



## **Response Proposed Merger Consultation Document**

### **Redcar & Cleveland College and Stockton Riverside College**

**April 2018**

The recognised Joint Trade Unions (UCU and UNISON) respond to the proposed merger of Redcar & Cleveland College and Stockton Riverside College (“the Colleges”) as follows.

#### **Background and Introduction**

Since December 2017, the Joint Trade Unions (JTUs) have held regular “Merger Consultation” meetings with senior managers and HR representatives from both Colleges. We have welcomed these meetings which have been a productive way of working together positively with “the Colleges”.

We have not opposed the merger, and we have always made it clear that this would be our position. Our concerns have always been:

- 1) The delivery of high quality, diverse education provision in the local communities that are currently served by the existing Colleges;
- 2) The protection of jobs at current sites;
- 3) No detriment in staff terms and conditions and pay;
- 4) The involvement of the recognised staff trade unions in consultations about these changes and into the future;

Our hopes for the new College are that it builds on the good traditions of “the Colleges” and that it continues to provide education and training for their local communities, delivered by staff that are valued and treated with respect. We welcome the statements in the consultation document about the benefits of the merged college for staff.

## **Educational Provision**

Both Colleges recently underwent OFSTED inspections, with some positive comments about the delivery of education in both. We would want to see the diverse range of high quality education that is currently provided to continue: building on the positive traditions of both institutions.

## **A presence in both boroughs**

Insecurity and uncertainty prior to a merger are an understandable concern of staff in “the Colleges”. We are pleased to see a commitment from the new College that:

*‘Local provision will continue to enable easy access for all learners.’*

Staff and students value their local further education college and we want to see good FE provision continue in the areas that “The Colleges” currently serve.

## **Consultation with Staff**

The JTUs continue to be consulted about the proposed merger of “the Colleges”. This formal response is part of the process of the JTUs making representations, and we will continue to make these on behalf of our affected members. We would like to talk about industrial relations in the new College prior to the merger, so that the new institution continues this process of consultation and negotiation.

## **Protections and Reassurances for Staff**

The TUPE process offers some protections for staff and we will be involved in that formal consultation process when it begins. But this is still a time of uncertainty in both Colleges as there has been much change within the further education sector in the last few years. Previously proposed mergers involving “The Colleges” did not take place. Above all, staff are seeking a defined future and some stability.

The protection of jobs for our members, no compulsory redundancies, and no detriment to terms and conditions for those in the new College – are all matters that are important to the JTUs and our members at “the Colleges”. Reassurances are important for staff at this time.

This is perhaps more the case for our members at Redcar & Cleveland College, as that organisation will cease to exist in this Type B merger, but reassurances are also needed for staff at Stockton Riverside College.

The location where staff work is important to them. Any change to both permanent and temporary workplace needs to be the subject of meaningful consultation. The JTUs wish to agree some principles around this, as well as any changes in policies, procedures and practices.

## **Governance**

The governance arrangements for the new College should ensure:

- 1) The involvement of all staff groups;
- 2) Representation from both former Colleges;

We understand that there are difficulties in formulating rules which would guarantee this, but with two staff governors on the Board we would hope that these principles would guide the Board’s thinking in terms of staff representation.

## **The Future**

The educational provision that currently exists at all the sites of “The Colleges” should continue to operate and serve those local communities. That is the benefit of further education – local college for local people. We acknowledge this commitment as outlined in the consultation document which states that:

*‘a priority of the merger is to ensure that both colleges retain their existing campuses, individual identities and names, never losing sight of those things that are specific to each college. Our vision is to deliver a local college for local people.’*

The JTUs will continue to work with the senior representatives of “the Colleges” to represent the interests of our membership up until the point of the merger, and will work with the new leadership when that is in place.

The joint trade unions have every interest in making sure that the new College works well for the benefit of the staff, students, and our local communities and we will continue to be involved in that evolving process.