

29 August 2014

# **(Outline) Scoping statement - Hidden / actual costs of education**

In Herefordshire, educational progress and attainment of vulnerable groups of children is not as high as it should and could be. It is already recommended as part of the education strategy and in light of low performance, that Scrutiny undertake a scrutiny enquiry into the use of the pupil premium. This is the subject of another scoping statement.

One of the barriers to the highest educational outcomes can be the actual or hidden costs to parents of their children's education. In their deliberations regarding the change in school transport policy, Scrutiny were interested in understanding the cost impact this may have on some families, and access to bursary schemes. It was suggested and Scrutiny agreed that any such consideration could also helpfully consider the total costs of educating a child in a state school, and through to college to examine whether all that could be done was being done to ensure that parents were not disadvantaged from enabling their children to participate in a wide ranging educational experience, due to cost.

Areas include:

- Uniforms
- Learning materials
- Expected contributions for trips, including transport
- Expected contributions for activities, including clubs and sports

It was recognised that schools often made mention of being open to discuss individual family circumstances if a family had difficulties with contributions. Bursary schemes and assistance schemes were also discussed.

The Scrutiny work would need to consider:

- The total costs of educating a child in Herefordshire
- The opportunities for financial assistance
- The information about and take up of such opportunities
- Whether the current systems in place resulted in some children "missing out" on opportunities due the ability to pay, above the threshold which qualified families for state assistance
- Whether there were any links to wider issues in terms of different levels of achievement between socio economic groups

- Whether schools are aware of the cumulative impact of individual requests for funding on families
- Whether families have been able to influence the demands schools make on them in terms of contributions
- What role governors play in determining the cost of education in their school
- What improvements could be made to communications to families on these issues

### Conclusion

It is recommended that as the first stage of this work, Scrutiny ask officers to collate a range of information and data to inform the questions above, through desktop and survey information. This would enable Scrutiny to advise the successor scrutiny committee of any further more intensive scrutiny work which might be necessary.