

## **People Scrutiny Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

### **Public Questions**

#### **Questions from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Health & Adult Social Care**

##### Question 1

“With childhood obesity now at crisis level in UK, what strategies is Southend Council using to tackle the causes and how to reduce childhood, teenage and adult obesity?”

##### Answer

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Obese children and adolescents are at an increased risk of developing various health problems and are more likely to become obese adults.

Childhood obesity is a complex issue and its multifactorial nature requires a broad range of actions to be taken by the Council and its partners.

Examples of current local actions include implementation of UNICEF baby friendly standards in maternity and community services to increase the uptake and duration of breast feeding. The 0-19 Healthy Child Programme, which is delivered by health visitors and school nurses, provides advice and support on helping children and young people to maintain a healthy weight through healthy eating and being physically active.

Children who are identified as being overweight or obese by school nurses can be referred to the More Life programme, which helps them and their families to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Southend also has a thriving Healthy Schools Programme which includes the requirement for schools to promote healthy eating and encourage physical activity in the school community.

An in-depth piece of work on childhood obesity is currently underway in the six wards linked to the Big Lottery funded A Better Start Programme. This is also looking at the role of the food environment and the prevention of childhood obesity.

Adult obesity is also a complex issue and the Council is working with a wide range of partners to support healthy lifestyles in adults.

Lifestyle advice is a key component of the NHS Health Checks, which are offered to people aged 40-74 without a pre-existing condition.

Local businesses are being encouraged to sign up to the Southend Public Health Responsibility Deal to support their employees to lead healthier lives, and food businesses to provide healthier food options.

The Council has a range of sport and leisure facilities and the Southend-on-Sea Physical Activity Strategy provides a detailed action plan on how people will be supported to be more active.

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

### Question 2

“Does the portfolio holder think the idea of an education board for the borough replace the current schools forum will continue to influence education policy and strategies and play a role in school improvement in the future. As many schools in Southend are academies and are run by trusts and are no longer fall under the control of the council nor its intervention polices?”

### Answer

The Council's statutory duties in relation to school improvement are changing, particularly with more schools becoming academies.

However parents and children, quite rightly, remain concerned that school performance remains at the forefront of our minds and continue to hold the Council accountable for this. We should also remember that, irrespective of a school's status, Councillors are elected to represent their residents' concerns and that this responsibility chiefly falls to the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning.

Therefore the Council has decided to take the bold move to bring forward proposals for the new Education Board, which brings together the Council (we are still responsible for 35 maintained schools), the Regional Schools Commissioner (responsible for 18 Academy schools), representatives of the maintained and academy schools themselves as well as other learning providers, into one place to oversee the improvement of our town's schools. This indeed strengthens the expertise with school leaders, enhancing the partnership between the Council and the Academy schools themselves.

The objective of the Council remains for all schools to be Good or Outstanding. By bringing all of our partners together onto one Board, we will be able to help and support each other to drive up and maintain the standards our children and other learners deserve.