

Hastings Old Town Residents Association
Report of a meeting held 20th October to consider plans for 2 academies

Over 40 people met to consider the case for and against the proposals. The speakers were Alasdair Smith [Anti Academies Alliance] Julian Crampton [Vice chancellor Brighton University] Geriant Williams [BT] Bill Goodwin [ESCC] Sir Dexter Hutt [Ninestiles education].

JC explained that the University already had strong relationship with the town through Hastings College and UCN. GE explained BT's thinking. With 140,000 employees across the world they have a strong emphasis on communication and ICT. They are strongly committed to Inclusion and helping people learn.

AS countered by saying the rate of improvement is a myth. AAA welcomes the involvement in secondary schools by universities and business. The real question to be answered 'Is this proposal a true partnership with parents and the community or are the sponsors going to have rigid control?' The Governance model has not been explained. Is this an example of schools being privatised? Jay Kramer welcomed the investment in new buildings but is worried about the loss of local democracy.

BG felt that people should judge if the plans were right for Hastings at this time. ESCC want outward looking Governing bodies that care about students, parents and the community.

Sir DH asked what is best for Hastings students and their future employment needs. Academies will bring extra funding and maximise the chances for pupils. Other concerns raised were :- appointing good headteachers; Special Needs provision and Family support; the breadth of the Curriculum; what will happen to the proceeds of the sale of The Grove site; is this a stitch up by ESCC?

Nick Perry was puzzled why 2 academies was the only proposal. What alternative is being offered to local people.

Ron Bennet felt that ESCC had failed the children of the town over many years, especially with the loss of 6th forms. Bright new buildings are needed for our children BUT results under ESCC had become awful and a new model of school governance is needed.

Chairmans conclusion

If the sponsors want Hastings to be confident in the 2 academies then the model of Governance must be truly accountable to parents and the local community

Dick Edwards