

Merger of Chichester College Group and Worthing College Statutory Consultation Summary Report

Published January 2019

Background

In July 2018, the Corporation of Worthing College selected Chichester College Group (CCG) as its preferred merger partner. This decision was reached after a robust selection and procurement process with input and support from the FE Commissioner and his team. Worthing College will join CCG's existing colleges – Chichester, Brinsbury and Crawley - with a timeline to complete the merger by the end of March 2019.

Vision

This proposed merger will secure the future of the college in Worthing at a time when further education provision is much needed to meet the local skills needs.

Whilst Worthing will be joining a larger group structure, the importance of its well-established local identity will be preserved and enhanced. This will enable a skills offer for Worthing and coastal West Sussex that meets and exceeds the needs and aspirations of local people, stakeholders and businesses, reflecting Worthing's economic landscape.

The priority for this merger is to improve the choice, opportunity and quality of provision for learners. There is much good and outstanding practice in both CCG and Worthing that together will drive up standards and increase the life changing opportunities for all of our learners. We believe that we can support Worthing's priority to facilitate growth in its curriculum offer whilst being responsive and inclusive to the market demand.

Ultimately, the merger seeks to ensure that people have access to an outstanding education, wherever they live in West Sussex.

This merger will:

- Create the largest College Group in Sussex and provide high quality learning opportunities for around 27,000 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, Higher Education and apprenticeships, providing essential skills and opportunities for outstanding futures
- 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 STEM, Sport, the Arts, Travel & Tourism, Health Science, Business and Management.
- Encompass a portfolio of successful commercial businesses operating alongside the colleges. These include a chain of childcare nurseries, an examination board, international education, forest schools, sports and conferencing facilities
- Extend outstanding teaching and learning for the whole of West Sussex and the wider region

Statutory Consultation

The proposed 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 Worthing College should dissolve, subject to consultation.

The merger 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 national newspaper and the Worthing Herald. It was also published on the Worthing 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 Education and 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 statutory consultation ran from 1 November to 3 December 2018. The public notice is included at the end of this summary report.

There were fifteen (15) responses received to the consultation. Responses have been anonymised but key comments have been summarised.

1. Do you agree the proposed merger of our two colleges provides the best solution and will ensure the best future provision of further education for Sussex?

Yes	5
No	1
Unsure	4
No response	5

Comments (summarised)

- The mission, vision and values of the Chichester Group seem to align with those of Worthing College.
- Increased/broadened opportunities for existing and future students and staff. Wider range of workforce training opportunities 'on the doorstep' of the businesses that need it.
- Financial sustainability. Teaching expertise across group.
- Continued further education provision in the Worthing area.
- Students will further become a statistic rather than a person and a merger would lose Worthing's identity.
- A lot of grand statements on the benefits of the merger made but not much content on how this will be actually achieved.

2. What are your views regarding the proposed mission, vision and values of the proposed merged group? (summarised)

- I think in the long term the merger is a good idea - Giving students broader options for education post 16 is definitely necessary in today's competitive market.
- I have seen the positive impact at Crawley College of CCG's mission and 'corporate identity' since the initial merger. Worthing College's existing mission already dovetails with and complements that of CCG. The merger will be mutually beneficial.
- I understand the need for this merger and wish all staff and students the best.
- I personally am not a fan of mergers as individualism and heritage is usually put aside and everything becomes about numbers.
- That actions speak louder than words.

Whilst some caution was expressed, only one respondent explicitly stated their opposition to the merger. Responses tended to focus on queries relating to individual circumstances of learners/parents and members of staff.

Individual and personal responses/queries have been managed confidentially as part of this process. A written response has been provided to each of the respondents.

Outcome of the Consultation

The consultation will be shared and considered by both College Corporations at their next meetings. Subject to their approval to transfer liabilities, both Colleges will continue to work towards a merger date of the end of March 2019.

Plans continue to progress to meet this deadline and implement the merger.

Copy of Statutory Notice

Statutory Notice - Further and Higher Education Act 1992

The Corporation of Worthing College hereby gives notice in accordance with the Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012 of the proposal that Worthing College, 1 Sanditon Way, Worthing BN14 9FD be dissolved and that the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation be transferred to the Corporation of Chichester College Group of Westgate Fields, Chichester, PO19 1SB be effected.

Dissolution of the Corporation is proposed, at the request of the Corporation of Worthing College in order that the College may merge with Chichester College Group.

The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation is midnight on 29 March 2019.

Provision will be made for all 1,400 students currently attending Worthing College 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.worthing.ac.uk or a copy of the full proposal is available free of charge via email merger@worthing.ac.uk and will be sent to any person who requests it.

The consultation period runs from 1 November to 3 December 2018.

All responses and representations must be received by the closing date by email to: merger@worthing.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 both the Worthing College and Chichester College Group websites.