

Press Release

## **Portsmouth and Highbury College agree to potential merger**

Two pillars of Portsmouth's educational community are set to combine to create a city-wide college of the future.

The governing boards of Portsmouth College and Highbury College have agreed to continue merger discussions following work carried out by a collaborative steering group as part of a Structure and Prospects Appraisal led by the FE Commissioner. The group included members of Portsmouth City Council, the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the FE Commissioner's team. Following a unanimous decision by the steering group, the FE Commissioner is recommending to the Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills the merger of the two colleges.

Subject to ministerial approval, plans will move to the next stage of consultation with stakeholders including current staff, students, parents, local employers, universities and secondary schools.

Nick Wynne, Chair of Governors at Portsmouth College said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to bring together two great complementary colleges that will enhance the quality and choice of courses for the learners in and around our city"

Paul Quigley, Chair of Governors at Highbury College said: "These are truly exciting times and we have the opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable college to support the educational journeys of local young people and adults, and in turn the economy and prosperity of Portsmouth and its surrounding communities as a whole."

Simon Barrable, Principal at Portsmouth College said: "These are inspiring times for post-16 education and training in Portsmouth and we now have the chance to realise a 'one city, one college' vision."

Penny Wycherley, Interim Principal and CEO of Highbury College, said: "We are delighted to be developing our partnership with Portsmouth College and moving to combining further our strengths. The next stage includes all the detailed checks and discussions that are necessary in bringing together two organisations who are so important to the City. We will now be inviting the views of the wider college communities to share their thoughts, ideas and ambitions."

Simon and Penny added: "Both colleges would also like to reassure current students and applicants for next September that your college places are safe and there will be no changes in the day-to-day operations of the Colleges."

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