

Hastings & Rother Post-16 Review Report of the Project Board to East Sussex County Council Cabinet June 2004

1. Overview

1.1 This report provides information on and results of the public consultation on the preferred model for post-16 learning in Hastings and Rother. The consultation extended from 27 February to 28 May 2004.

1.2 The report also describes revisions to the model, as a result of comments received during the consultation.

2. Recommendation

2.2 The Cabinet of East Sussex County Council and the Council of Sussex Learning and Skills Council are asked to consider the outcomes of the consultation; to approve this revised proposal from the Project Board; and to approve progress to the next stage in the re-organisation process, which is the refinement and publication of the formal proposal.

2.3 The model comprises a 'family of colleges' united under one Corporation Board (Hastings and Rother New College) that would guide the strategic development of post-16 provision in the area. Each of the four colleges would develop distinct provision in different locations across Hastings and Rother.

3. Introduction

3.1 The review of post-16 education and training in Hastings and Rother offers a unique chance to transform learning opportunities for people in the area. The timing of the review - taking place alongside social and economic regeneration programmes and the creation of a university centre for the area - allows for imaginative and innovative developments that will provide for the future success of young people and adults. The regeneration work in Hastings and Rother, which is being led by the Task Force, supported by SEEDA, identifies the centrality of high quality, coherent and socially inclusive education to the future success of businesses, communities, individuals and the wider economy of the area.

3.2 This proposal has been developed over a period of two and half years. Hastings and Rother New College (HRNC) provides a model for post-16 learning that will have the capacity to respond to the challenges of the Government's Skills Strategy and to deliver the strategic transformation outlined in the Government's vision for learning and skills (Success For All). It has been created to provide the framework for a varied and sustainable curriculum offering high quality opportunities for young people aged 14 – 19, as envisaged by the Tomlinson Working Group. The model has been developed and refined as a result of many contributions throughout the period of the review. It aims to be inclusive; to improve coherence of provision; to increase the range of learning opportunities available; to build on areas of strength and raise standards and to widen access to learning opportunities. It will promote excellence, working to enable all of its learners to achieve the best outcomes they can. It includes the growth of a local 'College for Business' that will support the training and development needs of local employers and contribute to improving the

skills and qualification base of people in the local area. It also provides a strong basis on which to establish and grow the local university centre, helping more young people and adults to progress to higher education.

3.3 The review process has offered opportunities for stakeholders to engage with the central issues for the area and to assess different models for development. An inspection, in Spring 2004, by OfSTED of 14 –19 provision in East Sussex clearly highlights the inspectorate's view of issues to be addressed in the area, and draws attention to low levels of achievement and added-value. The report also commends the LEA and LSC for the outstanding quality of their leadership, which they describe as 'excellent, clear-sighted and determined'. They recognise the strong drive for improvement and noted that:

'The strategic partners have a clear understanding of the weaknesses in provision that require attention, and appropriate action is being taken. For example, the local LSC and East Sussex LEA have provided strong leadership in producing far-reaching proposals for re-organising 14 – 19 education in Hastings and Rother.'

'In Hastings and Rotherthe local LSC and East Sussex LEA have provided strong leadershipand have not wavered from their intent to implement changes designed to improve participation and raise achievement levels in the area.'

3.4 The review process has also been examined by the East Sussex County Council Scrutiny Committee. Their report will be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 29 June, 2004.

4. The Consultation

4.1 The Process

4.1.1 The consultation was designed to encourage a wide range of responses from the communities in Hastings and Rother through a planned programme of activities. The consultation document, 'Opportunity and Excellence for All', described the preferred model and invited responses in a variety of formats. The document itself was available as an electronic document, in Braille, on audiotape and in large print. 55,000 copies of the document were distributed across the area through direct mailings to individuals and groups. Copies were also available via community venues, including libraries.

4.1.2 The consultation included 55 meetings; these are listed in Appendix A. Five major public meetings were led by the Director of Education & Libraries for ESCC and the Executive Director of Sussex LSC as well as senior officers of both organisations. Each school and college was offered separate meetings for governors, staff and students. Over 400 learners were directly engaged in meetings. Employer and community groups were consulted, and 'drop-in' information sessions were offered in public venues – a sports hall, cinema and leisure pool. In addition to these formal meetings there have been ongoing discussions with politicians, headteachers, union groups, colleges, architects, SEEDA and others, seeking to achieve a consensus on how the necessary and agreed improvements could be secured.

4.2 Results and Analysis

The results have been analysed and reported in three different ways:

4.2.1 *An analysis of origin of responses*

4.2.1.1 An analysis of **all the responses** received in the full range of possible formats (consultation form, pre-printed slip, e-mail, letter and phone) identifies that overall 787 were in favour of the proposals, 881 against, with 10 not expressing a strong view either way. This includes all those returns that had been supported through a school or college. In addition, two petitions against the proposal were supported with a total of 424 signatures. It was not possible to ascertain how many of these signatories had already submitted other types of response.

4.2.1.2 A further analysis of the responses is contained in Appendix B – Analysis of Consultation responses (this analysis is based on the often partial information provided by respondents, so these figures must be treated with caution). Broadly, the overall response rate was 3.8% (of the 55,000 documents circulated 2,100 responses were received). The largest number of responses were received from students at either William Parker School or Hastings College of Art and Technology. Of those respondents who indicated where they were resident, most replies came from Hastings with only a small number of replies received from the Rother area.

4.2.2 *An analysis of the issues raised during consultation events*

This analysis is contained in Appendix C - Issues arising from the consultation process. The central issues have been listed and addressed in paragraph 4.5 below.

4.2.3 *A broad analysis of the responses from representative groups*

Detailed responses have been received from governing bodies and representative groups:

Organisation	Key points
1066 Chamber of Commerce	In favour of a radical solution.
Bexhill 14-19 Partnership	Cautious support for the proposal with questions about governance and management, including level of delegation and administrative costs. Highlight the need for a faith dimension.
Bexhill College Governors	See significant risks and flaws in proposals. Support a Tertiary Board rather than a collegiate structure (i.e. one with a co-ordinating rather than a strategic leadership role).
Bexhill College Management Response	See significant risks and flaws in proposals with issues regarding quality and standards, choice, staffing, cost effectiveness and governance. Support a Tertiary Board rather than a collegiate structure.
Bexhill College Staff Response	See significant risks and flaws in proposals. Support a Tertiary Board rather than a collegiate structure.
Bexhill College Union Response	Generally against the proposals – believe proposal will not improve choice or quality, against the Rother College, and want a 'robust tertiary board'.
Diocese of Chichester	Neither for nor against the proposals. Would wish to see focus on pastoral systems, meeting the needs of faith groups and the provision of RE at level 3 in the new college.

East Sussex Schools Organisation Committee	Noted the proposals and identified the need to address spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the new college. Issues regarding staff terms and conditions and wish to see ongoing professional development for staff in the new college.
Filsham Valley School Governing Body	Against the proposals – see them as detrimental to the future of FVS and see no added value for St. Leonards. Support for the federated sixth form proposal.
Hastings Alliance of Sixth Forms (student councils of the five Hastings secondary schools)	Against the proposals but supports the federated sixth form proposal.
HCAT	In favour of the proposals. Identified features that would need to be included in the new college.
Helenswood School Governing Body	Against the proposals – predict a deteriorating effect on participation and achievement. Support the federated sixth form proposal.
Helenswood School Students' Response	Against the proposals see it as a reduction in choice and an unwanted proposal.
Hillcrest School Governing Body	Acknowledge the need for change. Support the federated sixth form proposal, but, if this is not possible, would support the preferred option, with modifications and guarantees about role of schools and support (including funding) for transition. Particular concerns include impact on 11-18 schools and recruitment and retention of teachers.
NATFHE at Hastings CAT	In favour of the proposals – believe proposal will raise aspirations, improve skill base and contribute to local regeneration.
National Union of Teachers	Serious reservations about staffing (including differences between terms & conditions), impact on Bexhill College and quality of transport infrastructure.
Pestalozzi Village Trust	In favour of the proposals
Robertsbridge Community College	In favour of the proposals but questioned the need for Rother College and its ability to provide adequate level 1&2 courses.
Rother Community Links	General support for proposals – comments on transport, use of other venues and partnership arrangements.
Rother District Council	In favour of the proposals
Rye District Council for Voluntary Service	General support but concern regarding lack of provision in Rye and the proposed college in Battle.
Sixth Form Colleges' Forum	Opposed to the proposal. Wish to preserve - and create - independent, free-standing, separate colleges.
Sussex Enterprise	In favour of the proposals – supports improvements in skill base and regeneration proposals.
The Grove School Governing Body	Acknowledge need for change and give cautious support for broad thrust of proposal. Reservations about effects on staff and the need for Rother College.
Thomas Peacocke Community	Support for the proposals but with no particular commitment to four colleges. Would like to see

College	outreach provision in Rye.
Tomorrow's People – Charity	Neither for nor against the proposals but issues around the needs of vulnerable people.

4.3 ***The Issues Raised***

4.3.1 The consultation revealed wide agreement that improvement is necessary for the area. There is also significant accord regarding the values and aims of the model; where there is disagreement, it is about the method of achieving them. There is positive support from many respondents for the inclusive nature of the proposals, for the emphasis placed on increasing vocational choice, for the urgent need to address declining standards and for the direct and essential link with regeneration in the area.

4.3.2 However, there are concerns about aspects of the proposal – particularly the change of status of the Hastings Schools from 11 –18 to 11- 16. There are also concerns from Bexhill College about the loss of autonomy, authority and the ability to respond flexibly and rapidly to changing circumstances.

4.3.3 Responses to the main issues raised during the consultation, based on the assumption that proposals for change are approved, are detailed on the following pages:

Issue 1 - The loss of school sixth forms

<p>Parents, pupils, governors and staff in Hastings schools are concerned that the loss of their sixth forms will reduce choice, increase travel and be less attractive to students as a progression option. There is also a concern that a change of institution at 16 will lead to fewer students progressing to full time education or training. Parents and students expressed their desire for continuity, strong pastoral care and a secure learning environment.</p>

<p><i>(Hillcrest School - Governors' response)</i></p>

<p><i>(Young Person's Charter – Letter)</i></p>

<p><i>(The Grove School – Governors' response)</i></p>

Comments

- i. Given the level of concern expressed, the Project Board recognises that the County Council and Sussex LSC will need to be assured that the desired outcomes for the area cannot be achieved alongside the continuation of the Hastings schools' sixth forms. The reasons for proposing closure have been extensively rehearsed during the consultation. These include: issues relating to levels of achievement, declining rolls, trends of participation in some school sixth forms and overall impact on the nature of provision. These issues remain valid.
- ii. The 'Federated Sixth Form' proposal (see below) recognises the validity of some of these issues, and has incorporated elements of the preferred model in response to them e.g. provision on a single site, the need for an overarching planning authority and the four college model. The LEA and LSC have discussed with schools' colleagues, whether it would be possible to combine the two models and enable the preservation of 11 – 18 school status. It is the view of the Project Board that, for reasons set out in paragraph 4.6 below, this is not possible.
- iii. The proposed model includes creation of the Hastings Sixth Form College. It is expected that this college will build on existing expertise in sixth forms. The model offers colleagues from Hastings schools structured opportunities to develop, manage, teach in and influence the creation and operation of the college.
- iv. The new college will invest in the development of a strong tutorial system, and will develop an entitlement to support to ensure that students receive high standards of pastoral care at each of the four colleges.
- v. The new sixth form college will offer accessible, high quality facilities and resources in a sustainable provision for all Hastings students, and for those who choose to attend the college from Rother.
- vi. There will be a wide range of 'A' levels on offer for those able to follow a level 3 programme and for some students, tailor-made transitional courses will still be available on school sites.

Issue 2 – Increased difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff in Hastings schools.

The parents, pupils, governors and staff in Hastings schools are concerned that the loss of their sixth forms will have a detrimental effect on the recruitment of new staff and the retention of current staff. They state that potential staff would be less attracted to teaching in an 11 – 16 school in Hastings than in one offering opportunities for level 3 work. It is feared that a negative impact on staffing will have an adverse effect on achievement. There is also a concern that existing experienced teachers will be lost due to a period of uncertainty.

(The Federation document para 3.3)

(Hillcrest School - Governors' response)

(Young Person's Charter – Letter)

(The Grove School – Governors' response)

Comments

- i. The concerns held by 11 – 18 schools regarding their ability to recruit and retain teachers if they were to become 11 –16 are acknowledged. Generally, there is not a significant difference in recruitment and retention issues between 11- 16 and 11 – 18 schools, but it is recognised that recruitment to Hastings Schools may be more challenging than in other areas of East Sussex.
- ii. There will be an expectation that HRNC will work in close collaboration with all local schools, and that – subject to sufficient suitable candidates being available – a significant proportion of the Hastings Sixth Form College staff would be appointed on a seconded basis from the federation schools (see point iii below); other staff would be appointed as permanent core staff of the college. Appropriate selection procedures would be utilised.
- iii. The planned ‘Excellence Cluster’ which will succeed the EAZ and also include Rye schools could, with the two new colleges in Hastings, form a 14 –19 federation which would support shared curriculum planning, development and teaching for this age group across the town.
- iv. The newly-created 11-16 schools engaged with the new Hastings Sixth Form College could continue to promote the opportunities to teach post-16 when recruiting staff. It would be possible to offer the chance to teach within the 14 –19 federation.

Issue 3 – The need to increase suitable provision for Year 12 pupils in Hastings needing to take a level 1 programme.

Staff in the Hastings schools are concerned that the transfer to a new college will be difficult for some students who may not be ready to progress to an appropriate course on a college site or to employment. The concern is that these students could be lost to education and training at the end of Year 11.

(The Federation document para 3.4)

(Young Person’s Charter – Letter)

(Helenswood School Governing Body – Response)

(Hillcrest School Governing Body – Response)

Comments

- i. Planning for the new college should include the development of transitional programmes at Entry Level / Level 1 to be based on school sites for individuals who would benefit.
- ii. These learners would be enrolled at the college, and funding would pass to the schools to run ‘tailor made’ programmes.
- iii. The courses would be an integral part of the post-16 curriculum and would be advertised in the HRNC prospectus.
- iv. There is potential for strong links with new Junior / Youth Apprenticeship and Entry to Employment (e2e) programmes to enhance opportunities for these young people.

Issue 4 – The need for a Rother College.

Parents, staff and governors across Hastings & Rother are concerned about the location and size of the proposed Rother College. The location on the site of Claverham Community College is perceived as a way of providing Claverham with a sixth form. Furthermore, the proposed size of college at 350 students is seen as not being financially viable as a single institution and as not being large enough to offer an inclusive curriculum.

(see Bexhill College Governors' response para 2b)

(Bexhill College – Staff Response)

(The Grove School – Governors' response)

(Thomas Peacocke- Response to Consultation Questions)

(Filsham Valley School Response)

(Headteacher, Robertsbridge CC)

(NUT East Sussex Division –Response)

(Rye and District Council for Voluntary Service – Letter)

Comments

- i. The Rother College provides improved accessibility for some students, and will broaden the range of learning environments available across HRNC.
- ii. Inclusion and equality of opportunity will be a core value of HRNC, and courses at levels 1 & 2 will be available at the college to meet the needs of young people in the area.
- iii. There is a clear opportunity to build on current successful 11-16 provision to offer high quality progression routes to further qualifications.
- iv. HRNC will encourage collaborative working to provide innovative solutions to extending and diversifying the range of provision for the rural area e.g. through links with providers of work-based learning, with voluntary organisations, and with ESLP / Sussex Careers Service on e2e. The use of e-learning will also be promoted.
- v. Alternative locations for Rother College have been explored but no suitable alternative to the site at CCC has been identified.
- vi. The site at Claverham will only accommodate a college of about 350 students, but this is an important step in meeting the needs of students who live in this area.

Issue 5 – The loss of independence of Bexhill College.

The proposed dissolution of the Bexhill College corporation is a concern for staff, governors and students at the college. The degree of delegation of decision-making authority, budgets and prescribed responsibilities of the College Council are seen as critical elements in allowing each college to maintain its distinctive identity and develop its provision successfully. Bexhill College would like to see a Tertiary Board instead of a new Corporation Board to provide the strategic planning framework for the area.

(see Bexhill College Governors' response para 1a,b,c)

(Sixth Form Colleges' Forum – Response)

Comments

- i. There has been wide support for a structure that will ensure coherent, integrated provision for the Hastings and Rother area. Whatever structure is employed for achieving this, it will inevitably provide some challenge to the existing autonomy and independence of individual institutions.
- ii. The possibility of creating a Tertiary Board was examined as part of the work undertaken during the consultation of 2003, and that work has been reviewed more recently. It has been concluded that a new Corporate Body provides the most effective means of achieving area-wide curriculum coherence and clarity of leadership.
- iii. Within the proposed model, the differing roles/responsibilities of the **College Councils, Tertiary Board and Corporation Board** will provide for clear and appropriate levels of delegation (see diagram and chart below – The Proposal). The intention of the “family of four colleges” model is to promote delegation of responsibilities and budgets to the point closest to provision for learners: a guiding principle of modern public service.
- iv. It is likely that the scheme for delegating the budget will reflect the basis on which LSC funding is allocated to the whole college (at present this is on the basis of learner numbers and priority groups / provision). At this stage it is not possible to be prescriptive about the methodology for internal allocation of resources - that will have to be agreed by the HRNC Corporation.
- v. The model encourages Bexhill College and others in the family to create their local identity and distinctiveness through the joint work of the College Council, Principal and staff, along with the particular curriculum offer and services to students. This work will include clear responsibilities, targets and budgets.
- vi. It would be possible for the Bexhill College Council to evolve from the composition of the existing Corporation, and for the term of office of council members to be five years in the first instance in order to provide stability in the period of transition.

Issue 6 – The potential reduction in ‘A’ level provision at Bexhill College.

Students, staff, governors and parents connected to Bexhill College predict a significant loss of students to the new Rother College. It is feared that the loss of students studying at level 3 will mean a reduction in the ‘A’ level course offer, with a subsequent impact on the recruitment and retention of specialist teaching staff.
(*Bexhill College Governors’ response paras 2b and 2d*)

Comments

- i. There will be strategic oversight by the proposed Tertiary Board that will monitor and plan the pattern of provision across the area and ensure the efficient use of all available resources
- ii. Some reduction in the ‘A’ level offer may be necessary, but any excess capacity should be balanced by the broadening of the curriculum to include more level 2 courses. This would meet a local demand expressed by the two Bexhill 11-16 schools.

- iii. These concerns should be placed in the context of a rapidly developing new 14 – 19 curriculum framework, as recommended by the Tomlinson Committee. The range, type and nature of qualifications available in the future may alleviate the concerns that currently exist about preserving AS / A2 provision in one location.
- iv. Bexhill College will have the opportunity to contribute to the planning and development of Rother College. Strong and fruitful curriculum links between all the colleges are expected to develop, including shared teaching where appropriate.
- v. If the proposals are accepted, the LSC will provide development funding which will support the participation of staff from schools and colleges (including secondments) in project teams that will define and develop arrangements for the HRNC.

Issue 7 – Different terms and conditions of teaching staff

Staff in 11 –18 schools and at Bexhill College expressed concerns about the potential for deleterious changes to their terms and conditions of service. The current national picture is that FE colleges, on average, have lower average pay rates than sixth form colleges, which in turn have slightly lower rates of pay than school teachers. Concerns were also expressed about the new college's ability to attract and retain high calibre teachers if pay rates were not set at an acceptable level.

Comments

- i. Although rates of pay vary across the three sectors (FE, sixth form colleges and schools), the contracts are also different – with varying teaching hours, holidays and expectations regarding preparation and marking / cover / attendance at events. These differences will need to be understood before comparisons are made, and work has been done to compare and contrast the key points at issue. Point (iv) below sets the financial context.
- ii. All staff employed at the two existing colleges, and those who transfer from schools, will have their terms and conditions protected under TUPE.
- iii. School staff who are seconded to the new college will continue to be employed by their school on the prevailing terms and conditions.
- iv. The financial projections for HRNC show that the income of HRNC will be sufficient to continue to engage staff on current terms and conditions. There should also be scope to match the sector norms for pay awards.
- v. In establishing the new college, the LSC expects the new Corporation Board to be seen as a good employer, recruiting and retaining the best staff possible and remunerating them appropriately.

Issue 8 – Weaknesses in the transport infrastructure

The majority of people consulted cited the poor transport infrastructure across the area as a major factor in accessing local provision. These difficulties are outlined in many responses regarding staff and student travel between sites.

(The Federation document para 3.3)

(Bexhill College Governors - Response para 3)

(Hillcrest School Governing Body – Response)

Comments

- i. Student movement between sites will be the exception.
- ii. Teaching staff movement between sites will also be limited. Each college will have a 'core' of teaching staff who would be based primarily on one site. There will be opportunities for shared teaching and some teaching staff with specialist roles may well be required to work on more than one site.
- iii. There will be direct liaison with transport companies in order to co-ordinate services and timetables. A new college of this size will be able to exert a greater influence on such discussions than any existing organisation. HRNC will be expected to plan access for students to its programmes, with the assistance of the LSC, LEA and local transport organisations
- iv. Learndirect centres in community venues will also be associated with the college, which will promote innovative IT-based approaches to learning in its centres, in workplaces and in the community, including partner schools.
- v. The current network of local community education centres is expected to function at a similar, if not greater, level of access points; although individual centres will develop their provision to meet changing needs.

4.4 *The 'Federated Sixth Form' proposal*

4.4.1 Towards the end of the consultation period, a revised 'Federated Sixth Form' proposal was received from the Hastings schools (see Appendix D). This is a somewhat different proposal from the one developed previously by the schools in 2003. The proposal suggests a 'Federated 16+ Centre', which would be 'a new and separate entity', located on a single site and operating with the other colleges under a Tertiary Board which would plan and co-ordinate all post-16 provision in Hastings and Rother. It recognises the importance of creating greater curriculum choice, improved collaboration between providers pre-16 as well as post-16, and of seizing the opportunity to develop 21st century facilities for teaching and learning.

4.4.2 Within this arrangement, the schools' proposal suggests that Hastings schools would continue to hold 11 – 18 status. Funding for the new Federated Centre would be via the schools, pooling the resources they would receive for Year 12 and 13 students, who would remain on the roll of their original school.

4.4.2 There are many points of similarity between the schools' proposal and that for a second college for Hastings within the 'family of four colleges' model. These include:

- i. Commitment to a single site, which should not be a continuing school site, with a single Director/Principal
- ii. Commitment to being part of a single organisation, through a 'tertiary board', with powers ceded in some way by governing bodies
- iii. Commitment to working in collaboration with other providers, including HCAT and Bexhill College, and the special schools
- iv. Curriculum planning across the 14-19 continuum, for students of all abilities
- v. Commitment to links with HE

- vi. Commitment to appointing the best (i.e. most appropriate) staff for post-16 work
- vii. Common prospectus and application form for all post-16 providers in the area
- viii. Improved facilities for 21st century learning, including use of ICT
- ix. Dedicated central administration

4.4.3 These are all significant strengths of the proposal. There are some important weaknesses, which are closely inter-related, and which affect the strength of leadership within the model:

- i. It is difficult to see how the schools could retain 11 – 18 status without fundamentally weakening the overall model. There could be no guarantee that future governing bodies would feel bound by an agreement to participate in a ‘tertiary board’ arrangement, especially if some schools or colleges were significantly stronger than others
- ii. HCAT and Bexhill College would retain their separate status, and no partner would have the opportunity to benefit from the overall financial strength of the larger single college
- iii. The tertiary board would essentially have the status of a co-ordinator rather than a strategic leader
- iv. Without the pooled funding for the overarching college, elements of the model are unlikely to be viable
- v. Without the creation of a single site, the benefits to sixth form students are likely to be marginal – they will only be able to access greater choice by travelling between school sites
- vi. The single site is not achievable without substantial LSC capital funding, which is only available for a college within the FE framework; the County Council does not have capital resources to commit to this development
- vii. Competition and unplanned duplication could remain a feature of provision if single institutions with target student numbers and financial accountabilities operate in what would be essentially either an informal network or one dependent on fixed term contractual arrangements
- viii. The transformation of learner participation and achievement expected as an outcome of the proposed model is less likely in an arrangement where current schools and colleges retain their existing identities for post 16, with their weaknesses as well as strengths
- ix. Governance arrangements are unclear and could take the federated institutions into new legal territory as well as providing challenges for the multiple managers drawn from separate institutions, with a danger of management by committee rather than accountable leadership supported by partners and stakeholders

4.4.4 Discussions with the Hastings headteachers about their proposal have sought to identify a way of including as many of its key elements as possible whilst retaining the opportunities for improvement in standards, participation and choice which are the aims of the preferred option. The revised proposal seeks to address the schools’ particular concerns about collaboration between providers, continuity and progression in curriculum and pastoral support for students - which is fundamental to current 14 – 19 developments, and recruitment and retention of teachers. For the reasons given above, the proposal does not include provision for the schools to retain 11 -18 status. It is therefore proposed that the following specific features should be included in the revised ‘preferred model’:

- i. The creation of a **14 – 19 federation** for Hastings and Rye. This acknowledges the natural relationship, due to transport links, that Rye will have with a town centre sixth form college.
- ii. A **strong and significant role for the Hastings and Rye schools** in the planning and operation of the Hastings Sixth Form College through membership of the College Council and of the proposed Hastings & Rother Tertiary Board. (see chart below)
- iii. Formal arrangements for **staff seconded from the schools** to work at the new Hastings Sixth Form College (see Issue 1 above). A substantial proportion of school staff could be appointed on a seconded or permanent basis to the new Hastings Sixth Form College. Through the mechanisms of the College Councils and proposed Tertiary Board, schools should be able to manage the recruitment and appointment of staff to a mutual advantage.
- iv. Formal and informal arrangements for **schools with specialist status** to contribute towards curriculum development within their specialism – both pre-11 and post-16. This could be supported by formal arrangements for the ‘purchase’ of services and facilities from those schools by HRNC. This could also include shared promotion of courses, services and facilities in areas of specialism to employers and the wider community.
- v. The development of an individualised **transition programme** initially based in Hastings and Rye schools. These programmes would meet the needs of those more vulnerable students who would benefit from additional support at Year 12 and who might otherwise not have stayed in learning. Schools could provide this programme, on behalf of the HRNC, for some students, enabling them to make a successful transition to further education or work-based learning. These courses would be advertised in the HRNC prospectus as an integral part of the curriculum offer.
- vi. The adoption of **performance targets**. Targets for the college as a whole, delivered by each college in the ‘family of four’, would be contained in HRNC’s three-year development plan. Targets that specifically relate to the performance of the new Hastings Sixth Form College would provide an additional level of accountability, and would encourage continuous improvement.

4.5 **Views on proposed college sites**

4.5.1 The consultation encouraged responses on the location of the fourth college – Hastings Sixth Form College. Of those 717 who responded using the consultation response form, relatively few completed the questions about site options for College D. It should be noted that, although the William Parker site generated some support from respondents, the governors of the Sports College are not minded to support this development on their land

Plaza	Havelock Road	WP	Not WP	Not Town Centre	Not Claverham	Other
18	16	29	10	12	33	Ore station (2); Rye (2); Thomas Peacocke, Upper Wilting Farm; Ore Valley; Marina; Summerfields Leisure Centre; Colleges C&D on one shared site

4.5.2 The consultation as a whole (including discussions at the consultative meetings) showed that the majority opinion favoured a town centre site as the location for the fourth college. However, some concerns were expressed about this option, including safety and security of learners and the need to co-ordinate transport services. Many learners consulted expressed the view that the town centre would provide a more accessible location for a college.

4.5.3 Discussions are continuing with SEEDA and their architects to ensure that the site on Havelock Road has the capacity for the facilities required to support a broad and balanced curriculum in an attractive and stimulating environment; and so encourage the creation of a positive college identity. Work is also continuing on ideas underpinning the design of the Plaza site.

4.5.4 The proposed location of the Rother College was a matter of almost universal concern. There are issues about the perceived independence of Rother College if based on the Claverham Community College site, and also about the distance between the college and the railway station. Co-location on the Claverham campus does, however, provide the opportunity for some shared use of facilities. Discussions with Rother District Council have failed to identify a suitable alternative site in Battle or surrounding area. If the Rother College is to be developed on the Claverham site, consideration needs to be given to providing dedicated transport between the station and the college, so that the college becomes a more attractive option for students who live beyond the immediate Battle area.

4.6 *Impact on the proposal*

4.6.1 Following detailed consideration of the consultation responses, the Project Board has concluded that change is still necessary in order to achieve improvements in standards, participation and curriculum breadth and to ensure sustainable provision. The Board believes that this can best be delivered through the proposed development of Hastings and Rother New College. The Board has examined the issues raised, and identified developments to, and refinements of, the preferred model that aim to respond to the concerns expressed through the consultation.

4.6.2 Furthermore, the Board has noted that, whatever the final outcome of the review, the 'status quo' will not be sustainable. The Project Board is concerned that, if this strategic plan for the area is not achieved, there is a risk that a differential system of secondary education in Hastings could result – with some schools maintaining sixth form provision as 11- 18, and others developing as 11- 16. The Board also recognises that, with changes to powers to establish sixth form provision, existing 11- 16 schools who demonstrate high quality performance could be well-placed to develop their own sixth forms. The impact of this could be to challenge the sustainability of parts of, if not the whole, post-16 education system in the area. The proposal from the Project Board represents a planned, strategic response to these challenges.

5 The Proposal

5.1 *Introduction*

5.1.1 Hastings and Rother New College (HRNC) - the 'family of four colleges' - was approved by Sussex LSC, with the support of East Sussex County Council, as the preferred model for consultation in September 2003.

5.1.2 This proposal confirms and builds on that model; maintaining the concept of a single new college that comprises four separate 'colleges' located across the Hastings and Rother area. This model will support the development of a unified approach to post-16 learning for the area, whilst also promoting diversity through the distinctive work of each of the four colleges. The HRNC will have the strategic influence and financial stability of a larger organisation, yet will be able to offer a learning experience that is personal to students through its individual colleges.

5.1.3 For the purposes of this proposal, the names of the four colleges in the consultation document will continue to be used: Bexhill College, Hastings Sixth Form College, Rother College and St. Leonards College. It is likely that the creation of the new colleges will generate ideas about names that reflect the purpose, ethos and character of each of them. The Project Board would wish to give consideration to the designation of the proposed Hastings Sixth Form College as **Hastings and Rye Federal Sixth Form College**, to reflect the influence and involvement of the 14 –19 Federation schools in the development, planning and teaching of programmes. This will, ultimately, be a matter for the HRNC Corporation Board, advised by the four College Councils.

5.2 **Values**

5.2.1 The values outlined in the consultation document were supported by the vast majority of respondents. However some additional and desirable values have emerged during the consultation process and these include:

- putting students' needs first
- ensuring access to excellence for all students
- valuing diversity and ensuring inclusion and equality of opportunity
- being collaborative and innovative
- promoting a culture of life long learning
- empowering local colleges and their communities
- being a good practice employer

5.2.2 All these are valid aspirations for a high quality education service, and will form part of the remit for the new Corporation Board and leadership team if the proposal is finally approved.

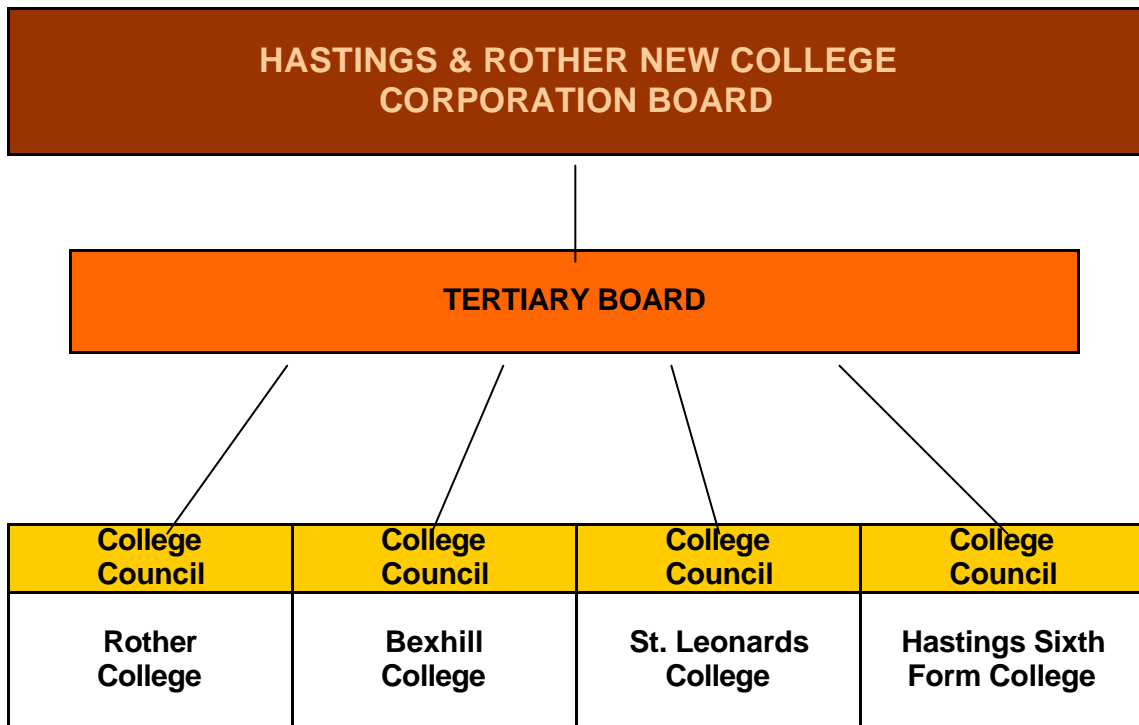
5.3 **Governance and management**

5.3.1 *Introduction*

5.3.1.1 The concept of a Tertiary Board was presented as an idea by a number of respondents during the consultation process, including for example Bexhill College, the Bexhill Partnership and the Hastings schools in their Federated Sixth Form proposal. It has generally been presented as an alternative to the proposed single independent Corporation Board, allowing individual colleges to retain their self-governing powers, but agreeing to cede some of these powers to a Tertiary Board with more limited planning, co-ordinating and monitoring responsibility. Some respondents have conversely argued that if the proposed single Corporation Board were replaced with a Tertiary Board - which would essentially be a voluntary federation of a number of independent schools and colleges – there would be little prospect of significant improvement and no authority to take the tough decisions which are almost certain to be necessary.

5.3.1.2 In the Hastings schools' 'Federation' proposal a model is presented which retains an overarching Governance Board with similar powers to those proposed for the Corporation, but includes in addition a Tertiary Management Board with a key role in development, co-ordination and monitoring of the provision made by the four colleges. However, further discussion with the headteachers (described earlier in this report) suggests that they would still wish the federated sixth form college to be formally linked to the schools sector, with each federation school retaining 11 – 18 status.

5.3.1.3 The Project Board has sought a way of incorporating this thinking into the model, whilst retaining the fundamental strength and coherence of the original proposal. The revised proposal includes a structure that is similar to that set out in the Hastings Schools' paper. The new governance and management model for HRNC would now be structured:



5.3.1.4 The relationship between the roles and representatives of the Corporation, Tertiary Board and College Councils is described in the chart below, and explained in more detail in the following paragraphs:

	Governance Role	Membership
Corporation (Statutory responsibilities)	Mission and character of HRNC Assuring financial health of HRNC Setting terms & conditions for all staff in HRNC 3 Year development planning & strategic overview for HRNC Senior appointments: Chief Executive, Principals and leadership team	Membership as per the Instrument and Articles for FE Corporations. To include: chairs of the four governing councils, staff, students, LEA, Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, business community, higher education.
Tertiary Board (potentially a sub-committee of the Corporation)	Demand/needs analysis for H&R Curriculum distribution across 4 colleges Quality of provision by college/client group Policy review and development Continuing Professional Development Student Admissions Service Development/initiatives/ innovation Marketing	Proposed membership: External members Headteachers Business community Voluntary organisation Local economic development advisers Diocesan representatives LEA Higher Education Connexions Internal members Corporation Board representatives Chief Executive Principal (x4) Other members of leadership team
College Council	Monitoring performance against targets Curriculum development and delivery Identifying local needs Quality assurance Student services/pastoral care Appointment of college staff Budget oversight for the college Maintaining strong community links Ensuring effective and efficient use of resources	Each college council would have its own particular composition to reflect the college's specialisms and local stakeholders. Representation would include 11- 16 school representatives (headteachers, governors, teachers), the business community and faith groups.

5.3.2 Corporation

5.3.2.1 It will be important to ensure that HRNC Corporation Board and leadership team respect the boundaries of their responsibilities and do not become involved in micro-management of the individual colleges. For example, in relation to staffing matters, the Corporation Board should be directly responsible for senior appointments (including the principals of the four colleges). However, this should not extend to other levels of staffing. The role of the overarching corporation in this respect should be to provide a framework within which the fair, effective and efficient deployment of staff across the four colleges can take place - through the appropriate management channels.

5.3.2.2 The following features will be significant in establishing the new Corporation Board:

- There will be an open advertisement for the appointment of members, including the chair
- The DfES has to approve the appointment of the first five members of the Corporation Board (excluding the Chief Executive, who is able to be a member of the Board)

- the Corporation will include the chairs of the four College Councils (the notion that the four Principals could also be members was explored, but advice from the DfES is that this would not be possible);
- the membership of the corporation will need to reflect and represent the relative needs and interests of both Hastings and Rother;
- the Corporation members and Chief Executive share and are committed to the aims of the review, and the agreed values and protocols for operation of HRNC.

5.3.2.3 The following features will be significant in establishing the new leadership team:

- The post of Chief Executive will be the subject of a national advertisement
- The Corporation Board will determine, advised by the Chief Executive, the processes for appointment of other senior postholders (including posts that are ring-fenced for existing postholders)
- The College Councils will be involved in the appointment of Principals
- the Chief Executive and leadership team share and are committed to the aims of the review, and the agreed values and protocols for operation of HRNC

5.3.3 *Tertiary Board*

5.3.3.1 The Hastings schools' 'Federated Sixth Form' proposal and the responses from Bexhill College have identified the key concept of a Tertiary Board. In giving this serious consideration, the Project Board has sought to develop the concept, and to give a proposed Tertiary Board significant influence and authority through a direct link with the Corporation Board of HRNC. The Tertiary Board would be charged with taking an area-wide view of curriculum development, delivery and quality across all four colleges.

5.3.3.2 The revised model (see diagram above) retains the strategic leadership, planning, funding and quality assurance role for the overarching Corporation Board and the leadership team. It recognises, through the proposal for strong school and college representation at all levels, that this leadership role must be grounded in the practical, day-to-day experience of the local schools and the four colleges. The Tertiary Board will provide a crucial advisory function for the Corporation. The Board may well have a budget (possibly allocated from various discretionary funding sources) to deploy for development and innovation in learning and skills. The College Councils will provide vital local leadership and advice to the Colleges' Principals, and will reflect particular local requirements and concerns.

5.3.3.3 The function of the Tertiary Board would be to provide a dynamic link between the ten 11-16 schools (five newly formed as a result of reorganisation) and also work with the management and Corporation Board of HRNC and other stakeholders. The operation of the Tertiary Board could allow the Corporation to develop a sub-committee structure giving a separate focus on different aspects of the curriculum of HRNC. The Tertiary Board may wish to organise its work to provide a focus on the learning and skills needs of the two main geographic areas within the broader district, or on the needs of the two broad age groups (14 –19 and 19+). In this way, the work of the Tertiary Board would contribute to the development of services for young people and adult learners across Hastings and Rother.

5.3.3.4 The Tertiary Board provides the means by which the schools in Hastings and Rother have real influence on the strategic development of the HRNC as a whole; for

learners, employers and the community. At local college level, such as at the Rother College, the schools will have positions on the College Council enabling them to exert influence, guide development and support the ethos and values intended to provide access, inclusion and excellence for learners. This should promote a professional yet challenging engagement of the schools with HRNC, to the benefit of all students. The Federated Sixth Form proposal included the suggestion of an annual conference to review progress and agree future developments. This would be planned and facilitated by the Tertiary Board. This is an innovative aspect of the proposal that will stimulate the development of self-critical academic communities, and enable outstanding, shared professional development opportunities, in both schools and colleges.

5.3.4 *College Councils*

5.3.4.1 The function of each of the College Councils will be to monitor the performance of their college against the agreed targets set by, and negotiated with, the Corporation Board. At a local level the College Council will be responsible for:

- curriculum delivery – ensuring that courses are run effectively and that arrangements for teaching and learning are effective;
- quality assurance – ensuring that strategies for the observation of teaching & learning, self-assessment review, staff appraisal etc. are in place and working effectively;
- pastoral care – ensuring that the interests and needs of students in relation to tutorials, student services and faith communities are properly met;
- appointment of staff – ensuring that the college is properly and efficiently staffed;
- resources – ensuring that there is effective management of resources, including delegated budgets;
- community links – ensuring that the needs and interests of the local community are properly reflected in the life and work of the college.

5.3.4.2 Each Council will be responsible for establishing and developing the new colleges. It is possible that Councils could evolve from existing governance arrangements to secure continuity and safeguard expertise. It has been proposed that the term of office of College Council members should be 5 years in the first instance, to provide stability in the set up period of the new college.

5.3.5 *The operation of the colleges*

5.3.5.1 Each college will have responsibility for delivering agreed targets and objectives, within the delegated budget from the Corporation. The Corporation Board, advised by College Councils and the Tertiary Board, will establish a framework of policies to ensure that fairness and equity exist across the four colleges.

5.3.5.2 The curriculum offer and support services for students will ultimately be determined by the Corporation Board and the leadership team in accordance with the remit set for them. They will rely on advice from the Tertiary Board and by College Councils executing their respective responsibilities. In establishing HRNC, some advance work will be undertaken by proposed project teams involving staff from schools and colleges across Hastings and Rother. A clear expectation within the remit will be that each college will develop a curriculum which offers at least as many choices for students as exist now, and that overall identified gaps in current provision which are relevant to local needs will be filled. Within each college, every student will

have an entitlement to key skills programmes; pastoral support and guidance; personal, social, moral and spiritual development; and a wide range of enrichment activities. The paper attached as Appendix F, which is based on preliminary discussions with staff in some of the schools and colleges, gives an indication of what the Corporation's remit for the curriculum and support for students might include.

5.3.5.3 As described in Appendix F, each of the colleges will develop partnership arrangements to offer education and training in different venues across the area, as well as at the four main college sites. For example, the transition programme proposed by the Hastings schools would be offered on school premises, in partnership with the schools and perhaps Connexions or employers. Specialist schools' community provision could provide a basis for developing wider opportunities for adults and could be promoted through a shared approach with HRNC. It will also be possible to engage schools with the development of the 'College for Business'. Many schools already have strong and productive links with local employers for work experience, projects and visits. There may be potential to build on these to ensure that the 'College for Business' recognises and builds on all dimensions of employer / education relationships. The strengthening of these relationships will provide mechanisms for employers to influence the range and type of provision offered at HRNC.

5.3.5.4 Another manifestation of effective partnership arrangements would be to build on the emerging Bexhill 14 –19 Partnership, which also has strong and purposeful links with local Primary schools and provision for adult learners. In this proposed model, the provision offered by and through Bexhill College would be developed to secure clear 14 –19 pathways for students, in partnership with local schools and the community.

5.3.5.5 Each college will make arrangements to open up access to high quality learning. At the Rother College, for example, this may mean greater reliance on distance and e-learning, as well as the development of work-related opportunities supporting the rural economy. This particular strand of work could be managed in partnership with Plumpton College which is a national Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in rural enterprise. HRNC would have the capacity and scale to support such developments.

5.3.5.6 Direct partnership working with the new university centre in Hastings (UCH), will aid the development of new pathways to higher education – including those from the workplace and also new Foundation Degrees. This is in line with the intentions of 'Aim Higher'. The link with HE teaching opens up opportunities for HRNC staff to extend their teaching and use their subject knowledge in a different setting. There is also scope for HE staff in specialist shortage areas to support teaching pre-18. In this way, the potential for an enriched academic teaching community can be developed and enhanced. The possibilities for area-wide approaches to professional development will also be explored. The schools and colleges in Hastings and Rother already have a strong track record in professional development, and between them offer opportunities for staff training for teachers in schools and colleges and also for classroom assistants and expert technicians. A development of this network could begin to help the area to 'grow its own workforce', thereby contributing to regeneration as well as securing high quality teachers and support staff for the future.

5.4 Next steps and implementation

Appendix E proposes the timetable that will be followed from this point on. The implementation phase will, of course, be contingent on approvals from the County Council, Sussex Learning and Skills Council and the Secretary of State at the appropriate points in the process.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The Project Board and a wide range of local stakeholders have worked hard over the past two years to achieve a consensus in the area about the issues to be addressed and the means of addressing them. This has been a thorough and challenging process— not least for the organisations in Hastings and Rother. There is still not a complete consensus on the method through which improvements should be delivered, but there is unity on the need to address serious and long-standing issues so that the area can be confident in its post-16 education and training provision for the 21st century.

6.2 It is recognised that a thriving local system of education depends upon all its sectors functioning well. Numerous respondents have argued that investment is needed as much in the pre-school, primary and secondary sectors as it is in the post-16 sector. There can be no doubt that excellence in post-16 provision requires that learners have had high quality education opportunities in their earlier education. There has been much investment in these other sectors over recent years, in particular in curriculum and management support, and this will be ongoing. It is important that focused attention is also given to the needs for development of the post-16 sector.

6.3 The Board has listened carefully to all comments and views, and has developed the Hastings and Rother New College as a four college model to try and take account of them in the best way possible. The model has developed during the course of the review; drawing on ideas, areas of strength and attending to the direction of national policy initiatives. The post-16 sector has a major role to play in delivering a more prosperous and cohesive society, and it needs to be positioned to rise to this challenge in Hastings and Rother as much as anywhere else. In addition, regeneration initiatives to address local challenges will be enhanced by thriving education and training provision that responds to and positively influences the health of the local economy.

6.4 The Board believes that the proposed model provides choice, quality, progression and community engagement in learning in an innovative yet sustainable way. This proposal will bring significant investment to the area – in terms of buildings and facilities but more importantly in terms of the people who live and work in Hastings and Rother.

Appendices:

Appendix A - The Consultation Meetings

Appendix B - Analysis of consultation responses

Appendix C - Issues arising from consultation process

Appendix D - The 'Federated Sixth Form' proposal

Appendix E - HRNC proposed timetable

Appendix F – A possible outline curriculum model for HRNC