

Response to questions raised at Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23rd July 2013

Ref: CSS/09/13, Agenda Item 9

Title: 2012/13 Essex County Council Annual Report and Corporate Plan Progress

Report: 2012/13 Year End

Cllr Finch presented the 2012/13 Annual Report and Corporate Plan Progress Report on 23rd July. A number of questions were raised by Members specifically in relation to the Corporate Plan Progress Report. The purpose of this note is to provide Members with a response to those questions.

1. Child Obesity (Corporate Plan Progress Report, Page 10, Ref: 3.2.4 and 3.2.5)

Q: Members requested that in future, child obesity data is also reported as raw numbers. This was felt to provide a clearer picture of progress made in tackling this area.

A: Unfortunately, it will not be possible to provide raw data relating to child obesity. Essex County Council is governed by specific rules of the national measurement programmes and are not provided with child level data to enable matching or tracking of children. We only have access to the nationally released obesity rates.

Each year, measurement is taken from a different cohort of children. Children at reception year will be measured again in 5 years' time (as Year 6 pupils) but with no way of tracking or understanding the change to this cohort i.e. those who have since moved out of or into the Essex catchment area, we are unable to provide any statistically significant analysis of progress made, other than the reported obesity rate data.

2. Educational Attainment (Corporate Plan Progress Report, Page 4)

Q: Members requested assurance that academy schools are reporting attainment data in accordance with national definitions

A: Currently around a fifth of our schools have academy status with around 80% of all secondary schools being academies (see below).

**Numbers of Essex schools by status
as at 22/4/2013**

	Academy	Community	Foundation	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Total
Nursery		2				2
Infants	5	44	8	3	1	61
Junior	8	35	7	5	3	58
Primary	34	151	36	58	59	338
Primary Phase						
Total	47	232	51	66	63	459
Secondary	61	4	8	3	1	77
Special	3	13	1			17
Total	111	249	60	69	64	553

Academies are publically-funded independent schools. They receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained school (plus additions to cover the support no longer provided by LAs). However Academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. Academies also have greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards – this includes more autonomy over how they deliver the curriculum.

This does not mean that Academies are not comparable in terms of attainment - they are still required to deliver core subjects, and given that they are still funded by the public purse, they still have an obligation to provide a good education for Essex children and therefore should continue to be included when calculating attainment levels across Essex.

3. Volunteering (Corporate Plan Progress Report, Page 19, Ref: 5.2.3)

Q: Members noted the downturn in respondents to our Resident Survey who state that they participate in volunteering activity, and wanted to understand how this area is progressing.

A: Whilst there has been a decline in the proportion of respondents to our Resident Survey stating that they engage in volunteering, our Volunteer Centres are reporting an improvement in the number of volunteers placed during 2012/13. This, alongside a small drop (of 271 people) in the number of volunteers registering with the centres, is seen as a positive success – given that trend comparisons are being made with 2011/12, which saw an influx of people registering to become Olympics Games makers. Further detail to support the positive progress made during 2012/13 with regards to volunteering activity can be found in the attached short report;