

SPC Annual Parish Meeting - 20 April 2016 - Annex G

Sparsholt College Hampshire 2016

Despite a slight demographic decline in the 16/18-year-old population of Hampshire, the specialism of the college at Sparsholt has allowed the student numbers at Sparsholt College to be maintained at current levels. This has been an important factor in maintaining a viable financial position for this college in the context of the gloomy outlook for public funded services generally. The financial situation of some other colleges (even those in Hampshire) has become very parlous.

The number of subsidised coaches and buses coming to the College continues to reflect the demand from our students and provides a very sustainable way of young people accessing the specialist services of the College on a daily travel to learn basis, from their homes throughout Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. We are currently arranging direct bus and coach routes for around 900 students on a daily basis, and the number of 17 and 18 year olds who drive to College continues to be very low. We have some students who travel three hours per day, which is a clear indication of the extent to which the College is seen as somewhere which really meets their needs and where the courses we provide, generally speaking, cannot be accessed elsewhere.

The emphasis of the College on sustainable land management, and particularly renewable energy, is an important strategic ambition for the College and resonates with the skill set requirements which we know that many young people will be required to have in working in a diverse rural economy in the future. There is very clear reference to this in the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan, with Sparsholt College being cited as a future 'Hampshire Centre for the Demonstration of Environmental Technologies' which is currently subject to a planning application.

Technologies and related skills to be illustrated and developed include wood fuels, bio-methane production from anaerobic digesters (AD) and others. In addition to providing skills for the rural economy of the future, the opportunities provided by these and increased photovoltaic rooftops will also significantly reduce the College's carbon footprint and, of course, our running costs at a time of tight fiscal control.

We have held a number of open consultation events which have been well attended. The College is always mindful of minimising the impact of its activities to our local resident community and have sought to provide as much information as possible to explain the impact of this new activity and how we will ensure that Sparsholt Village residents are not inconvenienced by it. We have kept the Parish Council up to speed on our ambitions and will continue to do so. It was pleasing to see many of the parish residents and the Parish Council attending the two most recent consultation events that we have held.

The continued staging of events like the 'Lambing Days' and the 'Bunnies and Chicks' weekend has been very useful for the College and, in particular, the extent to which this provides opportunities for students to interact with the public and develop effective communication skills, which their future employers really value.

The Farley Nursery, who occupy land at the College ('Garstons') have had a very successful second year at their Yurt Nursery which appears to have proved a big hit with parents and children alike.

Tim Jackson - Principal