



## A consultation on a merger of Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College



Sussex  
Coast  
College

University  
Centre  
Hastings



SUSSEX  
SKILLS  
SOLUTIONS

# Introduction

This publication outlines the proposal for the merger\* between Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College.

Bringing the two colleges together to create a College Group for East Sussex provides a significant opportunity to pool expertise, resources and connections to develop a new model that improves standards and stimulates growth and responsiveness in a unique way – a way that ensures an appropriate focus on County priorities whilst preserving a local focus.

Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College are already extremely strong brands with a highly visible presence in their own local communities. However, it is clear that both organisations have a significant role to play in shaping and delivering a wider East Sussex agenda.

Bringing the two colleges together as the founding partners in a new County wide organisation is a deliberate and positive way to protect and nurture local provision in East Sussex. This facilitates opportunities for repositioning, growth and expansion, and for reaching out to those local communities which may have hitherto been relatively untouched by the influence of the two colleges and those individuals who have not engaged in education or training.

In doing this the College Group will better serve the learners, businesses and communities of East Sussex.

## OUR VISION AND COMMITMENT

The colleges are excited to announce their proposal to merge in order to create a new College Group. Together we have an exciting, ambitious and unique vision:

“The new organisation will provide outstanding, responsive and viable academic, professional and technical learning provision. It will provide excellent progression opportunities for students and deliver the national skills agenda to benefit individuals, communities and employers in East Sussex.”

### Standards

We will target improvement in standards across East Sussex so they:

- Meet and exceed the South East and national averages.
- Contribute positively to economic development and regeneration.

### Strategic Partnerships

We will work closely with our partners to:

- Open up new opportunities for co-operation and co-working
- Extend the Colleges' reach, inclusivity and engagement with all communities within East Sussex
- Maximise learning, skills development and progression for East Sussex communities.

We really value working with a range of partners including schools, colleges, universities, other training providers, the voluntary sector, the employer community, and local authorities.

### Solvency

We will manage resources to the highest standards, to benefit students and maximise their learning, progress and achievement.

\* The proposed merger of the two colleges is subject to a range of processes, resolutions and approvals.

## our commitment

The governing bodies of both colleges have been working together successfully and constructively to shape a future which responds to the learning, skills and career needs of today, tomorrow and beyond.

In presenting our proposal for merger we wish to assure our students and partners that the colleges will continue to operate on a business as usual basis and we are committed to delivering the merger with no disruption to our students and their learning. Throughout this process our focus will remain on ensuring we provide a first-class experience across both colleges.

The new organisation is committed to:

- A strong identity and brand that resonates with the area and meets the education, skills and training needs of East Sussex - essentially local, strategically sub-regional.
- Excellent, responsive and viable academic, professional and technical learning, delivering the national skills agenda to benefit employers whilst addressing strategic stakeholder needs.
- A focus on driving up standards across East Sussex, facilitating best practice-sharing, and contributing positively to economic development and regeneration in East Sussex, whilst providing opportunities for personal development, financial, health & well-being and active participation.
- A breadth of provision structured around core and specialist themes, providing clear and career-based progression opportunities to East Sussex residents.
- An operating model that ensures financial stability and effective deployment of the estate and facilities.

## background to the merger & national context

For East Sussex to be successful, the Governing Bodies recognise that it must have an educated and skilled population.

The merger of the two colleges to form a new College Group is a positive and proactive step on the part of both governing bodies to secure a strong future for further education and skills across the region. East Sussex's education system must meet this challenge if it is to enable the County, region and UK to compete effectively in the global economy post-Brexit.

The decision to merge coincided with the Government's programme of Area Based Reviews of colleges across Sussex, which aims to produce a more stable and resilient further education and sixth form sector.

Embracing the review process to develop further and strengthen their positions, Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College took this opportunity to develop proposals that would ensure the continuation and development of Further Education and sixth form provision for their towns and local communities, now and into the future.



## about the colleges and localities

### Sussex Coast College Hastings, East Sussex

A thriving further and higher education college, Sussex Coast College Hastings has three campuses in the historic town of Hastings.

Offering a wide range of courses, from entry level through to A-levels and Higher Education, students are able to study subjects in Art, Beauty, Catering, Computing, Construction, Engineering, Sport and Travel.

The College encourages each of its students to develop their employability skills by undertaking work experience placements as part of their course. It is able to offer expert support to students as the College currently holds the Matrix Standard for advice and guidance, the British Dyslexia Association Quality Mark, and Autism Accreditation status.



### Sussex Downs College Eastbourne, Lewes, Newhaven

A diverse and vibrant College community, Sussex Downs College caters for in excess of 12,000 students across its three campuses. Its varied course offer includes A Level subjects, professional and technical courses, degree courses, apprenticeships and programmes for 14 - 16-year-olds. The International College also welcomes students to study from abroad.

The College itself employs over 900 staff and has close ties with local employers and voluntary organisations to enable learners to access their full potential through work experience, apprenticeships and re-engagement programmes. Offering an inclusive environment where every learner is given the tools to achieve beyond their expectations, SDC's focus is on four key areas: Sixth Form; Professional & Technical education; adult learning and apprenticeships.





## what the merger means for each college

The merged organisation would include enhanced choice and access to provision that act and deliver for their communities, provide local learning for local people and businesses, deliver financial stability, boast attractive employment opportunities for staff, whilst simultaneously shaping a new future for the wider education and skills agenda for the area.

The merger will retain the existing Sussex Coast College structure, offering high quality academic, technical and professional education and training for young people, adults and employers in Hastings and Rother. This will include the further development of the college's existing sub brands including the University Centre Hastings.

The merger will re-engineer Sussex Downs College's existing college to create two new colleges:

### 1. A dedicated and branded sixth form college covering Lewes and Eastbourne

Specialising in A level and applied general provision, teaching, pastoral care, attainment and progression and attainment will aim to be outstanding and match leading sixth form colleges locally and regionally.

### 2. A dedicated professional and technical college covering Eastbourne, Lewes and Newhaven

Delivering a unique model of education and training, providing young people, adults and employers with the skills needed for today and in the future. The college will deliver provision at all levels of need, covering entry and initial skills for employment through to advanced and higher education opportunities linked to local and national skills needs.

- The majority of provision for 16-18 year olds will remain the same, with some additional developments at the higher level (Level 3) added to provide the wider range of skills needed for East Sussex.
- The Group envisages significant growth in Adult Skills related provision, with a specific focus upon the Technician Level (Level 3) provision to address the current and future skills shortages in the County. This will be planned and developed with employers.
- Higher Education provision is also a targeted growth area. The College will work closely with Higher Education partners, in particular the University of Brighton, to develop further provision to meet local and national needs, building upon the effective University Centre Hastings model.
- Working closely with East Sussex County Council, the Group would also ensure that education for young people and adults with Special Educational Need or Disabilities (SEND) would be enhanced and increased.

The following diagram shows how, at a Group level, the key East Sussex priorities can be responded to whilst ensuring that existing specialist provision and the specific needs of the key communities are being addresses through locally relevant and specific learning and skills training.

#### Key determining the volume of study at each campus.

-  Sixth form provision including A-Levels and applied subjects (BTEC Science for example)
-  Technical & Professional qualifications including Engineering, Construction, Care, Hospitality and Business
-  Higher Education provision with a range of degrees including apprenticeships
-  Adult Skills and Community providing accredited and non-accredited training
-  Specialist Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) provision
-  Sussex Skills Solutions for apprenticeship and employer-focused training

## Lewes

- A strong and high-performing Sixth Form College for A-Levels and applied subjects
- Excellent Technical and Professional provision for young people and adults that addresses current and future local, regional and national skills needs
- An expanded Adult Education offer to meet local needs for regeneration and economic growth
- Specialist SEND provision developed in partnership with East Sussex County Council and schools
- An apprenticeship and employer focused training offer delivered under the existing Sussex Skills Solutions brand
- An expanded Higher Education offer targeting key current and future skills needs for the town and County



## Eastbourne & Newhaven

- A strong and high-performing Sixth Form College for A-Levels and applied subjects
- Excellent Technical and Professional provision for young people and adults that addresses current and future local, regional and national skills needs
- An expanded Higher Education offer targeting key current and future skills needs for the town and County
- An expanded Adult Education offer to meet local needs for regeneration and economic growth
- Specialist SEND provision developed in partnership with East Sussex County Council and schools
- An apprenticeship and employer-focused training offer delivered under the existing Sussex Skills Solutions brand
- An enhanced offer at the Newhaven campus to support regeneration and growth linked to the Enterprise Zone



## Hastings (including Ore)

- A strong and high-performing Sixth Form College for A-Levels and applied subjects
- Excellent Technical and Professional provision for young people and adults that addresses current and future local, regional and national skills needs
- An expanded Higher Education offer targeting key current and future skills needs for the town and County
- An expanded Adult Education offer to meet local needs for regeneration and economic growth
- Specialist SEND provision developed in partnership with East Sussex County Council and schools
- An apprenticeship and employer-focused training offer delivered under the existing Sussex Skills Solutions brand



## impact on the student experience

Learners will benefit from:

- A smooth transition between the different phases of learning.
- A wider, yet local range of learning opportunities.
- Excellent teaching and tutorial support, including Student Support Services to help students who require specialist help and assistance.
- Excellent support for progression to university (including internal college Higher Education, local partner Universities, Russell Group and other specialist universities).
- Technical skills acquisition that responds to local skills shortages and sits at the heart of each student's wider personal development.
- Improved work placement opportunities and ultimately, employability via learning within organisations operating on a commercial basis.
- Well supported transition into meaningful employment.
- The development of robust, life-changing, opportunity-creating skills incorporating English, Maths, digital literacy, enterprise, collaboration and communication.
- Outstanding progression opportunities from Entry Level to Levels 5 and 6 (and beyond).

## impact on our communities

Effectively meeting the needs of local communities (urban and rural) is a key contribution that the new organisation can bring to the economy. Across the County we will seek to:

- Significantly impact on the wider East Sussex regeneration agenda and contribute to community development, business and jobs growth.
- Raise aspirations, increase participation and reduce the dropout rates of young people and adults in the County.
- Provide solutions for unemployment, under-employment or career changes for an ageing workforce.
- Address low skills levels and skills gaps in recognised key employment sectors.
- Contribute to reducing the proportion of NEETs in East Sussex, in partnership with the County Council.
- Improving achievement and attainment at Key Stage 5 for 16-18 year olds and improving educational attainment at Higher education levels for East Sussex

# leadership & governance

Our proposal is to deliver this merger under a technical process known as a Type B merger and this involves one of the governing bodies dissolving and the other receiving the assets and liabilities of the dissolving entity.

The Boards of Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College have both passed resolutions to consult on the dissolution of the Sussex Downs College Corporation. [Page 11](#) of this document refers specifically to the statutory consultation on the dissolution of the Sussex Downs College Corporation.

In delivering the merger, appropriate leadership and governance will be implemented across the organisation. Leadership structures will be developed to ensure appropriate local and strategic leadership is in place and governance structures will reflect the best practice in corporate governance whilst providing the opportunity to ensure local needs are responded to.

# impact on the employer experience

Employers will benefit from:

- Wider engagement in the development of the talent pipeline in East Sussex through curriculum co-creation, content determination and expert advice in key sector areas.
- Adding value through the development of a talented local workforce.
- Future-proofing of skills development ahead of need or shortage.
- Well-developed partnerships across all areas of technical need.
- An efficient and effective apprenticeship service for East Sussex's employers.
- Brokered apprenticeship levy services.

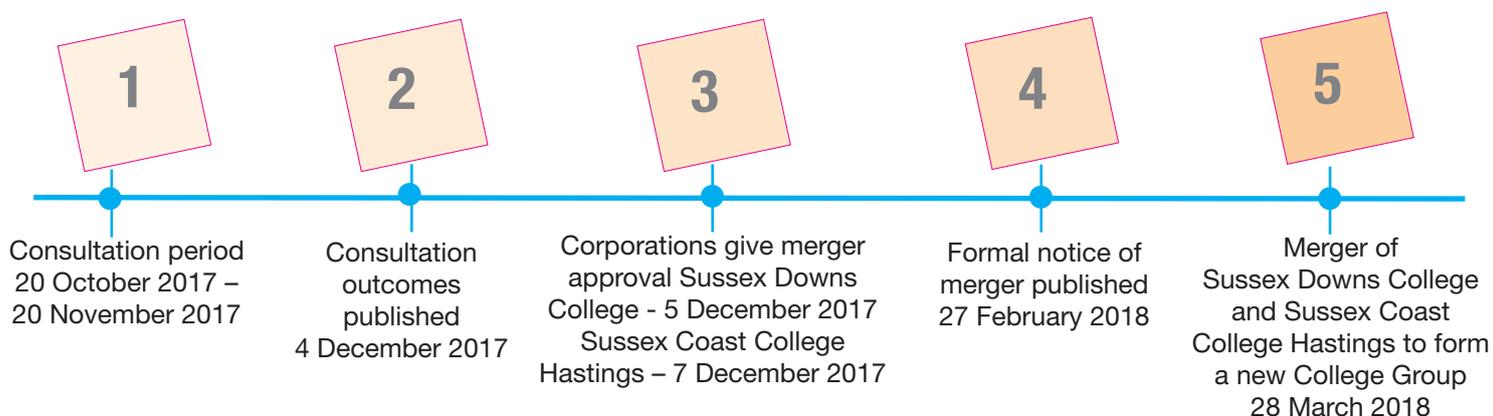


## timelines

The intention of the governing bodies of both colleges is to merge the two organisations in the week commencing 26th March 2018.

The process of merger will involve the dissolution of the Sussex Downs College Corporation and a formal consultation process will now commence on this aspect of the merger proposal.

As part of the merger process we also envisage commencing a technical consultation on changing the name of the Sussex Coast College Corporation to reflect the new reach and geography of the merged organisation.



## the public consultation process

There are two aspects to our public consultation process:

1. General consultation on the merger proposal itself.
2. The formal consultation process related to the dissolution of the Sussex Downs College Corporation.

### general consultation

Over the next few months, we will be engaging extensively with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss our plans for the merger. We are also inviting members of the public to comment on our proposal to merge the two colleges. We would welcome your views on the merger itself and the approach that is outlined in this consultation document.

You can contribute to the merger consultation process and give any views on the merger by emailing: [info@scc-sdc-merger.com](mailto:info@scc-sdc-merger.com) or completing the form below.

This aspect of the public consultation process will close on **20 November 2017**.

## CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Proposed merger between Sussex Coast College Hastings and Sussex Downs College response form.

Name: (optional)

Address: (optional)

Which of the following best describes you: (tick box)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student        | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Agency            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College Staff  | <input type="checkbox"/> Employer/Business            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer   | <input type="checkbox"/> College/training provider    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local resident | <input type="checkbox"/> School                       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below) |

Your comment, questions or suggestions about the merger or dissolution of the Sussex Downs College Corporation.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this response form, your comments are valuable to us.

Please return your submission to:  
Clerk to the Corporation,  
Sussex Downs College, Ecat House, Cross Levels Way,  
Eastbourne BN21 2UF – or email your response to:  
[info@scc-sdc-merger.com](mailto:info@scc-sdc-merger.com).

## consultation on the dissolution of the Sussex Downs College corporation

The Sussex Downs College Corporation will be writing officially to a range of stakeholders about its proposal to dissolve, to take effect on the merger with Sussex Coast College Hastings and to transfer its assets, rights and liabilities to that College.

Sussex Downs College resolved at its meeting of **18 September 2017**:

i.) To proceed to statutory consultation on the merger proposals, which are:

a. to create a new institution through a type B merger between Sussex Downs College and Sussex Coast College Hastings to provide the highest quality further and higher education in the region;

b. to dissolve the Corporation of Sussex Downs College and transfer its assets and liabilities to the new College

c. to undertake the legal transfer on or before **31 March 2018**

ii.) The following wording of the Notice to Dissolve, to be published in one local and one national newspaper:

Notice is given of a proposal to dissolve the Corporation of Sussex Downs College, as part of a merger with Sussex Coast College Hastings.

The proposed dissolution date is **29 March 2018**.

Members of the public are invited as part of this consultation to comment on the proposed dissolution.

The proposed dissolution will be publicised in the press as well.

You can contribute to this part of the consultation process by emailing [info@scc-sdc-merger.com](mailto:info@scc-sdc-merger.com)

**This public consultation process will close on 20 November 2017.**



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