

## **WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **REPORT EXTRACT**

#### ***(a) Council tax and spending***

The ODPM has published details of 2005/06 council tax and budget requirement decisions for each local authority.

For county councils without responsibility for fire and rescue services I attach tables showing for 2005-06:

- Band D council tax
- Budget spend per person.

From these tables it can be seen that Worcestershire's Band D council tax is around £53 or 5.8% below the average for counties with similar service responsibilities. The range of spending per person is from the highest at £1,027 in Durham to £878 in Worcestershire which is the lowest. Worcestershire's figure is 14.5% below the highest and 7.5% below the average.

#### ***(b) Education comparisons***

The DfES has recently published statistics on the schools' workforce in England for 2004. Worcestershire has:

- 1.07% of pupils in England aged 3 to 4, 5 to 10 and over 11;
- 1.05% of full time equivalent teachers in England;
- 0.95% of full time equivalent support staff in England; and
- 0.96% of total education formula spending share excluding provision for central education costs and the Youth Service.

Worcestershire schools would need around 350 staff to raise its proportion of the national workforce to the pupil proportion.

Allocating schools formula spending share strictly proportionately to pupil numbers would mean increasing funding in Worcestershire by £23 million. This would be an increase of 10% or so.

Worcestershire has recognised that there are parts of England where socio-economic deprivation justifies the tilting of resources in favour of the most disadvantaged inner cities. However, the scale is questionable.

It is likely that Worcestershire would, for example, need at least £6 million to eliminate the difference in staffing of 350.

Pupils are taught to a national curriculum. Teachers operate within their own norms and ethos as a profession. There are statutory limits on the number of children that can be taught as a group. There is a national system of pay and reward with some refinement for regional weighting. There is a system of national attainment targets. There is a national system of inspection through OFSTED. There is a system of GCSE and A level examinations regulated to meet national standards. Equality of entitlement is not underpinned by parity of funding.

**(c) Social Services comparisons**

Similar statistics are now available for Social Services. Worcestershire has:

- 1.1% of the English population;
- 0.86% of the English Social Services Formula Spending Share; and
- 0.86% of the national Social Services local government workforce.

Raising Worcestershire Social Services Formula Spending Share from around 0.8% of the English total to 1.1% to reflect the county's relative population share would require an extra £29 million to be allocated. This would be an increase of over 20%.

It is understandable that localities that are most disadvantaged should attract relatively more funding than Worcestershire but this analysis shows the extent to which Worcestershire's need has been discounted to allocate resources elsewhere. Equality of entitlement is not underpinned by parity of funding.

As with the allocation of education resources similar questions arise over the allocation of Social Services funding.

**(d) Conclusion**

Where increasingly national standards apply then the scale of local variability is questionable. Equality of service entitlement has to be matched by parity of funding. It is suggested that these latest statistics reinforce the Council's concerns about the way the country's resources are allocated.