

COUNCIL 28th FEBRUARY 2019

MEMBER QUESTIONS REPORT

1. Question from Councillor Nic Laurens:

Secondary School League Tables for performance have recently been published and I'm sure the Portfolio Holder would like to join me in congratulating everybody at The Priory School and Meole Brace School, the two local Secondary Schools in my division of Meole, which are both among the best six performing schools in Shropshire. Shropshire Schools have performed well generally given the funding disparity between Shropshire Schools and those of London and metropolitan authorities, securing a Shropshire average of -0.1 compared to an English average of -0.3. Given the lower levels of per pupil funding our schools currently receive, will the portfolio holder join with me in congratulating the entire educational establishment across Shropshire for this achievement. I believe that if our schools were funded on an equal basis with those from urban authorities, Shropshire's schools would be significantly above the national average across the board. Could the portfolio holder please update us on what steps he and his department have been taking to open dialogue with central government about this unfair funding formula on largely rural authorities such as Shropshire?"

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People:

Firstly, I would like to offer my congratulations to all Shropshire pupils and schools on their performances.

Shropshire Council and its Schools Forum are part of f40, a group representing 41 English local authorities with historically low levels of funding for education. On behalf of their members f40 has been campaigning for over two decades for a fairer system for allocating funding to schools and have been influential in securing the introduction of a National Funding Formula (NFF) which has, and is, addressing some of the historic inequities in funding between schools in different parts of the country. However, together and through f40, Shropshire continues to press for further improvements to the formula, in particular in addressing the historic inequities that have been 'locked into' the NFF. While acknowledging the NFF as being a move in the right direction, there is a strong case for further improvement for fairly funding schools in large rural counties like Shropshire.

The authority, on behalf of its education community, is also supporting the work of f40 in lobbying for additional funding for the sector, from early years, through mainstream and into post-16 education. They are also pressing for further support in meeting the increasing demand for, and the consequential additional costs of, educating our most vulnerable children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, currently funded through what is called the High Needs Block (part of Dedicated Schools Grant). Together with most English local authorities, Shropshire Council is struggling to provide effective

support within the current resources provided, with many having to go into deficit to fund provision.

The issue of school funding and, in particular high needs funding has been raised with local MPs.