

## **Schools Forum – Matters Arising From 19 October 2016**

**“That further information is provided in response to a Member’s request for consideration of how the Local Authority is managing, and modelling the implications of, the development of new Post 16 free school provision in the Bradford District”**

The role of Bradford Council in developing new post-16 free schools is clearly defined in the Education Act 2008 and associated statutory and free school application guidance. Local Authorities are expected to provide strategic leadership in planning, influencing and commissioning local provision 16-19 including for young people with SEND and young offenders. Local Authorities are expected to continue to have a statutory responsibility to secure high quality 16-19 education and training in their areas which ‘champions the needs of young people’ and the local economy.

In regard to the three new planned post-16 free schools, Bradford Council considered these applications in the wider context of the new post-16 approach that has been developed and adopted jointly by secondary schools, colleges, businesses, the University of Bradford and the Council. At the heart of this approach is our common purpose to work together to make sure that we can develop post-16 education in the Bradford District that can deliver the highest standards for our young people and community.

Bradford Council clearly expressed its view on both the need for the reform in the pattern of post-16 provision and how we will work to achieve a high quality and sustainable post-16 offer for our young people in the published ‘Post-16 Education and Training and Bradford and the Need for Change’. This document is the Council’s response to the review of the future of post-16 in Bradford that forensically examined education, economic, financial and demographic pressures and established the new collaborative post-16 approach.

As set out in this document, understanding that there is some excellent local post-16 education practice, the Council agrees with and supports the conclusions of the review that outcomes need to rapidly improve for all young people in all settings, that young people need to be better supported when choosing what to do, that the current choice for students is limited, and that the current offer is not financially sustainable.

Given these considerations, Bradford Council has clearly stated that it welcomes the free school applications that have been approved for development from Dixons Academy Trust and New College Pontefract. These new larger sixth form colleges will establish a wider range of high quality academic pathways and extra-curricular learning opportunities in areas of identified demographic demand. These two developments are in the main a consolidation of existing smaller sixth form provision that will increase student choice and the greater availability of high quality places. Whilst the Council is keen to work in partnership with all potential post-16 partners, it is the partners themselves that set their own strategic goals and manage their own provision.

The reality is that the Department for Education makes the final decision on the award of new free schools; the Council has a more limited advisory role. The Council recognises in our current environment that we need to truly collaborate with and influence local and national stakeholders to deliver the post-16 provision that our young people deserve.