

Statement from Cllr Joe Rayment

Recent analysis showed that Bath has the highest levels of inequality, when it comes to higher education entry, of any constituency in England and Wales.

This arises both because we have areas of considerable wealth and advantage, and because we have areas of considerable disadvantage and poverty.

Twerton is the most disadvantaged area of BANES with only 12% of young people going on to higher education, one in three children grow up in poverty, and the life expectancy for a man in Twerton is ten years less than that in other areas of the city.

There is only one way to end the cycle of intergenerational poverty, and that is to fund early years, primary and all education to the greatest extent that we can.

It is no coincidence that children in Twerton do not have educational outcomes comparable to their contemporaries in other areas of the same city.

When you are living in poverty, when you are surviving month to month, when you are having to choose between heating and eating, when you are faced with the threat of eviction, when you are working multiple jobs, or when you never yourself had a love of education, it is much harder to find the time to read - to or with - your child, to help them with their homework, and to instil in them a love of learning.

When you are having to seek the help of a food bank to feed you and your family, a solid healthy breakfast might not be top of your list of priorities.

It is for these reasons that I urge the panel to call in this decision. I understand that the national funding formula will have to be implemented in two years, and Twerton's schools will have to adapt to the new funding regime.

However, in the short term this council is presented with an opportunity. It can either go ahead with the decision as planned or it can chose to spend a relatively small amount of money to give a boost to Twerton's schools and others, while at the same time not disadvantaging other schools.

This is the option which has not been considered and which I pleaded with the cabinet member to consider before he made his decision.

And when he tells you, as he will, that no school will be worse off, because all schools will get a minimum 0.5% cash increase, just remember that 0.5% is not keeping up with the rise in costs.

So if this decision goes through, unamended, with your explicit support, you will be giving consent to a real terms cut to the education of the most disadvantaged children in our authority. Do not let that happen.