

CONSULTATION MEETING STATEMENT ON THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNING BODY REGARDING THE ACADEMY PROPOSAL

At the Parents and Community Consultation Meeting held on Wednesday 7th January, Philip Mason (Chair of Governors) clarified the position of the Governing Body regarding the Academy proposal.

He said.....

The governors recognise a history of under-achievement at the College and over time they have been prepared to examine a wide range of possible strategies to improve attainment, for example, opportunities provided by the Local Authority review process, The National Strategies, The National Challenge, the Northampton Area Partnership and the Northampton 14-19 Partnership.

In September, governors received a presentation from the Academy sponsors. The governors believed that the proposal, then in its early stages, had some strengths but also weaknesses. Following governor discussion it was agreed to support further development of the proposal to the point of production a written Expression of Interest and a consultation with interested parties.

It believed that development would be an iterative process and the consultation would provide the opportunity to explore with all parties the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. After full consultation, if the proposal had sufficient merit, it would receive Governing Body approval for further stages. If not, governors would withdraw support.

The Local Authority statement on the governor position is fair. It indicates to the public that governors have not a preconceived position. **The wording of Sponsors statement, to the lay reader, could easily suggest that the governors have unanimously agreed to back the content of the proposal. This is not, and never has been, the case.**

The Governors nominated two Foundation Governors with whom the project sponsors could liaise. The sponsors only invited these governors to one meeting, where the agenda was to determine the current financial position of Unity College. This is an aspect that has little relevance to how the educational experience of young people could be improved through an academy. No further liaison with governors was initiated.

At no stage was the Governing Body informed that the consultation on the Academy proposal and the Local Authority consultation to Close the College would be run concurrently. Governors are dismayed that this should have occurred.

There is a feeling that the Unity College community has been bounced into the current scenario and manipulated.

Governors entered into the process in good faith, they now feel bruised.

The sponsors and the Local Authority consultation documents were only received by governors on 23rd December. This is regarded as disrespectful to the body that has accountability for the well-being of students and staff of the College.

Because of this late notification governors, and many parents were denied the opportunity to hear the Parents and Community Presentation by sponsors on 15th December, although we now know that two of the sponsors failed to attend.

Governors will conduct their own consultation with students, staff and parents, as is required under the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for Governors when a major change to a school/college is proposed.

Because of the failure of the sponsors and the Local Authority to provide information on their consultations in a timely manner, the Governing Body has formally proposed in writing that all consultation should remain open until Thursday 29th January. This accounts for the working days lost to consultation because the meeting on 15th December must be considered null and void.

In summary:

The governors have not yet formed a view of the merits of the sponsors' Academy proposal. Until tonight they have not heard the sponsors' considered presentations or had the opportunity to ask questions on their considered strategies for improvement.

In their considerations during the next three weeks governors will have the interests of the students, parents, staff and community as their only criteria for assessment of the merits of the Academy proposal.

The expressions of the views of these parties will be given very serious consideration in any collective recommendation the governing body may make.