

Public Participation

Question from Mrs Tara Moggeridge, as a parent of children at Budmouth College, on Budmouth College Academy Conversion

Chairman and Members of the Cabinet. I am here today to express my serious concerns of my son's and daughter's education at Budmouth College.

My son has been attending the college since Year 7 and currently studying A levels there in the Sixth Form. He has a chronic health condition so is under Special Educational Needs and has an Educational Health Care Plan. My daughter who was offered a place just before there was any talk of a proposed takeover by Aspirations Academy is due to begin Year 7 this September. Like all parents I want the best education for my children. However, I have grave concerns about Aspirations Academy. Budmouth College is a unique school unlike the mould that Aspirations has created for their other Academies. I have worries about reduction in teaching and support staff that puts my children at risk. When my son started Budmouth College he was a high achiever. He was unfortunately diagnosed with a brain tumour 6 years ago and had surgery to remove it 3 years ago. The staff and support staff have been tremendously professional and helpful with his education throughout this difficult time. With the help he received combined with his determination he achieved 7 GCSES and is now coming up to his second year of A levels.

Do Aspirations Academy promote, support and understand inclusivity of children and young people with Special Educational Needs?

I believe with the new head, the leadership team and the current staff who have been there many years that Budmouth can be outstanding again. I understand the decision to choose Aspirations Academy was made by the RSC and the IEB. We as a group of parents have had many questions unanswered by them. We believe that there needs to be more transparency and that there has not been an official consultation process involving students and parents with the feeling of it being forced upon us. Can we ask that we see a breakdown of savings made or being made over the next 3 years by the laying off of Support staff?

Before I finish I would like to thank Councillor Parry for giving your time to meet with us straight after the full council meeting a few weeks ago and allowing us to voice our concerns, we are grateful for that. I am sure that you will understand that it is a rather stressful and exhausting task for everyone involved but we just want what is best for the children and the future children of Budmouth College. Thank you.

Answer

Thank you for taking the time to address Cabinet today.

It is important that Councillors hear from parents who wish to express their appreciation for the role Budmouth College has played in their child education and well-being to date, whilst also highlighting concerns regarding the future as a result of Academisation, especially in areas relating to inclusiveness and SEND.

In answering your first question, "Do Aspirations Academy promote, support and understand inclusivity of children and young people with Special Educational Needs?"

Dorset Council cannot speak directly on behalf of the Academy Trust. But we would like to point out that the funding agreement for the Academy Trust, would require them to work with Dorset Council on the provision for SEND children, something we hope they will do wholeheartedly.

In response to your second question "Can we ask that we see a breakdown of savings made or being made over the next 3 years by the laying off of Support staff?"

This is a matter for the Interim Executive Board. As Dorset Council is not the employer of the staff we would not be able to provide this information.

Having met with both the Colleges Principal and Chair of the Interim Executive Board recently, I feel confident they would wish to discuss questions of this nature with you directly.

Question from Toby Webber, Student of Budmouth College, on Budmouth College Academy Conversion

My name is Toby, and I started Budmouth College in year 7 in 2013. When I first joined, the school was rated “Outstanding” by Ofsted, and the school was accredited with, and I quote, “GCSE results for students being typically well above average”. “Impeccable behaviour and mature attitudes towards learning” was also noted on the ofsted report. However, due to allegations coming to light, the then-principle was dismissed, and the position of an acting principle was established. After this, a new principle was brought on and failed to raise the standard from inadequate, and was therefore put on leave.

I understand that Budmouth needs to change. I do. But do you really think that letting corporations into our classrooms are going to fix that? Getting rid of tens of teachers and support staff who have helped people like me pass those all-important exams and giving them the support they need to make it through secondary school? Letting richer people make money off my education? That’s not what my parents or I signed up for when I applied for Budmouth all those years ago.

Answer

Budmouth College is subject to a Directive Academy Order, issued by the Secretary of State for Education, that requires the Council to facilitate the transfer of Budmouth College to an Academy Trust. The Council has been informed that Aspirations is the Trust chosen by the Regional School’s Commissioner for the College to join. Academy Trusts are legally determined to be “exempt charitable companies.”

In the areas of your statement which this Council is not the forum to provide you with the answers you are seeking, as they are beyond our remit, I would however, encourage you to make your representation to the College’s Interim Executive Board and Principal.

Member Questions

Question from Cllr Brian Heatley to the Cabinet members for Economic Growth and Skills, and Finance, Commercial and Assets in relation to the Weymouth Museum Collection

There is no item in the 4 June agenda, nor apparently in the Forward Plan (it could be buried in some other item I suppose), suggesting that a decision will come forward on Weymouth Museum within the forthcoming year. However

- most of the museum's artefacts are currently deteriorating in store in Brewer's Quay;
- these artefacts belong to Dorset Council and are assets the Council is effectively holding on behalf of the people of Weymouth;
- a solution as to how to display some of them in Weymouth would contribute to extending the scope and nature of Weymouth's offer to tourists;
- thus promoting economic development in Weymouth;
- while we have been waiting since 2010 for the possibility of a development scheme for Brewer's Quay to provide the Museum with a home.

Why cannot the Council set a fairly close date, say by the end of September 2019, when, if no firm plans for development at Brewers Quay are forthcoming, officers will, in consultation with the Museum's Trustees, set about identifying the options by say the end of 2019 for exploiting these valuable assets in support of Weymouth's tourist industry?

Answer

A meeting was held on 16 May 2019 with representatives of Weymouth Museum and the developers which included council officers. At this meeting the developer provided reassurance about an imminent commencement of the scheme on site. This discussion indicated that it will not be necessary to relocate the museum collection in order to facilitate the development. Further discussions are taking place between the developer and the museum about this matter. A follow-up meeting to review progress on these discussions has been scheduled for 27 June 2019.