CONSULTATION RESPONSE
Telford College of Arts and Technology and New College Telford
Introduction

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the month-long public consultation on the proposed merger between Telford College of Arts and Technology and New College Telford to develop a single college that serves the people and businesses of Telford, Shropshire and beyond.

Feedback was invited through completion of our survey, both by post and online, and by attendance at one of our three public consultation events. Comments – positive, negative and neutral – were received from a range of our stakeholders – from students, parents and staff members across both colleges to representatives of our partners, including local government and the business community, as well as residents from the local community.

We have listened to all the feedback we have received, which reaffirmed the merger of the two colleges is right for the people, the communities and the businesses of Telford. The majority of the responses were in favour of the merger. All the results and the comments received will be taken into consideration during the detailed planning and communication phase.

We are satisfied our stakeholders were given ample opportunity to comment and they endorse our vision ‘To be a successful and good sub-regional college by 2020/21 and then by 2025/26 a regional player that wins national contracts. The merged college will provide students, businesses and communities of Telford and Wrekin with high quality education, skills and training.’

We want to be first choice educational provider whether you’re a school leaver, university student, retraining or an employer looking to grow your business. The merger will bring together best practice and expertise from each college and the opportunity to offer both academic and vocational qualifications. The merger will secure the long term future of the colleges, which will allow us to invest in our provision, facilities and students. This really is an exciting time for both organisations as we look to play a leading role in the development of Telford and Shropshire, where companies continue to invest and grow each year.

We thank you for your support.

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Summary

The corporations of Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) and New College Telford (NCT) jointly held a public consultation from 21 March 2017 to 21 April 2017 into proposals to merge the two institutions to create a single college serving the area.

The proposal was described in a 12-page document called “Proposed Merger: Telford College of Arts and Technology and New College Telford”. The consultation document, widely circulated to local, regional and national stakeholders, set out the reasons for the merger and its benefits as viewed by the two governing bodies. It also included a survey, requesting answers to a number of specific questions.

We received a total of 31 responses to our survey – 25 online and 6 in writing. We also offered the opportunity to attend public consultations on 27-29 March 2017 at different venues – the Park Lane Centre in Woodside, TCAT and NCT. Survey responses were received from people describing themselves as TCAT staff (10), students (8), NCT staff (4), parents (2), local community (2), other (2), FE/Sixth Form College (1), business group (1) and local government (1).

This report sets out and analyses the responses received during this month-long consultation period. It clarifies and responds to issues raised and sets out the next steps in the process.

In summary:

- The majority SUPPORTED the proposed merger of the two colleges.
- The majority EXPRESSED a preference to support new college name.
- The majority AGREED with plans to invest in student opportunities and provide employers with training and skills that contribute to growth in the local and regional economy.
- The majority AGREED with plans to share good practice on one campus (TCAT), after capital investment and modifications, in order to further enhance the quality of student and customer experiences.
- The majority AGREED with plans to focus on innovation, access to quality learning and being a source of pride for our local communities.

A summary of the survey responses can be found in the next section. A copy of all comments received is available on request.
Question

Do you support the proposed merger of TCAT and NCT?

Comments summary

- Protect the sixth form identity.
- Should have happened before now.
- Some concerns around financial standing, leadership and student numbers.
- Ensure the merger supports the future demands of the growing population.
- This will be an excellent opportunity for the young people of Telford and Wrekin.
- As long as jobs are protected and quality of learning is not compromised.
- Needs to bring the best of vocational courses and academic courses together.
- Ensure A-level courses are still of a high standard so students can aspire to university/HE.
Do you support Telford College as the proposed name of the merged college?

Question

Yes – 47%
No – 44%
Unsure – 9%

Comments summary

- A wonderful new opportunity for both colleges and the local community - a brand new college with a fresh start and clean slate when it comes to reputation and image.
- Easily recognisable – creates a strong brand around Telford as a town of innovation, industry and growth.
- Similar to the TCAT name.
- A good opportunity to reinvent the two college brands.
- Not sure it best reflects the catchment area of the new entity - mainly due to not understanding where current and future students will travel from.
- Bring as much prestige to the town of Telford as possible.
Question

As Telford College, we plan to invest in student opportunities and provide employers with training and skills that contribute to growth in the local and regional economy. Do you support these aims?

Comments summary

- Ensure the vocational courses are not reduced or devalued if A-level provision is introduced.
- It is still worth providing an academic education to attract more able students, even if that means they will move out of the area.
- Ensure academic qualifications are supported.
- The relationship between schools, FE and business needs to be strengthened to ensure young people are work ready and can access the wealth of opportunities in Telford.
- Skills for the whole economy – science, technology, medicine, societal needs, media and arts.

Yes – 87.5%
Unsure – 12.5%
As Telford College, we plan to share good practice on one campus (TCAT), after capital investment and modifications, in order to further enhance the quality of student and customer experiences. Do you support these aims?

Comments summary

- The college must be accessible to all across the borough and must be an attractive option for young people.
- Ensure procurement is undertaken properly with appropriate use of funds.
- Address traditional industrial skills as well as the investment in new high tech industries.
- Where will new buildings and additional car parking be located to cater for the increased capacity?
- TCAT should be a vocational site and NCT should become a strong sixth form site.
- It is clear that development of the campus will be needed to accommodate students from NCT.

Question

Yes – 66%
No – 15%
Unsure – 19%
Question

As Telford College, we will focus on innovation, access to quality learning and being a source of pride for our local communities. Do you support these aims?

Comments summary

- All these services should be delivered.
- Aims will be achieved through the work of staff at all levels across the colleges.
- For innovation to take place, a safe, meaningful and trusted relationship needs to be formed and maintained within the organisation.
- Expand course provision
- The curriculum at the college must fully reflect these aims – support for all, regardless of ability.
- Industry is important but so are the arts.

Yes – 88%
No – 3%
Unsure – 9%
Question

Do you think anybody, including students or staff, will be adversely affected by the merger plans?

Comments summary

- Students and staff need to be valued.
- Emphasis on technical training, scientific education and arts.
- The new combined college needs to present a strong offer with a variety of courses that will entice students from beyond Telford.
- Provision for students with special educational needs.
- Current students’ education could suffer if focus is lost with the merger process.
- Students may have less of a choice of subjects.
- There are sure to be job losses at many levels.
Theme 1 – Progress and leadership
A permanent principal – Graham Guest – for the merged college is now in place and the recruitment to senior positions making up the senior leadership team is underway. The Shadow Board, the group established to oversee development of the merger plan and its implementation, meets on a fortnightly basis. Lead officers have been identified for all of the plan’s key components – they meet regularly with colleagues to deliver these workstreams and report on progress to the Board.

Theme 2 – Staffing
The corporations understand that keeping staff members up to date with all aspects of the merger is important and are committed to ensuring they receive regular updates on merger progress. In the run up to and after the merger, the new principal will regularly engage with staff members across both college sites to meet with them and answer any questions they may have. The merger is an opportunity to share the good practice we know already takes place across the two colleges and to use that to become a high quality education, skills and trading provider for Telford and beyond.

Theme 3 – Academic provision
The vision for the merged college, as set out in the public consultation document, stated the merged college would have a comprehensive and diverse curriculum. Academic provision will play just as important a role in achieving that as vocational provision will. The sixth form at NCT will move onto the TCAT site in 2018/19 and it will form a critical and leading role at the merged college.

Theme 4 – Moving to one site
Work is already underway to plan for the relocation of NCT’s sixth form provision onto the TCAT site. There will be a dedicated sixth form centre on site and options are being explored for where new sixth form facilities will be incorporated into the existing TCAT campus. With regards to the logistics of additional students and staff members on one site, this will not happen until September 2018; therefore the next 12 months will be used to fully review the timetabling and room use at TCAT. We will take steps to ensure that we safeguard the interests of students and their teaching and learning when relocating to TCAT site. A similar review will also be undertaken for parking, which was noted within the feedback.

Theme 5 – Reputation, branding and identity
The merger provides opportunity for new beginnings and for best practices and expertise to come together. The corporations believe the merged college will restore local people’s confidence through delivering high quality teaching and learning; providing rewarding experiences for students; achieving excellent results; and building mutually productive relationships with its stakeholders, including local businesses. It is also important that the name of the college reflects the locality in which it is situated and is recognised externally. For these reasons, the name of the merged college will be Telford College. The new organisation will go through a full rebrand with a new name, logo, mission statement and tagline. Stakeholders will be engaged throughout the exercise to best reflect the new values of the college and bring together a brand that best represents students, staff, employers and the local community.

Themes raised

Whilst the survey confirmed the merger was supported by the colleges’ stakeholders, it also provided the opportunity to capture and understand more clearly any questions from those directly involved in the merger. These have been captured below and will be taken into account as we move forward with the merger plans.
The colleges are committed to merging on the proposed date of 01 August 2017. In order for merger to take place, the Corporation of New College Telford will officially agree to dissolve and the Corporation of Telford College of Arts and Technology will officially submit its change of name to Telford College.

On the day of merger, all assets previously owned by NCT will transfer to Telford College and staff members will move over to Telford College on their existing employment terms and conditions, as per TUPE legislation. A new governing body will be formed, following an extensive review of membership, structures, policies and processes, and will officially come into being on this day.

The merger webpage will be kept updated with information about progress, key dates and implementation. This can be found at www.tcat.ac.uk/merger and the email address publicconsultation@tcat.ac.uk can be used to contact the colleges about the merger.