

News Release from Nick Herbert MP

Immediate

Monday 20 March 2017

### **West Sussex MPs call for fair schools funding**

West Sussex MPs have called on the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, to amend the proposed new National Funding Formula to ensure a minimum level of funding for the County's schools.

In a formal response to the Stage 2 Consultation on the National Funding Formula, the MPs say that the proposed overall uplift of funding in West Sussex of 2.9 per cent – an increase of £14.3 million, or £122 per pupil – will be insufficient to meet rising costs faced by schools.

The letter has been signed by six of the County's eight MPs: Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West), Nick Herbert (Arundel & South Downs), Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham), Jeremy Quin (Horsham), Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) and Andrew Tyrie MP (Chichester). As Schools Minister and Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Education Secretary respectively, neither Nick Gibb MP nor Henry Smith are able to sign the letter.

The letter is the latest initiative from West Sussex MPs who have made the case for fair funding over an extended period, including calling parliamentary debates, asking parliamentary questions, meeting ministers, meeting head teachers and governors, and taking delegations of West Sussex head teachers to meet ministers and officials. Last week Nick Herbert, representing his West Sussex colleagues, was a member of a delegation of MPs which met the Prime Minister to express their view that the proposed schools funding formula needs to be changed.

In their letter, the West Sussex MPs raise concerns that, under the new Formula, a third of the schools in West Sussex will actually lose funding,

despite the County's starting point as the worst funded in the country. While 167 schools in West Sussex will gain funding, two will receive no change, and 94 will lose funding, many of them rural primary schools.

The MPs argue that schools in other areas which have historically had significantly better resourcing are far better placed to deal with these funding pressures. They point out that, while all schools in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets – the best funded in the country – will lose funding, with an average loss of 2.7 per cent, their funding per pupil will still be £6,718, compared to £4,257 in West Sussex.

The MPs say that West Sussex schools are facing the cumulative effect of underfunding over many years, so savings have already been made and school budgets are tight. They state: "Most schools in West Sussex would approach any further cost increases from a position of having already absorbed significant efficiencies. The regrettable delay of the introduction of the National Funding Formula by a year has exacerbated the pressures. Despite our request for some form of interim funding for West Sussex, as an authority with amongst the lowest levels of funding, this was not made available."

The MPs' letter points to a number of problems with the proposed National Funding Formula, including a limit on the extent to which very well funded schools can lose funding, which therefore "entrenches the same regional inequities that the formula was intended to remove". They say that data factored into the new Formula gives an inaccurate account of local operating costs, with a crude use of regional averages which masks the local economic realities of securing staffing and service provision beyond the London fringe.

The MPs also claim that 'additional needs' is given a disproportionate weight relative to core funding, a view shared by MPs in other low-funded authorities. They say: "The basic funding percentage under the existing proposed formula – approximately 72.5 per cent – is simply too low. It creates distortions which risk replacing one unfairness with another."

They go on to say: “We make it clear that we do not object to the principle that extra resources should be deployed to assist pupils with additional needs, since these negatively impact upon likely attainment. However it is important that every school, including those with very limited additional need funding, should secure the necessary appropriate level of resources to deliver the curriculum in an effective way to all pupils.”

The MPs propose that the “Formula is redesigned to provide a minimum level of funding for schools in each specified category, ensuring that all schools secure the necessary minimum operating costs required to deliver the curriculum regardless of the level of additional needs.”

They conclude:

“Despite our concerns about the proposed new Formula, we strongly reaffirm our support for fair schools funding and a national formula to redress the historic inequity in schools funding. From the many representations we have received, we know that we have the full support of parents, teachers and governors in West Sussex for fair funding.

“With the new pressure on school budgets there is a strong and justified feeling that the unfair treatment of our schools must now be properly remedied. We commend the Government for introducing a fair funding policy, but urge that the Formula is reconfigured to address the issues which we have set out.”

Nick Herbert said: “West Sussex MPs recognise the pressures on our local schools and have been calling for fair funding for some time.

“The Government has made a step in the right direction with its proposed new Funding Formula, which will mean extra resources for West Sussex, but it needs to go further.

“We will continue to fight for a fair deal for West Sussex and our local schools.”

ENDS

For further information please contact Michelle Taylor on 07928 529783.

**Notes for Editors**

1. The letter, which has been signed by Nick Herbert on behalf of West Sussex MPs, is attached.