

Division(s): All Carterton

CABINET – 18 MARCH 2014

PROPOSAL TO ALTER THE UPPER AGE LIMIT AT CARTERTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO PROVIDE POST-16 EDUCATION

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. Carterton Community College, in west Oxfordshire, currently educates students aged 11 – 16. There is no provision for post-16 education in Carterton town and so students must transfer to alternative centres elsewhere to continue their studies or training.

Background

2. Carterton Community College is rated Good by Ofsted (January 2013). Its past three years' GCSE results are as follows (taken from Annex 1):

GCSE Examination Results 2011-2013 Year	2011	2012	2013
5 A*-C including English & Maths	46%	57%	63%
5 A*- C	88%	90%	91%

3. The known destinations of students leaving the College at age 16 are set out in Annex 1 (the College's consultation leaflet). This shows that the largest percentage go on to Abingdon & Witney College, while others are spread across a range of establishments and locations. Students leaving Carterton largely go on to study A Level and BTec Level 3 courses.
4. Pupil numbers across Carterton have been low over several years but many of the primary schools have now seen a sharp rise in admissions for the last few years: Reception/Key Stage 1 cohorts are 15% larger than the Key Stage 2 cohorts. There has been mass troop movement at the RAF base in the town, as nearby RAF Lyneham closed and families transferred to Brize Norton. If recent trends continue, surplus places in primary schools will be almost completely removed over the next few years.
5. In addition to the increase in existing population outlined above, significant new housing development is also proposed for the town. As at January 2014, the

County Council has responded to two proposed developments in the town totalling 450 new dwellings and one Pre-Application proposal for another 1000 new dwellings.

6. It is not currently expected that expansion of capacity at Carterton Community College will be necessary as a direct result of housing development, but this will depend on how sustained the rising population trend already in primary schools is, and the progression of the proposed new housing. The situation is under constant review.

The proposal

7. The proposal is by the Governing Body, and is to offer post-16 education at Carterton Community College from September 2014 onward. It plans to introduce the new provision over a three-year period.
8. The Governing Body has stated that no additional accommodation is required at the College in order to implement post-16 education. Therefore there is no capital cost relating to this proposal. Adding post-16 provision will still leave sufficient accommodation to cater for forecast pupil numbers transferring from primary schools.
9. The main reasons given by the Governing Body for proposing to offer post-16 education at Carterton Community College (as set out in Annex 1) can be summarised as follows:
 - Providing continuity of education for students who attend the College and who wish to stay on. This also relates to some evidence obtained by the College on students dropping out of courses at other centres after starting them.
 - Increased diversity of provision, including all ability ranges at post-16. The College aims to use existing partnerships with the RAF, AirTanker, The Engineering Trust and other local bodies to deliver suitable provision for the local community.
 - A positive impact for the College in terms of attracting students who may not currently apply for a place in Year 7 because there is no post-16 provision.
 - A positive impact on the town as a whole, making it a more attractive place for families to live, including those Service families at the Brize Norton RAF base in the town.
 - Reducing the cost and disadvantage to families of students travelling post-16 to other towns to study or train.
 - Desire to offer adult learning and flexible hours to reach the whole community.

Representations

10. The College conducted a public consultation on its proposals (6 January 2014 – 17 February 2014). Two open meetings were held at the school on 14

January and 11 February to give the local community the opportunity to raise queries about the proposal with both the College and a county council Officer.

11. The first meeting was attended by parents, town councillors, district councillors and county councillors who were all supportive of the proposal. The main points from the meeting were as follows:
 - Generally all parties supported the idea of adding a sixth form. Questions were raised about the breadth of the offer and whether it may change. The College confirmed the offer that can be put in place, and that it can be delivered to a good standard. Year 11 students were to be consulted again the next day to continue to gauge likely take up.
 - A request was made for clarification on how the College had forecast likely take up of places (see Annex 1). The College identified a take up rate of one third of existing students, anticipating that some students would want to access different options for some time. This will be a larger percentage initially as the College's offer would be narrow to begin with, but it will decrease over time as appropriate courses and teaching input is put in place over the initial three-year period.
 - Carterton Town Council would like to see apprenticeship routes identified as part of the overall provision, for the town to begin to grow its own workforce for the future.
 - A suggestion was made that partnering with other local schools to make the widest offer possible for young people should be seen as a longer term goal.
 - Suggestions for identifying increased funding towards necessary resources were shared with the school.
12. The second meeting was again well attended by Carterton Town Councillors and district councillor, with some staff and parents of students at the college. All were overwhelmingly supportive and very positive about the proposal and the college.
13. A consultation leaflet (Annex 1) was sent to parents of students at the College and of children attending Carterton's primary schools, as well as to local councillors, early years providers including childminders in the area, libraries, local Early Intervention Hub, community groups and other stakeholders. It was also available on the OCC public website, together with full details of the various ways of responding. Additionally, the College highlighted the consultation in its newsletters to parents.
14. 44 responses to the consultation were received:
 - 41 respondents supported the proposal in principle,
 - 2 respondents were opposed to the proposal in principle.
 - 1 respondent was undecided.

15. The reasons given for supporting the proposal were:
 - The need for post-16 provision in Carterton.
 - The College is good, and should be able to teach post-16 students.
 - Reducing traffic on the roads and travel costs to families.
 - Continuity of education for students at the College who want to stay on.
 - Good for Carterton as a town and as a place to live.
 - Good for local employers.
 - Good for SEN students who have attended the College but may find nowhere able to meet their needs locally post-16, and so have to be transported elsewhere.
 - The age of participation in education, training or employment is being raised by the Government to 18, and so this proposal helps to meet that increased need for places.
 - Carterton town will be growing very significantly in terms of population in the next few years, and so post-16 provision should be available for residents of a town that size.

16. The points raised in opposition were:
 - Concern that the College would have insufficient funds to start up and maintain the post-16 provision.
 - A belief that travelling elsewhere to access post-16 education and training benefits young people as it teaches them to manage a budget and manage their time.

17. The undecided respondent raised a query about catchment areas if this proposal were approved. There is currently no plan to change catchment areas by Oxfordshire County Council as a result of this proposal. The neighbouring Burford School is an academy and therefore may set its own catchment area as it wishes.

18. As the College wishes to implement its proposal in September 2014, this report is being made to Cabinet rather than delegated Member for CEF due to meeting dates and necessary timescales for the consultation processes. Additionally, the Governing Body wished to share the outcomes of the consultation at an early date with the county council in order to receive feedback on its proposal.

Making a Decision

19. Although under the new School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 there is now no requirement to conduct an initial public consultation on a proposal before publication, the relevant Guidance* states there is a strong expectation on schools to consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication in accordance with Public Law principles. Therefore, the College has carried one out to gauge and respond to genuine opinion as early as possible.

* School Organisation Maintained Schools Guidance for proposers and decision makers (January 2014).

20. The College will decide whether to proceed to publication of a statutory notice, but wishes the county council to feed back its early view on the proposal following this initial consultation.
21. A view is now sought by the College from the county council, in order to inform the Governing Body's decision on whether to proceed to publish formal proposals. If it does, a statutory notice would be published, followed by a formal representation period of four weeks. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice will lie with the Local Authority, and a report will be put to Cabinet / Cabinet Member for Children Education & Families.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

22. The provision of sixth form school places within Carterton would be expected to have a positive impact on equalities through promoting social inclusion and minimising barriers to accessing education. It would provide greater equality of access to education between Carterton young people and those living elsewhere in West Oxfordshire, where all other schools have sixth forms. The proposal would increase the diversity of post-16 courses available, which should better meet the needs of a broader range of young people.

Financial and Staff Implications

23. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of undertaking the statutory process recommended, which is planned for and met within the normal Children Education & Families budget provision. There are no significant financial implications or risks at this stage. If the proposal proceeds, following statutory consultation there would be another report to Cabinet / Cabinet Member for CEF in due course seeking a final decision on whether to approve the proposals.
24. There will be on-costs to the College, in time, for additional staff however this would be minimal to begin with as the proposal is to implement over a three year period. Initially the College will be utilising existing capacity of teaching staff to deliver the increased provision. The day to day revenue costs for repair and maintenance and staffing costs must be met through the College's delegated individual school budget .
25. Funding for post 16 students in schools, colleges and Academies is via a national funding formula determined by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The formula for the academic year starting in August 2014 would normally be based on lagged pupil numbers ie: the number of students participating in the previous academic year. As it is proposing to set up new provision the College would need to discuss with the EFA how many students the EFA would fund for the academic year 2014/15.

RECOMMENDATION

26. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to consider the proposal by Carterton Community College to alter its upper age limit in order to establish post-16 education, and give its view to the Governing Body.**

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Annex 1 Consultation leaflet produced by Carterton Community College

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