

24 February 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian,

In the last six weeks there has been significant coverage of the issues surrounding the future of post-16 provision for our students. The College remains concerned however, that the only proposal now being considered by the County Council is not in the long term interests of our students or for Rutland as a whole. In the recent public meetings the County Council made it clear that, if the current proposal is rejected, they have no plan 'B'. The College believes this unacceptable; there are a number of alternatives that could and should be considered by the County.

In each of the public meetings it was asked many times why we are not involved in these proposals; the following attempts to explain the issues which have led to our opposition to the proposals.

## THE ISSUES

### 1. The role of the admissions authority and the post-16 'trust'.

The body responsible for college admissions; under the current proposals this will be CBEC. The trust proposal also requires, according to the Council, the transfer of our land. It was within this context we sought specialist legal advice which is summarised here:

- the new Sixth Form provision will be an integral part of Casterton under the day to day management and control of the principal of Casterton and under the overall jurisdiction of the Casterton governing body;
- the trust will have no direct power or involvement with how the Sixth Form provision is made or managed;
- under admissions law, the governing body of Casterton would be the admission authority for the whole school, including the Sixth Form;
- the trust would have no direct powers in relation to the setting or implementation of the Sixth Form admission arrangements or the way in which the provision is managed;
- the expression 'Rutland County College' is, in effect, no more than a badge for the proposed Casterton Sixth Form.

In respect to this advice the College governors cannot support proposals which require the transfer of the College's land into a trust controlled, in part, by the County Council and Tresham, without the associate powers of being an admissions authority for post-16 provision.

## 2. The use of Catmose College funds to support the Council's post-16 proposals.

The County Council has demanded that all partners contribute to the transition costs and any ongoing deficit associated with the post-16 provision. The College has asked for advice on this matter from our legal advisors, the College auditors and the County Council's auditors; the advice is consistent.

- The College cannot fund another college's provision (in this case Casterton); the budget we receive can only be spent on our existing 11-16 students. The decision by the County Council to make Casterton the sole admissions authority makes it impossible for the College to contribute in this way.

## 3. The role of Catmose College in the creation of the current proposals?

The College had worked with the Council, alongside UCC, CBEC and Tresham, for a year and, by July of 2009, had reached an understanding which we were to take to our governing bodies by 18 September. Under these proposals all three colleges were to be involved on an equal footing. On August 21 we received a letter from Carol Chambers which significantly modified these proposals to one which proposed the creation of a Casterton Sixth Form, with no alternative.

In the public meeting at Casterton (4 February) it became clear that this change in the 'direction of travel' was made at a cabinet meeting during the summer, that Heather Wells (the portfolio holder) was not present and that no minutes were published (as it was an 'informal' meeting). As a result we do not understand why such a decision was made. The College was not contacted to discuss difficulties with the original proposals (until the letter of August 21) and there has been no compromise in the County's position in light of the concerns raised by ourselves and many others in the community.

The College remains disappointed in the way the County Council has acted which has, as a result, led to such divisive proposals going forward to consultation. We remain willing to rejoin discussions about other constructive options as an equal partner.

## 4. The role of Tresham

We recognise that Tresham have offered to transfer some of the assets they hold in Rutland College to assist the establishment of the new Rutland County College, although it is not clear which of their land is to be transferred.

We believe more should be done by the County, and perhaps others with influence, to petition Tresham governors to return to the County, land and assets which they obtained when they first set up Rutland College. This would ensure a sounder basis for post 16 education when they leave. If necessary, given the short time scale, they may need to be prevailed upon to delay their departure; this need would become acute if the current Council proposals are defeated with nothing immediately to replace them.

## 5. The future

We do not yet know Tresham plans for the land and assets of Rutland College. The County Council has, we believe, insufficient funding committed to make their plans past September 2010 a reality. The College is concerned that by agreeing to these proposals without significantly more detail and assurances we would be jeopardising the future opportunities of our students.

We would wish published:

- the business plan the Council has for the next three years;
- an outline plan of what the new post-16 buildings will consist of, where they will be located and how they will be funded.

## 6. Alternative Proposals

In each of the public meetings it was stated that, if these proposals are rejected, there is no plan 'B'. The College believes there are other options well worth exploring.

- The July 2009 proposals, which were substantive and which, we understood, the DCSF (Department for Children Schools and Family) had approved, could be considered. These may require 'tweaking' but would provide a solid foundation.
- New College Stamford has offered to become the admissions authority, which could have several attractions, notably a reduction in financial risk to the County (as they have considerable post-16 expertise). Also Stamford College has agreed in principle to a governance model involving the three 11-16 colleges.
- The preferred model of an independent post-16 provision on the lines of Rutland College before Tresham became involved.

Although the County Council has dismissed all of these alternatives they have not provided any substantive evidence from the DCSF, the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) or others as to why they have done so. Where is the analysis that proves an independent sixth form college is less viable than the split site Casterton model? Where is it that the DCSF says that an independent college is not possible? What are the numbers in Melton which make their proposal viable? Why has the Stamford offer been rejected outright?

We do not believe that, if the current proposal is rejected, there will be no post-16 provision; the County Council has a statutory responsibility to provide it and there are alternatives that could be considered.

These proposals will be discussed at the Council meeting at 7pm on Monday 8 March. If you share our concerns and wish to ask a question at the Council meeting please read the following document which explains how to do so.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Williams  
On behalf of the governing body

## HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY AT A COUNCIL MEETING

The Council offers all members of the public the opportunity to submit a petition, deputation and/or written question. If you wish to submit a petition, present a deputation or ask a question, you must give written notification to the Head of Democratic Services at the Council Offices **no later than 4.30pm on the second working day before the meeting at which you wish to present it** (for the meeting on Monday 8 March, by 4.30pm on Thursday 4 March).

### ASKING A QUESTION

You must indicate who will ask the question at the meeting and ensure that your written notification to the Head of Democratic Services includes the questioner's address.

At the meeting:

- Each question must be restricted to a single topic.
- The total time allowed by the Chairman, for each questioner including the response will be **5 minutes**.
- If the person who is to ask the question is not present at the meeting, the question will not be considered, unless the question was to be asked by a representative and s/he is absent, then the person who gave written notification may still ask the question.
- After a question has received a reply, the questioner may ask one supplementary question for the purposes of clarifying the reply.
- Every question will be asked and answered without discussion.

Extracts taken from Rutland County Council website:

<http://www.rutland.gov.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=10703>