in an increased overall youth provision in Central Southend.**

The full review and recommendations are in the publically available Cabinet report.

These review decisions are now being progressed. Council provided youth services at Focus have ceased and the transfer of Cluny to community leadership are underway and a number of community groups have been identified to provide activities in these areas.

Services provided at the Shoebury Centre remain in place with no reduction and attendance numbers are stable. Capital funding has been approved for the internal remodelling of the centre and work is underway to identify additional community uses. These should begin to impact on centre usage over the coming year.