



**CONSULTATION ON
PROPOSED MERGER**



**Richmond Adult and Community College
and Hillcroft College**

March – May 2017

Contents

- 3** Foreword
- 4** Context for the Merger
- 5** Vision
- 6** The Merger Proposal
- 7** Quality
- 8** Benefits to:
 - Students
 - Community and employers
 - Staff
- 9** Impact on competition

Appendices:

- 10** A - College locations
- 11** B - Merger timescale
- 12** C - Indicative list of stakeholders
- 13** D - Information to be provided
 - in accordance with regulations
 - (Statutory Notice)
- 14** E - Responding to the consultation



Foreword

Richmond Adult and Community College (RACC) and Hillcroft College are pleased to announce their proposal to merge the two colleges, the result of which will be a single legal entity.

The proposal is for the merged college to be named Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College.

The merger will provide a sustainable foundation from which adult learning can grow and flourish. It will enable us to both protect our existing provision and develop new provision to meet the needs of our learner groups, our local communities and the wider community we serve.

The existing curriculum offers will be retained.

The governors of both colleges support the reorganisation and recognise the benefits that the merger will bring. The merger is also supported by the London South Area Review Group.

Louise Fluker

*Chair,
Richmond Adult and Community College*

This merger offers an exciting opportunity to combine the expertise of the two colleges to provide an outstanding range of innovative and inclusive courses and learner support services.

Our public consultation begins on 31 March 2017 and runs to the 5 May 2017.

We have outlined in this consultation document the way in which you can take part and express your views about our plans, and view the proposed timeline both colleges are working to.

We strongly urge you to take part in the consultation process and we look forward to receiving your views.

Linda Jones

*Chair,
Hillcroft College*



Context for the Merger

Richmond Adult and Community College (RACC) has been meeting adult learning needs in Richmond since 1895 and has adopted different structural and legal forms through its lifespan to support the delivery of its adult learning mission.

Over recent years RACC's income has declined as a result of government policy to withdraw funding for adult learning from general further education. As a General Further Education College (GFE) RACC has also faced difficulties in matching Government funding priorities to the broader learning needs of the whole community.

Hillcroft College is a Specialist Designated Institution (SDI), also known as an Institute for Adult Learning, situated in Surbiton. Established in 1920, it has a national mission and is the only publicly funded institution providing residential education specifically for women with multiple disadvantage in the UK. As an SDI its funding has not been reduced at the same rate as RACC. However, as the second smallest college in England it is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain financial sustainability.

RACC and Hillcroft College entered into a federation partnership on August 1st 2015.

Following an evaluation of the first year of the federation, the RACC Governing Body and the Hillcroft Council, at their October 2016 meetings, agreed to explore merger.

Subsequently, a feasibility study of the merger was undertaken and at their December meetings both colleges agreed to proceed further with the merger proposal.

This proposal is a development of the federation partnership and is also consistent with the Government's agenda for further education.

The reorganisation will enable economies of scale to be realised which will aid financial sustainability and improve services to learners. This will enable greater investment in curriculum development giving protection to both the women's mission of Hillcroft and the wider adult provision of RACC, especially provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.



Vision

Both colleges provide high quality and excellent inclusive adult learning opportunities to people of all abilities, ages and backgrounds underpinned by effective pastoral and learning support. We are joining forces to build on this inclusive approach to enable more adults to achieve their potential.

The merged specialist adult learning institution will seek to:

- Be the outstanding adult education provider of choice for South West London providing learning for life, work and wellbeing across Richmond, Kingston, Merton, Hounslow and Wandsworth local communities, across London and nationally for communities of practice.
- Provide accessible learning opportunities and coherent learning pathways from local community learning to national higher education that are highly responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.
- Achieve long-term financial sustainability through reduced operating costs and increased capacity for income generation.
- Provide focused residential and day provision for women, people with disabilities and adults at risk of not achieving their potential due to social disadvantage.
- Provide non-accredited learning for wellbeing for adult learners of all ages, abilities and background.

The merged institution will protect Hillcroft's women only provision within the wider curriculum offer. The expertise within the merged College will enable improved progression opportunities for disadvantaged women through the availability of a broad range of curriculum pathways leading to volunteering, employment and higher education.

Equality and Diversity are key to the merged College vision which will seek to:

- Ensure that equality and social inclusion is embedded into the curriculum, strategy, operations and all aspects of the student experience.
- Continue to deliver high quality and effective support for all students and particularly those identified as having specific and additional learning needs.

Both colleges are relatively small and have objectives for growth and to increase learner numbers. Both colleges also have a curriculum focus on learners from disadvantaged groups and recruit on a local and regional basis.

The merged College commits to maintaining the range of opportunities that meet existing learner needs and ensure that future curriculum is planned in response to local, regional and national needs. It will be important for the future success of the College that in changing circumstances it keeps under review its assets in order to obtain the best advantage for its learners.

We intend to achieve this by maintaining both sites and retaining their current brands. Focused offers for specific learner groups will also be associated with a centre e.g. The Hillcroft offer for women, The Richmond Business School offer for employers.

The Merger Proposal

The colleges have different legal structures: Richmond Adult and Community College (RACC) is a General Further Education College (GFE) and Hillcroft, a Specialist Designated Institute (SDI), is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.

It is proposed that a 'Type B' merger is used to create the new college. This is a technical approach to a college merger that involves one of the corporations or governing bodies dissolving.

This proposed merger is being undertaken in a manner that is a 'reverse' of the norm where the smaller college dissolves. This merger will involve RACC dissolving as a GFE and its property, rights and liabilities transferring to Hillcroft College. The rationale for this type of merger is therefore that the merged college will have SDI status.

Both colleges benefit from strong and committed governing bodies that have a good understanding of the needs of their learner communities.

It has been agreed that the merged College will have a new Board of Governors and Governors from both of the existing colleges will join it.

Appointments to the new board will be based on skills needs. It is believed that this approach will ensure that a governance structure is in place that will deliver stability and continuity whilst at the same time ensuring that the merged College will benefit from an appropriate level of strategic focus.

The pre-merger college brands and college campus names will be maintained.

The merged College will seek to bring together all support operations into new combined teams.

At the time the merger takes place the name of Hillcroft College will change to 'Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College'.

The provisional date for the merger is 1 August 2017



Quality

The merger will bring a number of quality benefits by combining the best practices of both colleges with the overall aim to further enhance all the quality standards currently achieved by both colleges. *Currently both colleges are rated 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features by Ofsted and will continue to drive up standards.*

The merged College will create the capacity and capability to achieve excellence across the broad range of provision and an Ofsted 'Outstanding' rating. Learner satisfaction levels in both colleges are extremely high. RACC came top of the 2015/16 national Learner Satisfaction Survey.

As a merged college we will be educationally and financially strong, delivering high quality programmes to meet learner and employer needs. We will remain steadfastly at the heart of our local communities and keep those within our college community at the heart of everything we undertake.

We will remain committed to using self-assessment as a tool for quality improvement and will strive for continuous improvement in all that we do by:

- Continuously and rigorously monitoring performance and addressing any areas of weakness.
- Sharing the best practices of quality improvement, teaching, learning and assessment skills.
- Benchmarking successful practice with other providers.
- Designing programmes and services to meet the needs of students.
- Developing the professional skills of all staff and introducing best practice.
- Continuing to listen to the views of students and all other stakeholders by seeking feedback about our services and using this as the basis for improvement.
- Striving to become an outstanding provider as judged by Ofsted, and other regulatory bodies, in a way that is consistent with our values and ethos.
- Continuing to develop expertise in English, maths and foundation skills that enable learners to achieve their life and career goals.



The Benefits of this Proposal

The vision, mission and aims of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College will focus on the needs of students, the continuous enhancement of quality and providing appropriate progression opportunities into employment, further and higher study.

Benefit to students

- The merged College will build upon local priorities for those who do not possess the required employability skills or who have poor literacy and numeracy skills.
- The provision of academic and wider vocational opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will be expanded to aid entry to employment and further study on both a day and residential basis.
- As student needs are varied and many have low starting points, they will have access to high levels of academic, pastoral and learning support.
- The College will increase its employer based provision to help meet the needs of the local and regional economy.
- Where appropriate and effective, the development of more digital forms of delivery and learning will be supported within a blend of high quality traditional methods.
- The College will continue to drive improvements to the learner experience and develop opportunities for progression.
- The quality of the current Hillcroft facilities will be improved.



Benefit to the community and employers

The merged College will have enhanced ability to respond to local and regional needs creating progression opportunities for the most disadvantaged learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and wellbeing opportunities for the whole community.

- Both of the existing sites will provide hubs for community involvement and inclusion.
- Using the RACC fee strategy and delivery plans agreed by Richmond and Kingston Councils fee income will complement government grant funding to create provision to meet the broad range of learning needs.
- Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College's SDI status will enable a greater range of first steps and wellbeing provision to meet the needs of the unemployed, older people, people with disabilities and those new to the UK. It would also enable intensive residential provision to be offered.
- Consolidation and enhancement of existing training and services offered, so a greater number of employers, SMEs and self-employed people can gain access.

Impact on competition

Both Colleges are entering into the merger on the basis that by working together they will be better placed to raise quality of provision and increase choice for learners while at the same time being more efficient and financially sustainable.

Given the nature of provision of both colleges it is not anticipated that there will be any major impact on neighbouring providers. The merged college will continue to work with its partners to further develop partnership initiatives for the benefit of learners.

Benefit to staff

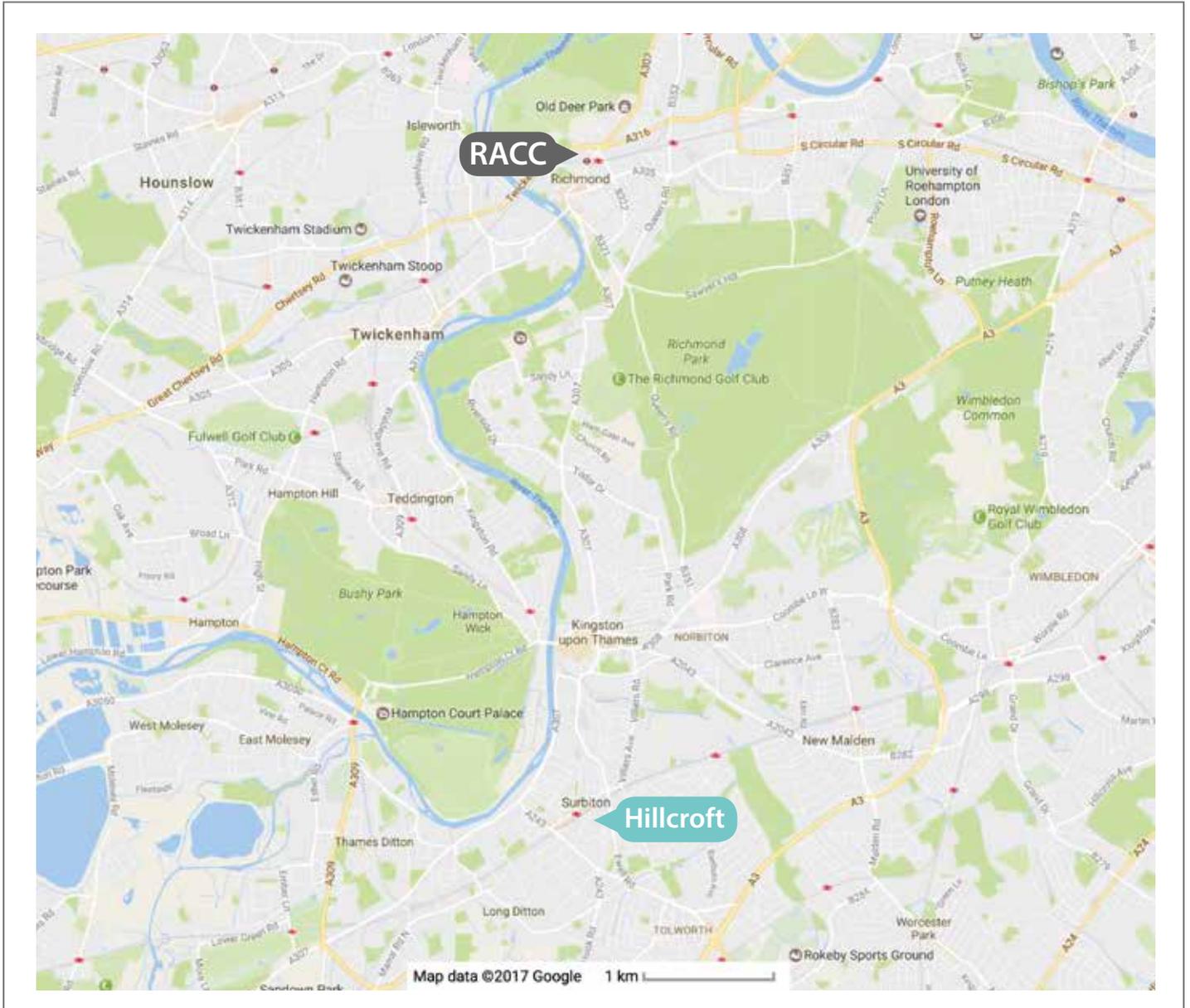
The proposal seeks to retain the skills and expertise of staff. The creation of the merged College will necessitate the transfer of employment for all staff employed at RACC to their new employer Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College. This will be achieved through a TUPE consultation process that will explain how the proposed change in employer will affect them personally.

The terms and conditions of employment for staff currently employed at Hillcroft will be protected, as Hillcroft will remain as a legal entity, while RACC will be dissolved. For staff transferring into Hillcroft from RACC terms and conditions of employment will be protected through TUPE.

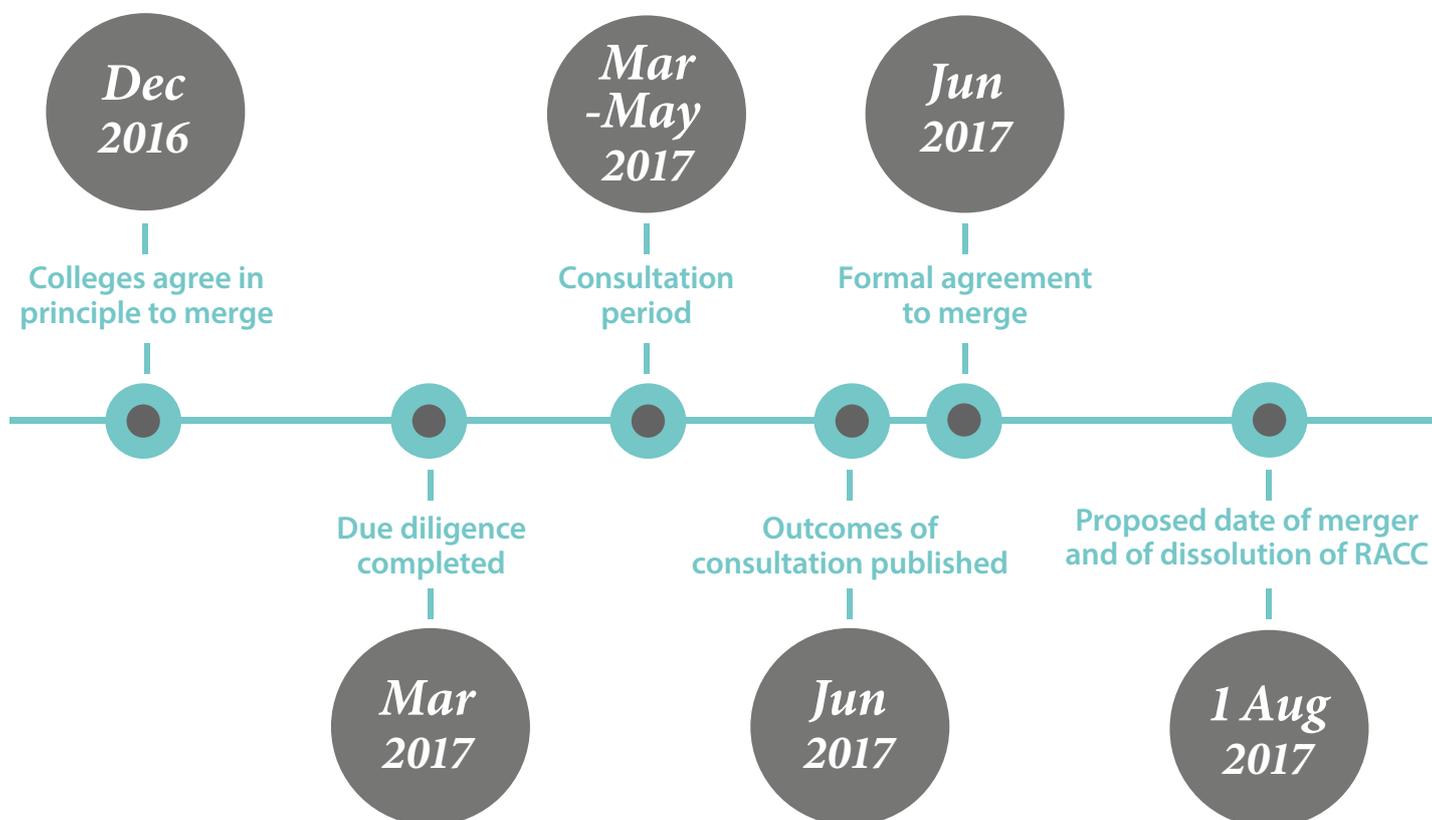
We will work to ensure that the benefits of the merger for staff include:

- Greater opportunities for staff to improve their skills through sharing of best practice with a wider group of colleagues, thereby raising the quality of provision for students and employers.
- Enhanced opportunities for staff to access continuing professional development activities.
- Increased opportunities for career progression.
- Opportunities to work across both college locations covering different areas of curriculum and their specialist facilities.

College Locations



Merger Timescale



Merger implementation

A Joint Governance Committee has been established comprising governors and senior staff from both colleges. This group will oversee the merger process and ensure it is implemented in an open and transparent manner that meets the requirements of The Education Act 2011.



Indicative List of Stakeholders

The following list has been identified as key stakeholders. It does not prohibit any person or organisation not listed from submitting comments or replies.

Universities, Colleges and Schools

- Local Universities
- Local FE Colleges
- Institutes for Adult Learning
- Schools and Academies in the area with sixth form provision

Charities and Associated Bodies

- The Charity Commission
- Big Lottery Fund
- Richmond Parish Lands Charity
- Barnes Workhouse Fund
- Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity
- RCVS, Portcullis Trust and local charities

Local and National Government

- London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- South London Partnership
- Greater London Authority
- Sarah Olney MP
- James Berry MP
- Dr Tania Mathias MP

Government Agencies and Funding Bodies

- Skills Funding Agency
- Education Funding Agency
- Higher Education Funding Council for England
- Department for Education
- FE Commissioner
- Emergency Services
- Ofsted

Staff and Students at both Colleges

Hillcroft Members

Membership Organisations

- Association of Colleges
- HOLEX

Other Organisations

- Employers associated with the two colleges
- Trade Unions
- Student Loans Company
- QAA
- JISC

Statutory Notice Further and Higher Education Act 1992

Notice given in accordance with the Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012

Richmond Adult and Community College Corporation of Parkshot, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 2RE hereby gives notice in accordance with the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, of the proposal that Richmond Adult and Community College Corporation be dissolved and the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation to Hillcroft College of South Bank, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6DF be effected.

Dissolution of the corporation is proposed at the request of the Corporation of Richmond Adult and Community College in order that the College may merge with Hillcroft College. The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation of Richmond Adult and Community College is 1 August 2017.

Hillcroft College is separately following the statutory processes to secure that the name of the College be formally changed to Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College.

Provision will be made for all students currently attending Richmond Adult and Community College who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the dissolution, to complete their studies with Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College.

The statutory consultation document which gives details of the proposals is available on both colleges' websites. Alternatively a copy of the proposal is available free of charge via email from clerk@racc.ac.uk and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of the Act, representations may be made by 5 May 2017. Representations can be made in writing to The Clerk of The Corporation, Richmond Adult and Community College, Parkshot, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 2RE and will be considered by the Corporation before a final decision is reached.

At the end of the consultation period all responses will be collated and a summary of the consultation and outcome will be published on the colleges' websites within two months.



Responding to the Consultation

Governors at Richmond Adult and Community College and Hillcroft College would like to hear your feedback on our proposal to merge. Details of the merger are outlined in this document.

You can access the questionnaire from each college website:

www.racc.ac.uk/merger

www.hillcroft.ac.uk/merger

If you wish to comment please respond opposite and send to **The Clerk of The Corporation, Richmond Adult and Community College, Parkshot, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 2RE** or by emailing clerk@racc.ac.uk.

The consultation runs from 31 March – 5 May and all responses must be received by the closing date.

At the end of the consultation period all responses will be collated and a summary of the consultation and outcome will be published on the colleges' websites within two months.

All responses will be anonymised in the consultation results documentation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.





Response to Merger Consultation

Please complete and return to:

The Clerk of The Corporation, Richmond Adult Community College, Parkshot, Richmond, TW9 2RE

Full Name:

Organisation:

Email Address:

Please tick which college you are responding about:

RACC

Hillcroft

Both

Please tick which best describes you or your organisation:

College Student

Employer/Local Business

Local Resident

College Applicant

College Staff

School

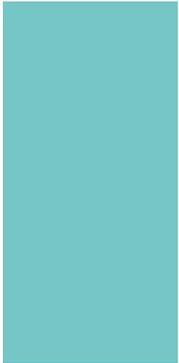
Funding/Govt Agency

College/Training Provider

Other (Please state)

Please tell us your views regarding the proposed merger between RACC and Hillcroft College.

Comments:



Hillcroft College
 South Bank
 Surbiton
 Surrey, KT6 6DF
www.hillcroft.ac.uk
 Tel: 020 8399 2688

Richmond Adult and
 Community College
 Parkshot,
 Richmond, TW9 2RE
www.racc.ac.uk
 Tel: 020 8891 5907