

## **SOUTHEND ON SEA CITY COUNCIL**

### **People Scrutiny Committee Meeting**

**6<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

#### **1. Question from Kay Mitchell for Cabinet Member for Children Services Education & Learning (Cllr Boyd)**

Following the excellent presentation by our Youth Mayor Jocelyn Ayao and Madi Falkner-Hatt from the UK youth parliament at the last People Scrutiny Committee, it is clear that there is significant inconsistency in free school meal (FSM) fund allocation across secondary schools, and that the cost of living crisis has brought about a reduction in portion sizes.

In the table shared in the report on free school meals for 2023 it shows that out of 15799 primary school pupils only 4049 are eligible for free school meals and only 3133 of those are taking their free school meals. The table also shows that only 166 of 331 pupils eligible in special schools are taking up FSM.

Looking at menus they appear to show that they fall short of nutritional value expectations as set out in the governments school food standards that also includes portion sizes.

Can the portfolio holder for Children and Learning please advise how many children in our primary schools, both academies and community schools, currently receive free school meals and what can be done to make sure they are easily accessible, consistent and sufficient?

#### **Response**

**As a council we do not provide a schools meal service and therefore have no statutory authority or capacity to collect detailed information from our schools regarding their service delivery. However, we can remind Local Authority maintained schools to encourage families to apply – including the use of a free FSM family checker in Southend which families, as well as schools, are able to check their FSM eligibility. In addition,**

**in Governors' training and headteacher briefings as part of our training to schools in how to respond to cost of living challenges, Free School Meal purchase power has been highlighted as a source of potential inequality.**

**Schools hold the data in regard to the number of children eligible for free school meals and submit this as part of their census return to the DFE. According to the latest figures from October 2023, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Southend's primary schools (community and academy) was 25.3%.**

**FSM data is published for all local authorities annually using information submitted in the January school census (when the percentage historically is higher than October). Southend was reported at 25.6% in January 2023 which is 1.6 percentage points higher than the national average, and also above the average of its statistical neighbours. The gap between Southend and England increased in 2020/21, having previously been similar, and both have risen at the same rate since then. Further information can be found on Southend's Education dashboard [here](#).**

**Following the presentation by our Youth Mayor Jocelyn Ayao and Madi Falkner-Hatt from the UK youth parliament at the last People Scrutiny Committee I have arranged a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the People Scrutiny committee prior to us all then meeting with Jocelyn and Madi on this matter. I know that the UK Youth Parliament recognises this as a national issue, and it was debated recently when the UK Youth Parliament met at the House of Commons a few weeks ago with an impressive and eloquent contribution from Madi to that debate which I would encourage all members of People Scrutiny to watch. I would like to add that I know that Madi's term of office as the UK Youth Parliament representative for Southend is coming to an end and I would like to thank her for all her hard work and for ensuring that the views of children and young people in Southend are heard at a local, regional and a national level. As the portfolio holder I would like to congratulate Madi for**

**being an excellent UK Youth parliament member for the City of Southend-on-Sea.**

**2. Question from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Public Health (Cllr Moyies)**

How many physically inactive adults completed a physically active programme course in 2022 compared to 2023, and please describe the programme structure, criteria used for enrolment and expected benefits for completing the course?

**348 physically inactive adults completed a physical activity course from January 2022 to December 2022 and 359 completed the course from January 2023 until October 2023.**

**The weekly sessions are held over a set period of time, ranging from 6 weeks to 12 weeks. The criteria is for adults who do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week.**

**There are a range of physical and mental benefits for those that complete a course, including reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes and hypertension, and help maintain healthy body weight and improve wellbeing.**