



Proposed merger of Epping Forest College and New City College.

Consultation summary

1. Summary of the consultation process

The Corporation of Epping Forest College has consulted on its proposed merger with New City College in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The statutory public notice of the proposal of the dissolution of Epping Forest College Corporation was published on 29 March 2018. This was followed by a detailed merger proposal document. Responses, comments and questions were invited by a deadline of 4 June 2018. One late response was received and accepted on 6 June 2018.

2. Summary of formal responses to the public consultation

The college received five written requests for the merger document and eleven written responses to the proposal. These included responses from students, local stakeholders, local councillors, staff and one of the college's recognised trade unions. Those who responded have received individual replies from the college.

Common themes in the responses include:

How Epping Forest College students might be affected by the merger

College response: Epping Forest College students should not notice any change in their day-to-day college experience as a result of merger, though the merger will allow increased investment into their teaching and learning environment. No students will need to travel to another campus to complete their courses and qualifications.

The need for a continued local provision delivered from the Epping Forest College campus, which meets the needs and demands of local people and the economy

College response: The college will continue to deliver a broad and varied curriculum from its current campus, responding to the needs of the local community and employers. The boards are committed to making sure that our communities are equipped with skills and qualifications they need to progress and succeed in their careers. Being part of a wider college group will allow curriculum growth including the development of specialisms and enhanced opportunities for professional development.

Recognition of recent improvements to quality and operational management at Epping Forest College and the need for this improvement to continue

College response: Both college boards are fully committed to continued improvement. The merger will facilitate extensive sharing of best practice across all areas of teaching, learning and quality processes which will make sure of a high quality offer to students and local communities now and in the future.

Benefits to the local community

College response: This merger will secure a continued further education provision for the community of Epping Forest District and gives the college an opportunity for long term viability which it otherwise would not have. A clear benefit of the merger to the communities served by the college is the continuation of courses, supported by a financially robust organisation. The merger will also bring benefits of shared best practice which will help to enhance quality still further and support investment into specialisms and will support the success and progression of Epping Forest College students.

The need to maintain strong local strategic partnerships

College response: It is important that the college continues to work with partners and to prepare students for the career opportunities of the Epping Forest District, as well as those of the wider region and the capital. The continued support of local strategic partners is valued and appreciated.

Recommendation for local management within the wider college Group

College response: The boards agree that it is essential that a further education college must work with and respond to the needs of its local communities and economy. The New City College model allows and supports this approach, with locally managed campuses within the wider organisational structure. An Epping Forest Local Advisory Board is to be formed, comprised of governors, staff, students and local business and community representatives. This Board will advise on general strategy relating to Epping Forest College and the district, including in particular curriculum and business development/apprenticeship strategies.

Specific arrangements for staff

College response: No staff cuts are planned as a result of merger. Staffing levels are informed by funding levels. A full TUPE consultation with staff will be accompanied by the relevant details for staff to make informed decisions. Local line management will be retained in the majority of cases and there are no plans for Epping Forest College staff to relocate at the point of merger.

The assets of Epping Forest College

College response: New City College does not have plans in place for the land assets of Epping Forest College and this will be carefully considered in due course.

The timescale of merger preparations and consultation

College response: The consultation has been carried out in accordance with regulations. A merger for Epping Forest College was recommended by the college's Structure and Prospects Appraisal led by the Further Education Commissioner of which key stakeholders were aware. It was also noted in the Greater Essex Further Education Area-based Review, published in August 2017. The Department for Education has given a clear mandate for merger by 1 August 2018. Epping Forest College has been exploring merger partners through this period. The merger cannot be postponed. The due diligence process has been undertaken robustly and under the guidance of external advisors.

Financial benefits of the merged organisation

The merger has not been planned to save money however in its previous mergers the New City College group has been able to effect savings in the areas of software, printing, insurance and other running costs. The college will be better-able to access diversified sources of funding and subsequent investment, in order to better meet the needs of its local communities, as part of a wider college group. The merged organisation will have good financial strength.