

Merger of Chichester College and Central Sussex College Statutory Consultation Summary Report Published 12 June 2017

The Vision

The governing bodies of Central Sussex College and Chichester College are committed to coming together to rejuvenate and enhance education and offer high standards in training and skills development. A merger will build on Chichester's strengths as an 'outstanding' (Ofsted 2014) and financially secure college to support the development of Central Sussex College. This merger will create a group structure that is sustainable and innovative and ensures a diverse and employer led curriculum to meet local and business needs. This merger will:

- Create the largest college group in Sussex and provide high quality learning opportunities for around 25,000 students every year.
- Offer increased opportunities to students, employers and communities in Sussex and beyond by growing income, sharing costs and working in a wider geographical area.
- Provide greater access to Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE) and apprenticeships, providing essential skills and opportunities for outstanding futures.
- Significantly improve the learning opportunities, experience and environment for students across the region - combining inclusion and excellence to meet local and community needs
- Have the potential to attract greater investment in education resources and expertise, whilst achieving value for money through central services.
- Provide a responsive resource for employers seeking to develop their workforce and recruit apprentices.
- Build on existing centres of excellence, whilst meeting the needs of local priority sectors, including engineering, construction, business, ICT, hospitality, healthcare and logistics.
- Encompass a portfolio of successful commercial businesses operating alongside the Colleges. These include a chain of childcare nurseries, an Examination Board, International Education and sports & conferencing facilities

Statutory Consultation

In March 2017, Central Sussex College resolved to go ahead with the merger with Chichester College, subject to consultation and due diligence. The merger will create a group structure that is sustainable and innovative and ensures a diverse and employer led curriculum to meet local and business needs. Governors will be appointed from each existing Board and a new Chair designate has been recruited. The merger is of a type which requires the dissolution of one corporation and

its transfer of assets and liabilities to the other and it was agreed that the Corporation of Central Sussex College should dissolve, subject to consultation.

A specific statutory consultation took place on the proposal of the dissolution of Central Sussex College, so that the merger could take place with Chichester College. This consultation ran from 23 March 2017 to 24 April 2017. The proposal was published and the consultation formally announced in accordance with The Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012. The formal public notice of the proposal and statutory consultation was published in The Times Newspaper and the Crawley Observer on 23rd March 2017. It was also published on the Central Sussex College and Chichester College websites, and sent to other stakeholders. These stakeholders are prescribed by the above regulations, and include local schools, local employers, the Local Authority, Members of Parliament, the Skills Funding Agency and the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. The public notice clearly stated how a copy of the proposal could be obtained, and the closing date of the statutory consultation. The public notice is included at the end of this summary report.

To complement the statutory public consultation, additional research was also conducted among Students (focus groups) and Employers (online Stakeholder Awareness Survey).

Responses to the Statutory Consultation

Ten written responses were received to the statutory consultation on the proposed dissolution of Central Sussex College to enable the merger of the two colleges.

Eight responses received were in support of the merger, there was one 'no response' and one 'unsure' response. Reassurance has been given to consultees directly, in response to their concerns. Key comments in support are provided below:

- We will have a local, sustainable college with a broad curriculum offer for young people.
- The immediate advantage is in securing a sustainable future for Central Sussex College and it is encouraging that the existing sites will be retained, including the Central Sussex site at Horsham Training Centre. The new Chichester College Group will build upon the relative educational strengths of Chichester College and Central Sussex, to provide a wider curriculum offer across West Sussex.
- Scale adds to financial viability and enables a wider offer for students.
- Given the current and significant challenges facing Central Sussex College, there is no other realistic and viable option. I hope the expectations set out in the document can be realised for the businesses and community of Crawley and surrounding area. The over-arching advantage is to combine the local knowledge of business and local community need from Central Sussex (along with some excellent staff) with the outstanding performance and reputation of Chichester College.
- Chichester College's outstanding leadership and vision will enhance and develop the provision.

- We see the advantages of the merger being manifold. The merger will create a quality and cohesive education institution across the region delivering value for money on an operational level, improving the learning experience and widening the offer to students with relevant work related content, and increasing collaboration with local businesses to be more responsive to the needs of the local labour market, including improved offers for workforce development and apprenticeships, which are key to future labour market supply and upskilling.
- I can see it makes perfect sense, especially to get synergy and economies of provision between the institutions, but I feel Mid-Sussex-especially Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill are the big losers in this decision.
- We will have joined-up thinking across the county.
- We have an existing strong partnership with Chichester College and will be able together to continue and support improvement of post-16 education provision in the county.
- The proposed merger with Chichester College should bring many advantages for Central Sussex College, particularly increased financial stability, greater access to funding opportunities and the benefits of working with a college rated “outstanding”. Drawing on the expertise from Chichester College, Central Sussex College will be in a stronger position to serve Crawley residents and to refocus and react positively to local business skills and employment needs, with the aim of cementing a reputation as an efficient, good quality and employer centred training provider in the Sussex region. Finally, by becoming the largest college group in Sussex with facilities across a wider area, the combined colleges should have a further reach, serving more Crawley businesses and students than ever before.
- Continued financial stability and investment into Further Education in Sussex.

Of those responses unsure of the proposed dissolution, reasons related to the closure of an existing site and provision of a 6th form in Hayward’s Heath.

A response has been provided to each of the consultees.

Outcome of the Consultation

Further to the consultation and consideration by both Corporations at their May meetings, Central Sussex College has resolved to go ahead with the dissolution and merge with Chichester College.

Subject to Secretary of State approval it is the intention of both Boards to approve the transfer of liabilities at their July Board meetings to take place on 1 August 2017.

Next Steps

Subject to approval by the Secretary of State for Education, both Colleges are working towards a merger date of 1 August 2017, and are progressing plans to implement the merger.

Statutory Notice

The Corporation of Central Sussex College hereby gives notice in accordance with the Further Education Corporations Publication of Proposals, England Regulations 2012 of the proposal that Central Sussex College, College Road, Crawley RH10 1NR be dissolved and that the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation be transferred to the Corporation of Chichester College of Westgate Fields, Chichester, PO19 1SB be effected. Dissolution of the Corporation is proposed, at the request of the Corporation of Central Sussex College in order that the College may merge with Chichester College.

The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation is midnight on 31 July 2017. Provision will be made for all 4,421 students currently attending Central Sussex College (1,150 full-time and 3,271 part-time) who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the dissolution to complete their studies on the same campus as planned. A consultation document setting out our full proposal is available online at www.chichester-centralsussexmerger.co.uk or a copy of the full proposal is available free of charge via email merger@centralsussex.ac.uk and will be sent to any person who requests it. The consultation period runs from 23 March to 24 April 2017. All responses and representations must be received by the closing date by email to merger@centralsussex.ac.uk. These will be considered by the Corporation before a final decision is made. A summary of the feedback and its outcome will be published within two months of the closing date on the Corporation's website.