

11th July 2012

The Church of England Diocese of Salisbury
Diocesan Education Centre
Devizes Road
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 9LY

c/o: Democratic Services
Legal and Governance
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Dear Mr Shepperd, Professor Ward and Mrs Thomas,

Re: Sarum Academy response to the Final report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group issued May 2012

Your recent letter to Mrs Carolyn Godfrey (Corporate Director, Wiltshire Council), raising concerns in respect to aspects of the above mentioned report, has been forwarded for consideration by the task group. Having received the views of the members of the task group, I am now in a position to respond to your letter.

In the first instance, it is a matter of regret that Sarum Academy did not receive a copy of the report in a timely fashion, the more so as the Academy was on the primary circulation list. It was the task group's expressed wish and stated recommendation that the report be widely circulated and I have taken action to expedite this.

In respect to the specific issues raised in your letter, I can only ask that the report is read and absorbed as a whole rather than taking selected phrases out of context as this inevitably loses the spirit and intention of the task group's recommendations. The report, and the presentation made to the Select Committee on 31st May 2012, was and is fully supportive of Sarum Academy, recognising that it has a key role in improving post-16 education and training in the Salisbury area.

The task group drew its conclusions from a wide range of sources including:

- Meetings with students from Sarum Academy and, at a later meeting, with the principal
- Meetings with students, head teachers and principals, and governors of all five 11-16 secondary schools in the Salisbury area and Avon Valley College
- Meetings with the principal and chair of the board of Wiltshire College, and with the principals of three Hampshire providers
- School prospectuses, including the draft Sarum Academy Sixth Form Prospectus for September 2012
- A parental questionnaire
- Extensive data provided by Connexions and the Young Peoples Learning Agency

- Vision Documents provided by the Laverstock Schools and Avon Valley College/Stonehenge School
- Versions of the Expressions of Interest to establish sponsored academies through Salisbury High School (i.e. the successful Sarum Academy bid) and the Laverstock schools (i.e. the stalled “Laverstock Academy” proposal)

Thus, in relation to all the providers involved, including Sarum Academy, the report and recommendations were drawn from a number of sources and did not rely solely on individual meetings. In this respect, the task group does not consider that the report and recommendations lack objectivity.

The task group also wishes to point out that, in identifying a gap in sixth form provision in central Salisbury beyond that being developed at Sarum Academy, the task group noted that the Expressions of Interest for sponsored academies were developed simultaneously for Sarum High School (Sarum Academy) and the Laverstock schools (“Laverstock Academy”) – the latter outlining provision of a large sixth form in Laverstock with Salisbury Diocese and Wiltshire Council as key sponsors. Whilst the Laverstock Academy proposal did not reach submission stage, it is the view of the task group that the need for sixth form provision envisaged in the draft Laverstock Academy Expression of Interest has not changed.

Finally, I note that Mrs Godfrey and Mr Powell have explained the process by which the task group report has been endorsed by the Children’s Services Select Committee and a formal response is now anticipated from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services. This response will be received at the Select Committee’s next meeting on 26th July and you will have an opportunity to raise substantive points at this meeting. You will note that I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Member and other concerned parties ahead of the meeting on 26th July in order that the position of the task group is understood.

Yours sincerely,

M H Thompson
Chairman of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group

c/o Henry Powell
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CC:

All those copied into the email from Sarah McNicol on 21st June
Cllr R Britton, Task Group member
Cllr J Hubbard, Task Group member
Cllr J Lay, Task Group member
Cllr B Moss, Task Group member