



**Embargoed to 0900 Monday July 10, 2017**

## **POTENTIAL COLLEGE MERGER ANNOUNCED**

Sussex Downs College and Sussex Coast College Hastings have declared their intent to merge, subject to due diligence. Further talks are planned to examine the business case for a formal merger and if successful the new college will launch on March 29, 2018.

A Transition Board has been created to oversee the process and will be chaired by the renowned educationalist at Sussex Downs College, Henry Ball. Tony Campbell OBE KSG, former Principal at St Richard's College and now Chair of Corporation at Sussex Coast College, will be Vice-Chair.

Sussex Downs College offers full-time and part-time courses including A-levels, BTECs, apprenticeships and a wide range of vocational qualifications. A total of 3,800 students aged 16-19 and 6,000 adult learners enrolled in 2016/17 across three sites in Eastbourne, Lewes and Newhaven.

Henry Ball, the Chair of Sussex Downs College, said:

“At a time of unprecedented changes in the sector, the potential ‘merger’ is a first step of an ambitious programme for educational change that will give young people, employers and adults throughout East Sussex ‘Access to Excellence’ - it will provide the highest level of qualifications and skills they need to achieve their ambitions.”

The colleges have been close working partners for some time. Launched a year ago, Sussex Skills Solutions is a highly successful joint venture that is focussed on apprenticeships and employer related trading. Working in partnership will be a hallmark of the new college as new and innovative ways of working are established with schools, parents, employers, social enterprises and local authorities.

Henry added:

“Both colleges have a distinguished legacy of serving their communities and it is our shared responsibility to ensure access to high quality education and training is in place for generations to come.”

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In 2010 Sussex Coast College Hastings opened two new college campuses, one on Station Plaza in the town centre and the other in Ore Valley. The £120 million project was transformative for Hastings and the college now welcomes over 1,800 young people and 4,000 adults every year to full-time and part-time academic and vocational courses from across Hastings and Rother.

Sussex Coast College is also launching a University Centre in September 2017 offering degrees and higher education to 400 students.

Tony Campbell commented:

“The Corporation of Sussex Coast College Hastings is committed to working collaboratively with Sussex Downs College for the development of the new College. Both Corporations have a progressive vision for this new College which will meet the very diverse education and training needs of young adults and employers across East Sussex and beyond. The strategic alliance will ensure the sustainability and development of both Colleges within their respective communities which they are committed to serving. We are also committed to improving the economic prosperity, life chances and wellbeing of every person in both communities and across East Sussex.”

**Ends**

**Note to news editors:**

Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College participated in the Government’s Area Review process designed to give colleges recommendations on how to be secure and provide a good quality offer to learners and employers in the long-term.

Following the Area Review recommendations and the Colleges’ close working relationship they have declared their intent to form a strategic alliance which in legal terms must be classified as a ‘merger’.

**For further information, please call Tim Cobb on 01323 416 999**