

DELIVERING
EXCELLENCE IN
FURTHER EDUCATION
**IN WARRINGTON &
MID CHESHIRE**



**Proposed Merger
Consultation Feedback
June 2017**



Warrington Collegiate



Mid
Cheshire
College

CONSULTATION OUTCOME STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the 30-day public consultation about the proposed merger between Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College. We have received emails via the consultation survey, letters and have held employer and head teacher briefings, alongside student and staff events. We are satisfied that we have given the public and key stakeholders ample opportunity to respond.

We have listened carefully to your feedback during the consultation process and we will use your feedback to inform our planning.

The feedback we received has reaffirmed our ambition to merge on 1 August 2017.



Mervyn Ward
Chair of Governors
Warrington Collegiate



Geoff Hope-Terry
Chair of Governors
Mid Cheshire College

The Corporations of Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College held a joint public consultation from 28 March 2017 to 28 April 2017 proposing the merger of the two institutions, to create a new FE college serving the region.

A 12-page consultation document was widely circulated. The document set out the merger proposal, outlined the need for change and the benefits of the merger.

This publication summarises the responses received during the consultation period. It also clarifies and responds to issues raised. It should be read in conjunction with the original consultation document, which can be viewed online at www.warringtonandmidcheshire.co.uk

CONSULTATION

We received 35 written responses from individuals and organisations to our merger proposal.

The colleges have also received significant support for the college name to change to Warrington & Vale Royal College and we have recently received approval from the emergency services for the use of this name, alongside campus identification as detailed below.

Vale Royal has been chosen for inclusion in the college name because the towns of Northwich and Winsford resided within the borough of Vale Royal between 1974 and 2009 and Vale Royal also appears on most street signs in the area of Hartford and Winsford today. In addition, the town is home to Vale Royal Abbey, a medieval abbey founded in 1270.

It is proposed that the college sites will be referred to as:

Warrington & Vale Royal College - Hartford Campus
Warrington & Vale Royal College - Warrington Campus
Warrington & Vale Royal College - Winsford Campus

The Corporations of Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College have agreed the name and we are currently awaiting approval from the Secretary of State and Cabinet Office.

Feedback received:

“By bringing the colleges together, it will give us more financial stability and potentially a larger curriculum offering for potential students.” (College staff)

“Students of all ages, living in the communities will be provided with an excellent higher education collaborative, which will help develop local and national economic skills priorities in the future. This will help support industry via apprenticeships and underpin the growth of the region - excellent opportunity.” (College staff)

“Greater capacity to develop expertise in order to provide strong post 16 progression routes locally, which can adapt confidently to a changing qualifications’ framework and which can work in close partnership with local schools to enable smooth transition for learners. This can be underpinned by greater financial resilience.” (Local head teacher)

“We are committed to supporting the new college in the future, in order to ensure that the needs of local people and employers are met.” (Local Authority)

“We really welcome the local offer from Mid Cheshire College and it’s reassuring that will still be available for us.” (Local employer)

“I am positive and supportive. The vision seems strong and do-able. It should be possible to translate the theory into practical reality.” (Local head teacher).

“The Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomes the proposal and see this as a very positive step in response to the Area Based Review and the wider review of post-sixteen education. We believe that the proposal will yield a number of benefits for employers and chamber members and that the new college will be able to respond to their needs in a more coherent and cost-effective manner.” (Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in association with Vale Royal)

“I am content you are following the statutory process....[and] officials from the Education and Skills Funding Agency will continue to work with you to support and monitor the planned implementation of the planned merger.”
(Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills)

“[The merger will secure] the future of FE and adult learner provision in the Mid Cheshire area.”
(College student)

EMERGING THEMES

Some specific issues were raised by learners, parents and local community stakeholders, especially in the Mid Cheshire area. After careful consideration of these issues, we offer the following response:

Transportation between the college sites and the risk of closure

Our aim is to create a larger, financially stable and economically resilient institution, which will build on and strengthen the educational offering currently provided by the partner colleges at campuses in Hartford, Warrington and Winsford.

We recognise the importance of ensuring an excellent provision across the three sites and are keen that learners benefit from the outstanding facilities available. Hartford, Warrington and Winsford campuses will feature in our curriculum plans moving forward. We will make every effort to minimise the impact that any changes may have on our learners. However, in the event of under-recruitment, small class sizes and course viability will have to be considered. If learners are required to travel between sites, we will communicate this to learners and their parents and a free shuttle bus will be available. Whilst it is noted that there are several bus routes between Northwich and Warrington, the college will provide free, daily college buses running in the morning, arriving in time for the start of the teaching day and at the end of the teaching day, for learners travelling from Hartford, Northwich and Winsford into Warrington and vice versa. Wherever possible, the cost of transport will be shared with other schools and colleges.

We have no plans to close the Winsford campus. Instead, over a period of time, it is our intention to invest in best in class facilities and resources there to meet and exceed industry standards and respond to the skills needs articulated by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the government's modern industrial strategy.

Strategic approach to apprenticeship delivery and employer engagement

Apprenticeships will form an integral part of the college's strategy to ensure learners progress into fulfilling careers. Technical pathways will feed directly into apprenticeship provision through current frameworks and the new standards at higher levels, with a particular emphasis on growth in degree level apprenticeships. The new college will respond to local skills priorities in key sectors identified by the LEP, for example, life sciences and engineering, as well as responding to the skills needs of employers in other sectors, including the Winsford project. The new college will develop its commercial strategy to engage and collaborate with employer partners, securing their future investment and mitigating against an over-reliance on public funding.

Management of the merger

The merger has been managed through a Joint Steering Group (JSG) with representatives from the Boards of Corporation at Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College, along with an ESFA observer. The partner colleges have appointed an experienced and skilled project manager to oversee the merger to meet the vesting date of 1st August 2017.

Ofsted, the FE Commissioner and the ESFA are kept up to date with merger activity through a series of meetings and visits to the partner colleges.

The financial proposal for the merger has been prepared on a very prudent basis and will enable the creation of a sustainable college with improved financial health. Barclays Bank PLC confirmed their support for the financial proposal in May 2017.

Possible effects on staff

The colleges have held regular briefings and consultation meetings with staff and recognised Trade Union representatives, which have enabled any concerns to be raised and addressed at an early stage. In the context of the uncertainties regarding future funding faced by the whole of the Further Education sector, both colleges have had, and continue to have, an open and transparent dialogue with staff.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Following your feedback, we will ensure that:

- We put learners at the heart of all we do: meeting their needs, raising their aspirations, ambition and improving their life chances;
- There are a number of quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure that learners' needs will be met;
- We work together to develop an integrated and embedded learning strategy that ensures excellent teaching, learning, assessment and learning support for all learners, including those with special educational needs and disabilities;
- Our curriculum plan will respond to new information, market intelligence and/or changes to the economic strategy as well as providing a coherent response to LEP priority sectors, raising skills levels and enriching the learning experience for our students;
- A key component of our curriculum is a range of clear progression routes at all levels into positive destinations, higher level study or work;
- Our learners have a clear view of their progression and feel empowered to make confident and informed choices through the provision of high quality careers advice and guidance;
- We work together to build on the strengths of each partner college and their locality;
- We share our talents and expertise, truly developing staff, creating a culture of co-prosperity;
- We create a single gateway for business and industry – diversifying and growing apprenticeship provision and commercial programmes;
- The merged college is a financially resilient and sustainable entity;
- We take advantage of the outstanding resources, including technologies, across the Hartford, Warrington and Winsford sites and plan our curriculum accordingly;
- We minimise any disruption to learners.





www.warringtonandmidcheshire.co.uk



Warrington Collegiate



Mid
Cheshire
College