

## People Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019

### Public Questions

#### Question from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning – Cllr Helen Boyd

##### **Question 1**

*The department of Education informed Southend Council in September 2018 it needs two new secondary schools to cope with the estimated 16,622 spaces it suggested is needed in 2023-2024. However Southend Council is only planning for 1,150 extra places. **What is the Conservative run council provide 1,150 and not the recommended 16,622 by 2023 by The Department of Education?***

##### **Answer**

The 2017 Surplus Places Return was published by the DfE and showed that for 2023/24 the local authority was forecasting a total secondary school population of 16,622. This figure includes post-16 pupils. As of September 2016 the local authority had 14,456 places (including Post-16) within the secondary schools. As the forecast number was significantly higher than the places that were available the authority embarked on a phased expansion programme. Phase one is underway and will add an additional 1,150 places giving a total of 15,606 by 2022/23.

The 2017 Surplus Places Return was based on the known Southend primary pupil numbers and the advised losses of places within Essex schools that Southend pupils usually access, mainly due to large housing developments in the Rochford and Rayleigh area. As the rate of completion of these, and other large developments within Southend, are not progressing as fast as expected, this number has now been revised downward to 15,952 as part of the submitted 2018 Surplus Places Return due to be published later this year. This new figure gives a phase two forecast shortfall of just over 1,000 places spread over the seven secondary year groups and the expansion programme will address this shortage. A constant watch is kept on expected pupil numbers and future year numbers are adjusted to meet demand, both up and down.

## **Question from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities & Wellbeing – Cllr Lesley Salter**

### **Question 2**

*Swimmers have lost out in free swimming on a Wednesday and only get 4 free sessions. Then apply a concession membership of £26.25 per month, £315 per year which is a lot on top of their shopping, heating bills. **How many over 65 took free swimming in 2015 - 2016, 2016 - 2017, 2017 – 2018 and does the portfolio think the cuts in only offering 4 swimming lessons will affect their over 65 health?***

### **Answer**

Wet Wednesday's has been a programme that was originally central government funded until 2010, this programme has been continued in Southend, funded by the local authority.

Historically it has been very difficult to understand the exact number of people taking up the offer of free swimming. Data is unavailable for usage during 2015-16, however in 2016/17 there were just over 3000 individual swim sessions attended on a Wednesday. In 2017/18 this increased to over 4500 sessions.

Due to the data collection method used it is unclear is whether these numbers are made up of a small number of individuals attending every week (e.g. 60 people making 52 weekly attendances) or whether the number of different people taking up the offer is much greater and they are only taking up a small number of sessions each.

During 2018 the decision was taken to change the scheme due to a lack of long term financial sustainability and an inability to understand the impact of the scheme (and therefore return on investment) both in terms of numbers of individuals benefiting and the schemes ability to engage and support our most inactive individuals, as per our ambitions within the Southend Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

As part of the redesign of the scheme we are now able to understand how many times individuals are attending swims and their current physical activity levels. The latest data submission from Fusion shows 235 individuals have accessed the scheme between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018- and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018. We are working with Fusion to further understand the demographics and physical activity levels of those who are attending the scheme to gauge the Public Health benefits of the programme.

Physical activity has many health benefits including improved quality of life and reduced risk of long term conditions. For older people physical activity is particularly important to maintain bone strength, flexibility and balance.

It is important to note that swimming is just one of a range of physical activities available for older adults in Southend. The five weekly Health Walks across the borough target our most inactive individuals with opportunities to attend led walks around our parks and open spaces for free. We also have our Staying Steady Falls prevention classes which provide exercise to those who are identified as being at risk of falling.

Whilst we know that our older populations tend to be our most inactive it is important to recognise the diversity in our older populations and provide a broad physical activity offer to suit.