

Report on the Statutory Public Consultation on the Proposed Merger of Filton College and Stroud College

August 2011

Of interest to stakeholders in this proposed merger

Protect: Commercial

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the proposed merger of Filton College and
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Foreword

As Chief Executive of Skills Funding, I am pleased to publish this report on our recent statutory public consultation on the proposed merger of Filton College and Stroud College.

We received 137 responses. Thank you to everyone who took the time to read the consultation document and respond.

There is a clear majority (86 per cent of respondents) in support of the proposed merger but some stakeholders have raised questions or possible concerns which have informed the key messages section of this report.

The next steps in the process require the Colleges to consider the outcomes of the consultation, complete due diligence and submit a final merger proposal to the Agency for assessment. If it is assessed as meeting all the requirements, a proposal would then be made to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, who would decide whether to make the orders to establish a new further education corporation, dissolve the further education corporations of Filton College and Stroud College and transfer the property, rights and liabilities of both corporations to the new corporation.

If you have any queries about this report or would like it in another format, please contact providerreorganisations@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

Thank you again to everyone who responded.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Russell
Chief Executive of Skills Funding

Executive Summary

Background

- 1 This is a report on the statutory public consultation on the proposed merger of two further education (FE) Colleges: Filton College and Stroud College.
- 2 The consultation was undertaken by the Chief Executive of Skills Funding in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- 3 The consultation lasted beyond the statutory minimum of a calendar month between 15 June 2011 and 20 July 2011. Views could be submitted in an online consultation survey, by email or in writing and public notices were issued in line with legislative requirements, including in a local newspaper.
- 4 The questions in the online survey are confirmed at **Annex A**.
- 5 This report includes high-level summaries of the comments made by respondents. They are not presented as facts or the views of the Agency. In the interests of concision, comments that reoccurred more than once are not repeated.

Responses

- 6 There were 137 responses to the consultation.
 - 127 online survey responses
 - 10 non-online responses.
- 7 Respondents to the online survey were asked to describe their interest. The distribution of the 113 respondents who answered the question was:
 - College staff (61.1 per cent)
 - Other (8.0 per cent)
 - Local government (1.8 per cent)
 - College or training organisation (5.3 per cent)
 - Employer (7.1 per cent)
 - Learner (8.0 per cent)
 - Local business (4.4 per cent)

- Local community (1.8 per cent)
- HE institution (0.9 per cent)
- Government agency/body (0 per cent)
- Member of Parliament (0 per cent)
- School (1.8 per cent)

8 The 10 non-online responses were distributed as follows.

- Local government (3)
- Government agency/body (2)
- Local business (1)
- Member of Parliament (1)
- College or training organisation (2)
- Other (1)

Key messages for the Colleges from the consultation

- 9 There is a clear majority in support of the merger. Of the 127 responses to the online survey, 108 (85 per cent) of those answering Question 1 said they supported it. All 10 non-online responses were supportive or did not object to the merger. Of the total 137 responses therefore, 118 supported the merger – 86 per cent.
- 10 Support is further evidenced by the majority of respondents giving positive answers to each question in the online survey:
- 87 per cent supported the objectives of merger
 - 86 per cent supported the new college's vision and aims
 - 85 per cent supported the plans for the curriculum
 - 80 per cent supported the arrangements for governance and management
 - 84 per cent said merger would sustain and extend learner/employer choice with access to high-quality provision
 - 76 per cent said merger provided value for money
 - 73 per cent said that learners would **not** be affected adversely
 - 71 per cent supported the proposed name of the new corporation.
- 11 Support has been expressed by key organisational stakeholders such as the local and county council, the local chamber of trade and commerce, local colleges, a higher education (HE) institution, and by key individuals such as a local Member of Parliament.
- 12 We received 10 non-online responses and the online survey allowed respondents to add comments. This qualitative information, along with the quantitative information above, has informed the identification of the key messages below. These must be addressed by the Colleges in their Final Merger Proposal (FMP).
- **The new curriculum.** The FMP should provide more detail on the proposed curriculum for the merged college and on how the college will work collaboratively with other providers in developing and delivering it, for example on opportunities for collaboration and progression routes. It also needs to show how the needs of local businesses have informed the development of the offer.

- **The new ‘mid area’ centre.** The FMP should include a more developed plan for the new centre. There is widespread support for it but also interest in where it will be, when it will open, how much it will cost, what provision will be offered there and how the merged college will engage with and support local communities to access the centre and ensure its success.
- **Rationale for merger as the model.** The FMP should include a final review of why merger is the right choice in this case. For example, what other options were considered and how, what criteria were used to choose between options and why the expected benefits of this merger could not be achieved through another form of collaboration.
- **Staff concerns regarding merger.** The Colleges have held events with staff and learners but some of the detail of how merger will affect staff was not available at the time of the consultation. The FMP should include an update on what further information has been shared with staff and confirm how staff-related issues will continue to be identified and managed.
- **Impact on choice and competition.** The more advanced merger plans in the FMP should include an assessment of the impact on choice and competition locally. For example, how will merger increase choice, what other choices will remain for learners and employers, and what adverse impact might the merging of two Colleges into one have, such as removing a driver of quality improvement.
- **Retaining local identity and accountability.** The character and identity of the two Colleges are valued by stakeholders. Filton College’s links with the city of Bristol, for example, and the benefits of Stroud College’s small size. The FMP must demonstrate that steps are being taken to preserve the characters, strengths and ‘localness’ of both Colleges and how leadership, governance and management arrangements will help facilitate local accountability.
- **Impact on learners.** Although there were no significant concerns about an adverse impact on learners, the potential for this must be considered as part of the more detailed FMP, particularly given the

difficulties posed by transport in some of the areas covered by the merged college.

- **College Name.** The name of the new college must be confirmed as part of the submission of the FMP.

Next steps

- 13 The next step for the Colleges is to produce an FMP. This must meet the Government's published criteria for college mergers and address the issues raised through this consultation. It will be assessed by the Chief Executive of Skills Funding and a submission made to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision.
- 14 These are the expected timescales for the next stages of the process:
 - August – FMP submitted to the Agency
 - September – assessment and recommendation to Secretary of State
 - October – decision by Secretary of State.

If approved:

- October – laying of orders before Parliament to create the new Corporation
- November – New Corporation meets
- December – laying of orders to dissolve the Corporations of Filton and Stroud
- 1 February 2012 – proposed date for merger implementation.

Background

- 15 In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the 1992 Act) as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, responsibility for the public consultation on a proposed FE college merger lies with the Chief Executive of Skills Funding.
- 16 This would be a Type A merger, where the corporations of both colleges, in this case Filton College and Stroud College propose the dissolution of both corporations and their transfer to a newly established corporation. The proposed date for the merger to take effect is 1 February 2012.
- 17 Following the consultation, the Colleges will produce a final merger proposal. This will be reviewed by the Chief Executive of Skills Funding and a submission made to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will decide whether, under section 27 of the Act, to by order provide for the dissolution of the FE Corporations of both Filton College and Stroud College and the transfer of the properties, rights and liabilities of both corporations to the newly established corporation.
- 18 The Government confirmed its merger criteria for FE colleges in *Further Education Colleges – Models for Success*, August 2008.
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/fe-improvement/models-for-success>
- 19 These criteria are that the FMP ensures the embedding of all aspects of equality and diversity and that it is likely to:
 - address the needs of learners and employers
 - increase opportunity for the learner to exercise choice and encourage diversity in the education and training available
 - increase local participation rates and result in improved quality and success
 - develop innovation and improve access to learning for the community
 - promote effective community cohesion through community presence and representation within governance structures
 - provide better value for money.

Consultation Process

- 20 The two Colleges produced a consultation document, which was endorsed by the Chairs of both Governing Bodies. This was used by the Chief Executive of Skills Funding as the consultation document.
http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Stroud_and_Filton_College_Consultation_Document_Final_Version_080611.pdf
- 21 The statutory public consultation began on 15 June 2011 and ended on 20 July 2011. The provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 state that the consultation period must be at least one calendar month.
- 22 Statutory Notices (**Annex B**) appeared in the 15 June 2011 editions of the Bristol Evening Post and the Stroud News. Statutory notices were also placed at:
- the main entrances of Filton College and Stroud College
 - Filton library, Shield Road Retail Park and Stroud Library, Lansdown.
- 23 There were three ways for stakeholders to respond to the consultation:
- i. completing an online survey
 - ii. sending an email to a dedicated address
 - iii. writing to the Chief Executive of Skills Funding.
- 24 Notice of the consultation, with information on how to respond and links to the consultation document and online survey, were available on the consultation section of the Skills Funding Agency website for the whole of the consultation period. Stakeholders were also given ways to contact the Agency if they wanted a paper copy of the consultation document or a copy in another format. Links to the information were displayed on both College websites.
- 25 The Chief Executive of Skills Funding wrote to a list of potential national, regional and local stakeholders to notify them of the consultation and invite them to respond (Annex C).

Responses received

Responses to the consultation

26 There were 137 responses to the consultation:

- 127 online survey responses
- 10 non-online responses.

Incomplete online surveys

27 Some respondents did not complete the survey by clicking the 'Done' icon at the end. Of the 127 online responses:

- 113 were complete surveys
- 14 were incomplete surveys.

28 The answers from 14 respondents in the second group have been included in the analysis in line with practice in previous consultations.

Online survey responses (127)

Introduction

- 29 The sections that follow confirm the answers given to each of the questions in the online survey.
- 30 Although there were 127 online responses in all, the number of responses to each question varies because some respondents chose not to answer every question.
- 31 For each question, a chart confirms the answers given followed by some conclusions from the answers. There is also a summary of the comments made by respondents. As confirmed above, the comments are not presented as facts or the views of the Agency. In the interests of concision, comments that reoccurred more than once are not repeated

Analysis

- 32 In Questions 10 and 11 of the online survey, respondents were asked to confirm if they were:
 - a) replying as an individual or on behalf of an organisation and
 - b) what best described their interest.
- 33 The answers are shown in Charts 1 and 2 respectively.

Chart 1: Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

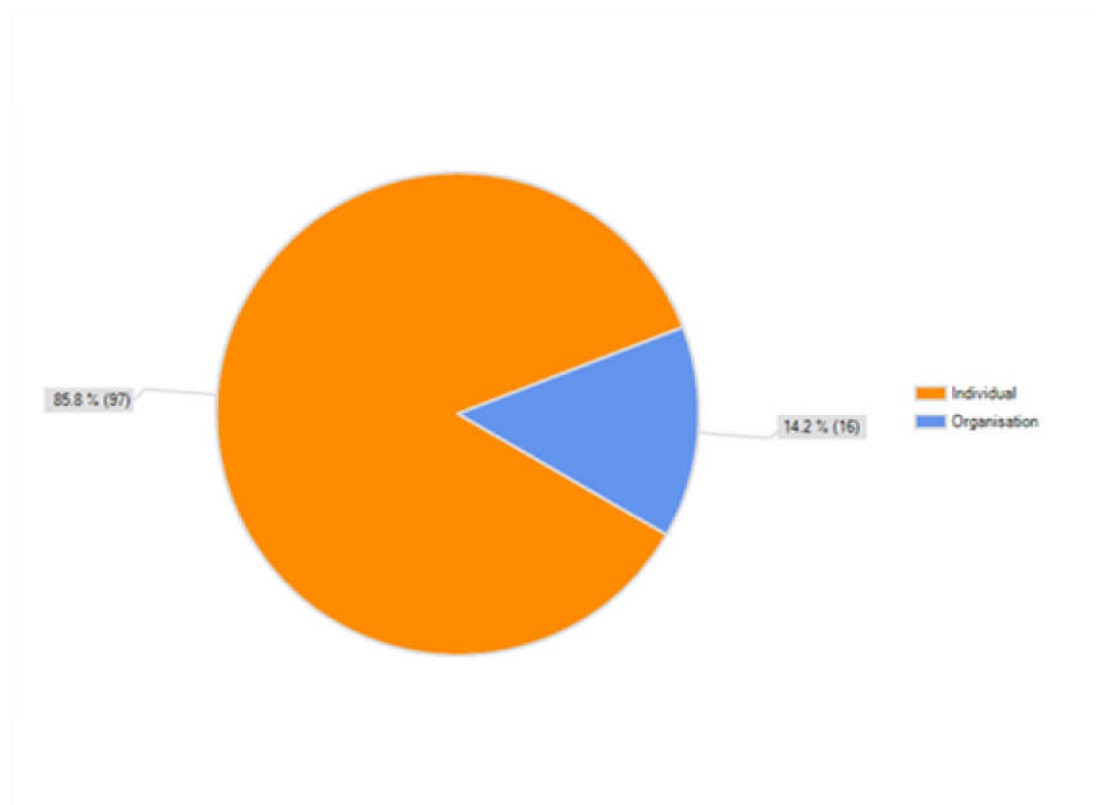
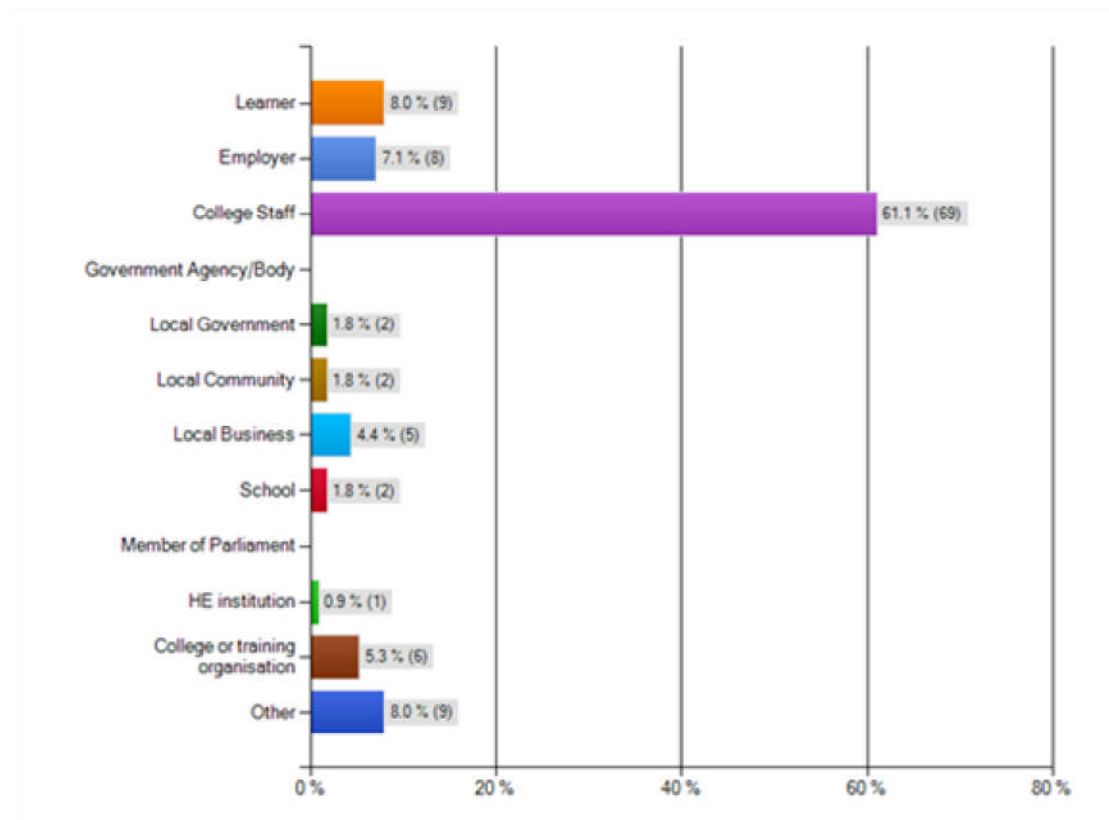


Chart 2: Which of the following best describes your interest?



Conclusions from the answers

- Responses were mostly received from individuals (85.8 per cent) compared to organisations at 14.2 per cent.
- Of those who chose an option to describe their interest, the greatest percentage was college staff at 61.1 per cent, followed by learners (8 per cent), other (8 per cent) and employer (7.1 per cent). Only Government Agency/Body and Members of Parliament were not represented in the online respondents.

Question 1: Do you support the proposed merger?

34 Chart 3 shows the answers to the question.

35 Where respondents also confirmed what best described their interest (Question 11), the distribution of those who answered 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not Sure' is shown in Table 1.

Chart 3: Do you support the proposed merger?

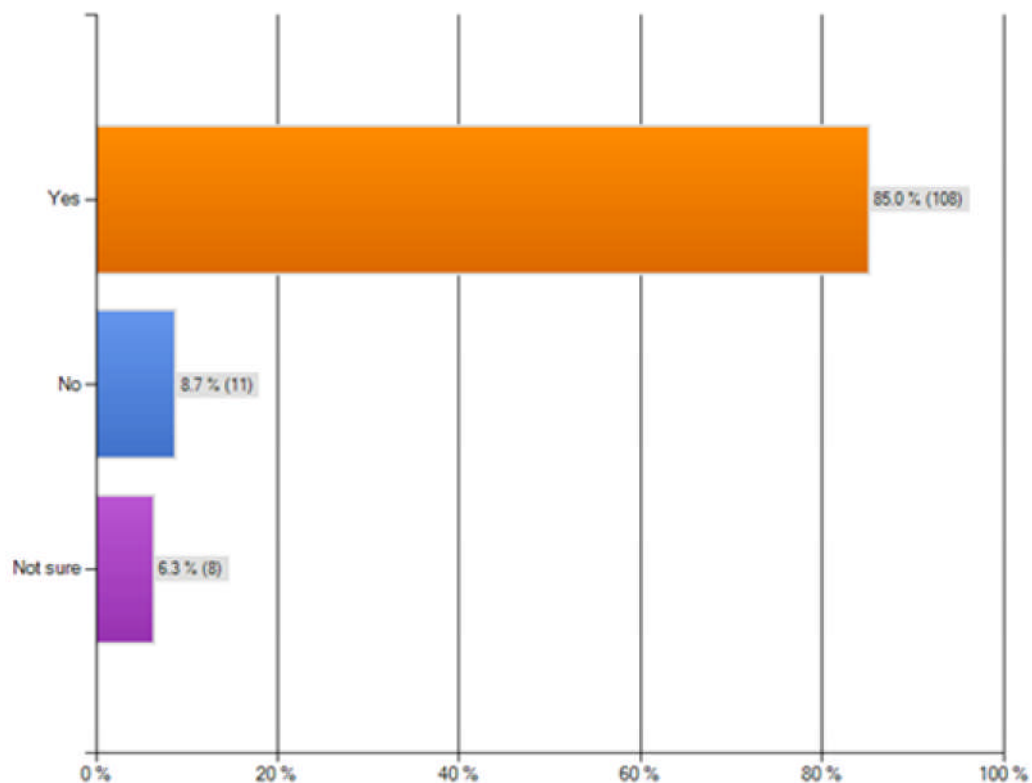


Table 1: Do you support the proposed reorganisation? (Analysis of 'Yes'/'No'/'Not Sure' answers by respondent type)

Do you support the proposed merger? (includes only the 113 of the 127 online responses who confirmed their interest)			
Interest	'Yes'	'No'	'Not Sure'
Learner	6	1	2
Employer	5	2	1
College Staff	65	1	3
Government Agency/Body	0	0	0
Local Government	2	0	0
Local Community	1	1	0
Local Business	5	0	0
School	2	0	0
Member of Parliament	0	0	0
HE institution	1	0	0
College or training organisation	4	1	0
Other	7	2	0

Conclusions from the answers

- The chart shows a clear majority in support of the proposed merger: 108 respondents (85 per cent) said they supported it.
- A total of 11 respondents (15 per cent) did not support the merger and 8 (6.3 per cent) were not sure.
- The table shows the types of respondent not supporting the merger to be employer (two), other (two), college staff (one), local community (one), learner (one) and college or training organisation (one).
- Support for the merger was spread across all of the interest types who responded. All of the respondents from local business (five) supported it as did the Local Government (two), School (two) and HE institution (one).
- The type of respondent most represented in the table is college staff where 65 of 69 supported the merger.

Summary of comments

36 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents:**

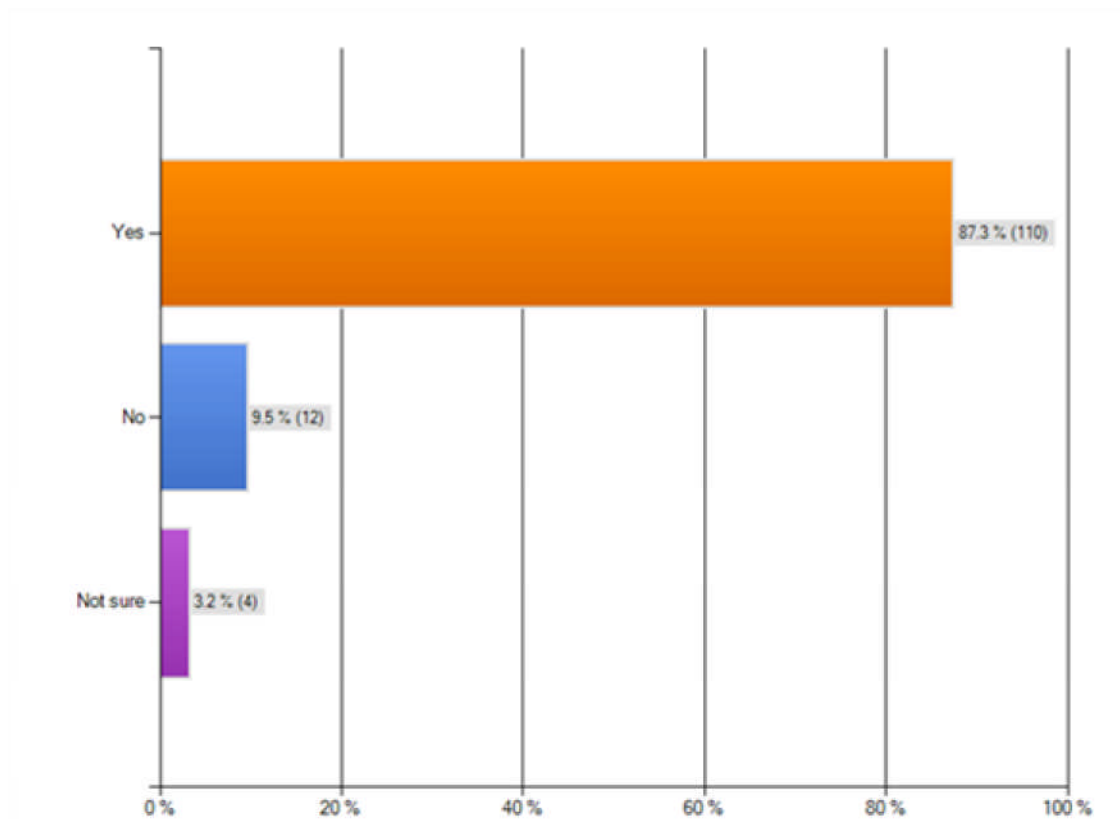
- A larger college will better serve the area, including its rural and market town communities.

- There should be more consultation on the proposed curriculum with other local providers.
- An appropriate response to funding changes but may adversely impact on staff. More information is needed on this.
- Economies of scale will be achieved whilst retaining identities.
- Assures the future of Stroud College and puts both Colleges in a stronger financial position.
- A wider curriculum choice and high-quality learning opportunities will help the region to survive current economic hardships and be competitive in the UK, European and global markets.
- Potential for improved progression routes and better and wider range of enrichment activities for all learners.
- An employer preferred the services of a smaller college and would consider moving its apprentices to a different college.
- Both Colleges must grow; not just Stroud as the smaller partner.
- Best approach to using more limited future funding in the most cost-effective way without impacting on learners.
- Ensures the future offer for students in a period of uncertainty.
- Stability would be ensured with continuity of senior leadership.
- Stroud College's small size is a key part of its success with relationships and responsiveness. There is a risk that learning will be more of a business in the new college.
- Provision will be strengthened in areas of South Gloucestershire and Cotswolds which are presently poorly served.
- Another college may be a more appropriate partner for Filton College.

Question 2: Do you support the objectives of the merger?

37 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Do you support the objectives of the merger?



Conclusions from the answers

- There is a clear majority in support of the objectives of the merger: almost 88 per cent of respondents supported them.
- 9.5 per cent did not support the plans and 3.2 per cent were not sure, amounting to 12.7 per cent.

Summary of comments

38 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents**:

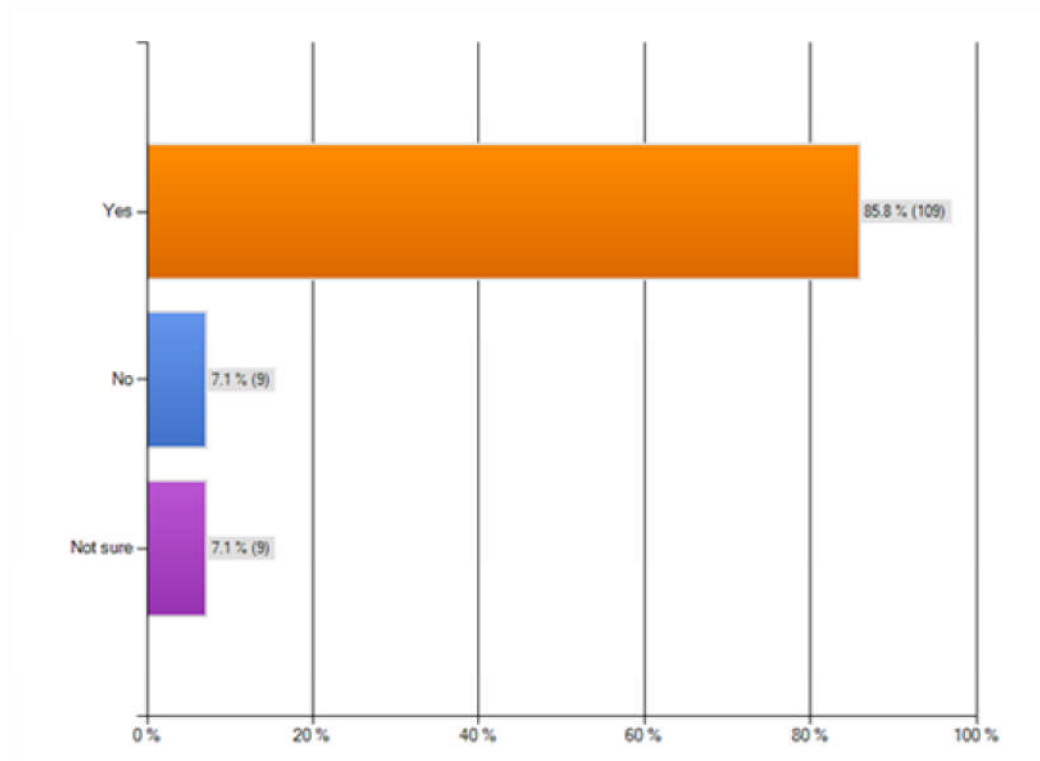
- The objectives are robust and will secure the future of both Colleges.
- Both Colleges offer a wide range of vocational courses and seem to be well matched in terms of reputation and quality.
- The Stroud area will have the increased funding and provision it needs.
- The merged college should be in a better position to withstand current reductions in FE funding and provide a strong offer across the south Gloucestershire communities.

- Key requirement to look five years ahead is being addressed.
- Welcome the potential to deliver more Apprenticeships, 14-16 vocational education and graduate level courses.
- Concern at loss of community delivery evident in the proposal.
- Encouraged by the commitment to engineering.
- Too early to support the objectives as anything more than aspirations.
- The professionalism of Filton College's employer responsiveness team and sports provision should continue and be replicated in Stroud.
- Reducing HE costs is sensible but not the proposed approach.
- The senior management team (SMT) encouraging the merger will no longer work at the college.
- Improved provision for learners in the mid-area is welcome but transport must be improved if it is to be successful.
- The new college needs to reach more employers and learners to equip them with skills and knowledge they need.

Question 3: Do you support the new college's vision and aims?

39 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Do you support the new college's vision and aims?



Conclusions from the answers

- There is a clear majority in support of the new college's vision: almost 86 per cent of respondents supported them.
- 7.1 per cent of respondents did not support the vision and 7.1 per cent were not sure, amounting to 14.2 per cent.

Summary of comments

40 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents:**

- Securing and extending provision and enhancing quality is welcomed, especially in a time of funding cuts.
- The needs of young people in rural areas need to be better met.
- The reputation and identities of the Colleges should be retained.
- More detail needed on how learner and employer needs will be met.
- A combined team serving employers in South Gloucestershire can only be beneficial in terms of the support for employers.
- Addresses the lack of FE presence in towns such as Dursley, Frampton on Severn, Slimbridge, Wotton-under-Edge and Berkeley, where there is a growing population but reduced local amenity.

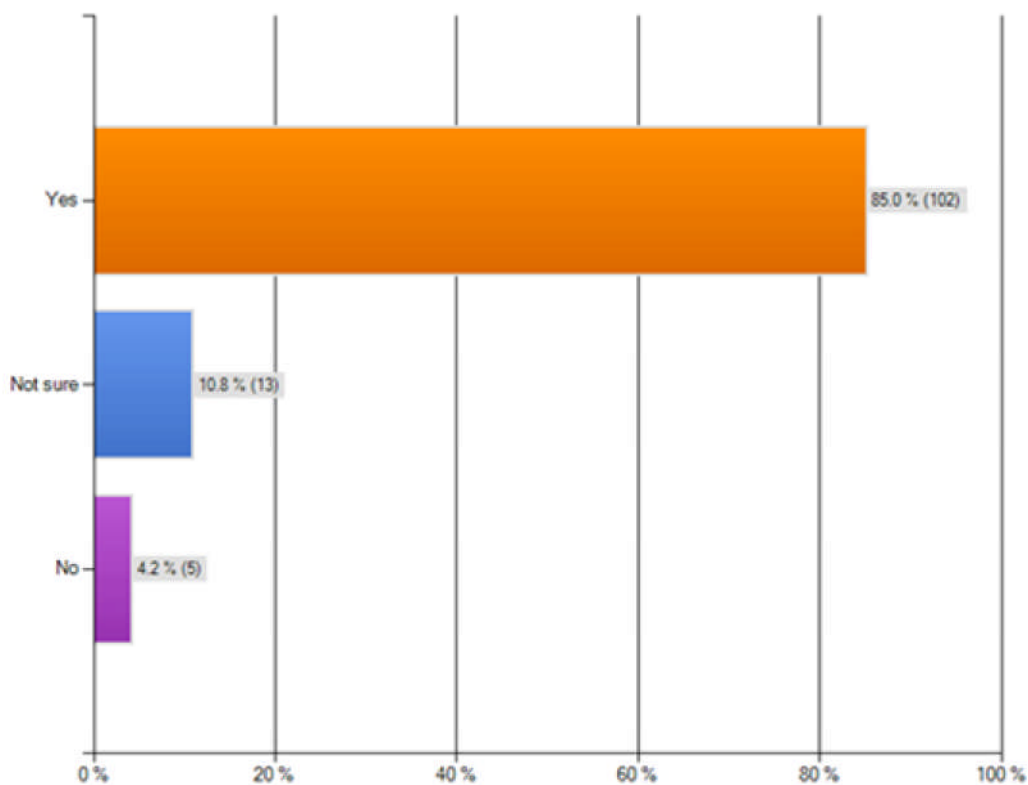
Investment in access to training, greater expertise and diversity is essential to the West and South West Gloucestershire area.

- The public transport service and the low numbers of young people owning their own transport, mean that the existing Colleges are not easily accessible. If there was another centre between Stroud and Filton this would help ease the access problem. Redundant sites at Newport Towers or Berkeley Vale School could be an option.
- Student life should be boosted by the possibilities offered by the new college as long as students are always the focal point.

Question 4: Do you support the plans for developing the curriculum?

41 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Do you support the plans for developing the curriculum?



Conclusions from the answers

- There is a clear majority in support of the plans for developing the curriculum: 85 per cent of respondents said they supported them.

- 10.8 per cent of respondents were not sure if they supported the plans and 4.2 per cent did not support the plans, amounting to 15 per cent.

Summary of comments

42 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents:**

- A wider curriculum is needed, particularly in Stroud and the areas between the two Colleges. Both Colleges should learn from each other to develop a strong curriculum.
- Some aspects were particularly welcome - a wider HE curriculum with higher level courses in all areas, high-quality vocational provision for 14-16-year-olds and Apprenticeships, and more opportunities for young people.
- Engaging more people should be a priority for the merged college.
- The character of each College would still be visible in its curriculum offer.
- Plans for vocational provision welcome, particularly engineering where there is a shortfall in provision to support employers.
- Concern at the potential for duplication of courses without discussion and collaboration with other local providers.
- Concern that the plans will require staff to work across both sites.
- Merger should result in more choice for more employers.
- The curriculum should support careers in engineering and rural/agricultural employment.
- Uncertain of the need for more sports-related curriculum.
- More detail needed to provide a definite answer, for example what will be provided at the new mid-area centre?
- Learners in Stroud would particularly benefit. Sharing the expertise of Filton College staff is cost effective.
- The area has many small businesses with less capacity to invest in training. Individuals should be trained in response to national needs and for regional strengths such as technology, agriculture, land-based, renewables, tourism and culture.

Question 5: Do you believe that the proposed merger will sustain and extend learning/employer choice and access to high-quality provision, meeting the needs of customers, within the area served by the new merged college?

- 43 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 7.
- 44 For this question we also compared the distribution of responses where the respondents had also confirmed their area of interest in Question 11. The results are shown in Chart 8.

Chart 7: Do you believe that the proposed merger will sustain and extend learning/employer choice and access to high-quality provision, meeting the needs of customers, within the area served by the new merged college?

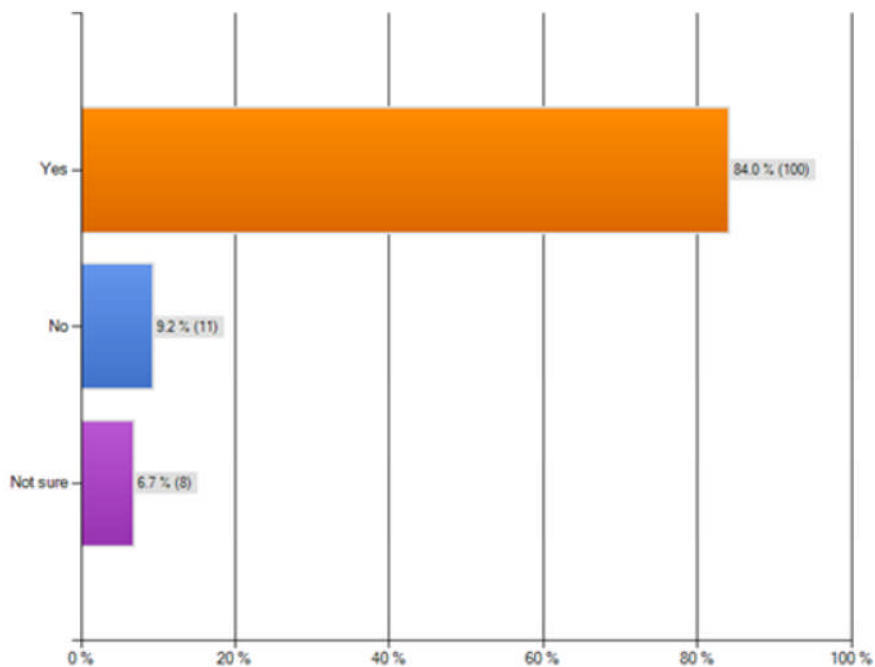
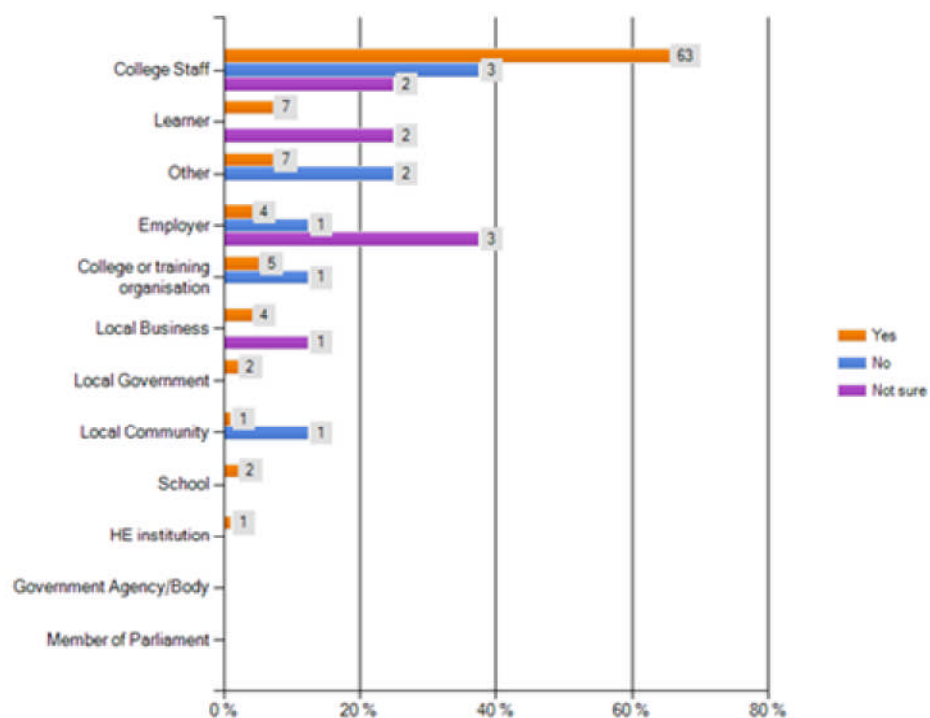


Chart 8: Distribution of the ‘Yes’ (96), ‘No’ (8) and ‘Not Sure’ (8) answers across respondent types (in the 112 cases where type is known)



Conclusions from the answers

- A majority of respondents (84 per cent) said that the merger would sustain and extend learner/employer choice and access to high-quality provision, meeting the needs of customers within the area of by the new merged college.
- The second chart shows that the greatest number of respondent types saying ‘Yes’ were college staff (63), followed by learner (seven) and other (seven). There were also positive responses from employer (four), college or training organisations (five), local business (four), local government (two), local community (one), school (two) and HE institution (one).
- 9.2 per cent of respondents said that the merger would **not** sustain and extend learner/employer choice and access to high-quality provision. A further 6.7 per cent were not sure if it would. Overall therefore, almost 16 per cent of respondents did not give a positive answer to this question.
- The three interest types who said it would **not** lead to a diverse and relevant education and training were college staff (three) other (two), employer (one), college or training organisation (one), and local

community (one). The not sure respondents were college staff (two), learner (two), employer (three) and local business (one).

Summary of comments

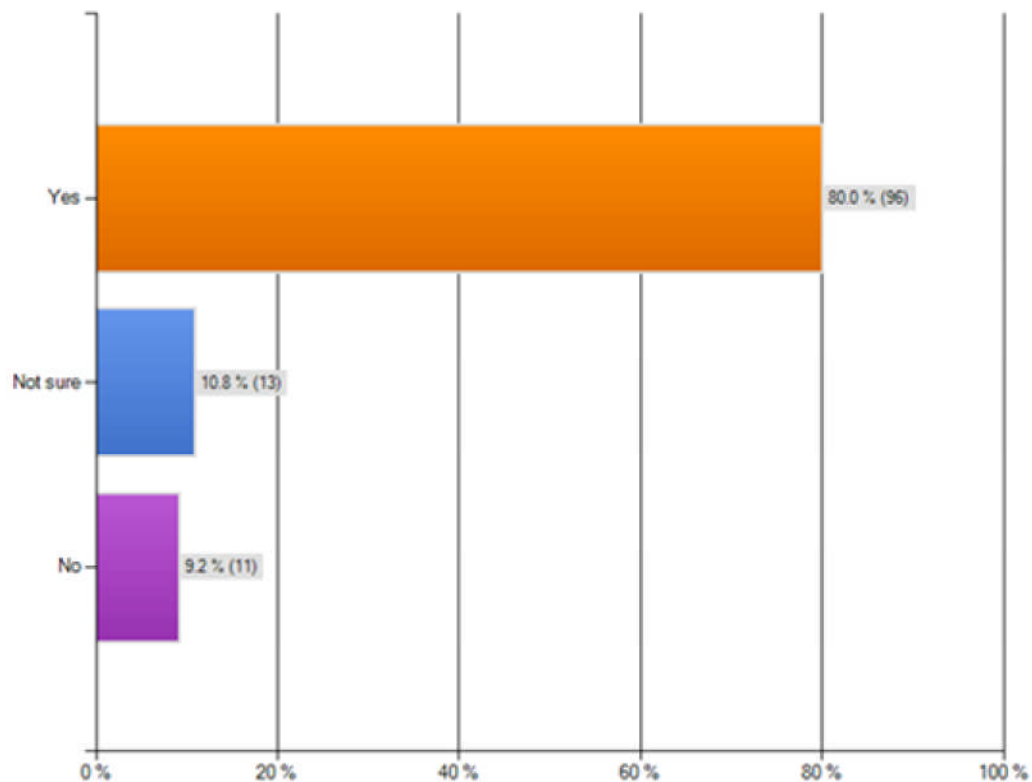
45 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents:**

- More partnership arrangements needed with local Higher Education Institutions (HEI).
- Engineering needs to be developed at all levels and for all student abilities to meet the demands of employers in the areas.
- Employers and learners will have more choice.
- Thoughtful and cooperative management across the colleges is needed to ensure current high-quality provision is maintained whilst new provision is being established.
- Greater local access to high-quality provision in a range of subject areas will improve learner and employer choice.
- The proposals align with the needs of the area and combining the expertise in both colleges to deliver them is positive.

Question 6: Do you support the proposed arrangements for governance and management?

46 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 9.

Chart 9: Do you support the proposed arrangements for governance and management?



Conclusions from the answers

- There is a clear majority in support of the proposed arrangements for governance: 80 per cent of respondents answered 'Yes' to this question.
- 9.2 per cent answered 'No' and 10.8 per cent were 'Not Sure', amounting to over 20 per cent.

Summary of comments

47 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents**:

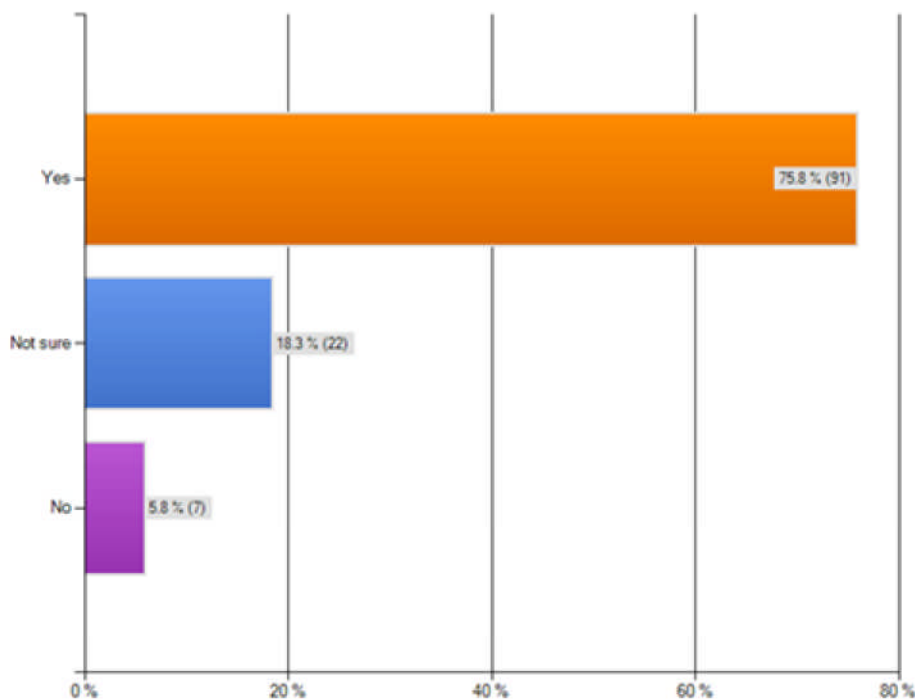
- Continuity in governors and management will ensure success.
- The Type A merger provides an opportunity to combine continuity of governors with some new appointments to add fresh thinking.
- Assurance needed that Filton and Stroud will both be well represented and have equal influence at SMT level.
- The identities of both Colleges need to be preserved along with their reputations in areas where they are strong performers.
- Senior management in the new larger college must be joined up.

- Merger should not derail the Colleges' vision of becoming outstanding.
- The same outcome could be achieved by a different merger; possibly more so with another college.
- Opportunity to make savings on management costs.
- If the best of each College is brought together in the new college's provision, culture and governance, this will benefit learners.

Question 7: Do you think the proposed merger provides value for money?

48 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 10.

Chart 10: Do you think the proposed merger provides value for money?



Conclusions from the answers

- A majority of respondents (75.8 per cent) said that the proposed merger provided value for money.
- 18.3 per cent were not sure and 5.8 per cent said that it did not, amounting to 24.1 per cent.

Summary of comments

49 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents:**

- Although limited detail is available, merger provides a significant opportunity for economies of scale, efficiencies from merging back office functions and savings from fewer management posts and systems improvements.
- Savings made may release funds for investment.
- There is evidence mergers do not save a great deal of money.
- Concern that smaller colleges like Stroud will need to merge in future to survive even if they have been financially strong. The new merged colleges may not prove to be as financially stable.
- The merger will enable growth without increases in costs.
- Capital investment in the medium term with savings over time will improve financial viability.
- The expertise, infrastructure and opportunities for efficiencies exist already within the existing framework of staff and partners/providers.
- The current financial status of the two Colleges does not necessitate a merger to further add value for money.
- Unclear what investment is needed for the new centre and who will provide it. Value for money is unclear until it opens.
- Choice will increase at the same time as costs are reduced.
- Difficult to know without detail on the harmonisation of contracts and terms and conditions for staff.

Question 8: Do you think any group(s) of learners would be affected adversely by the changes?

50 The answers to this question are shown in Chart 11.

51 For this question we also compared the distribution of responses where the respondents had also confirmed their area of interest by answering Question 11. The results are shown in Chart 12.

Chart 11: Do you think any group(s) of learners would be affected adversely by the changes?

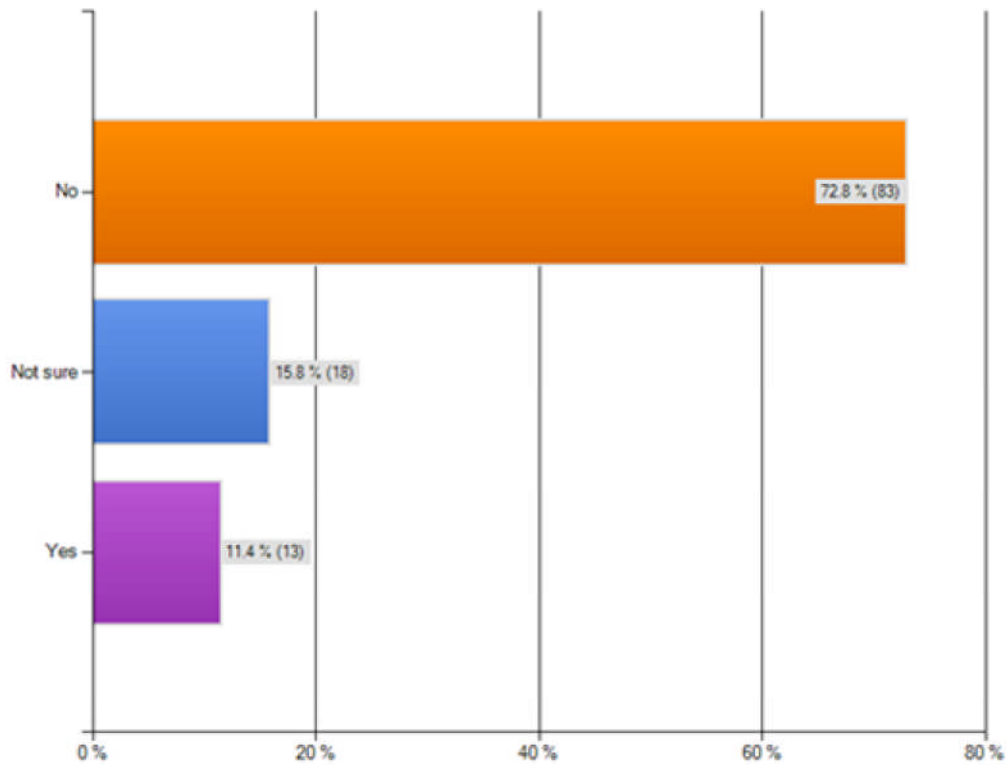
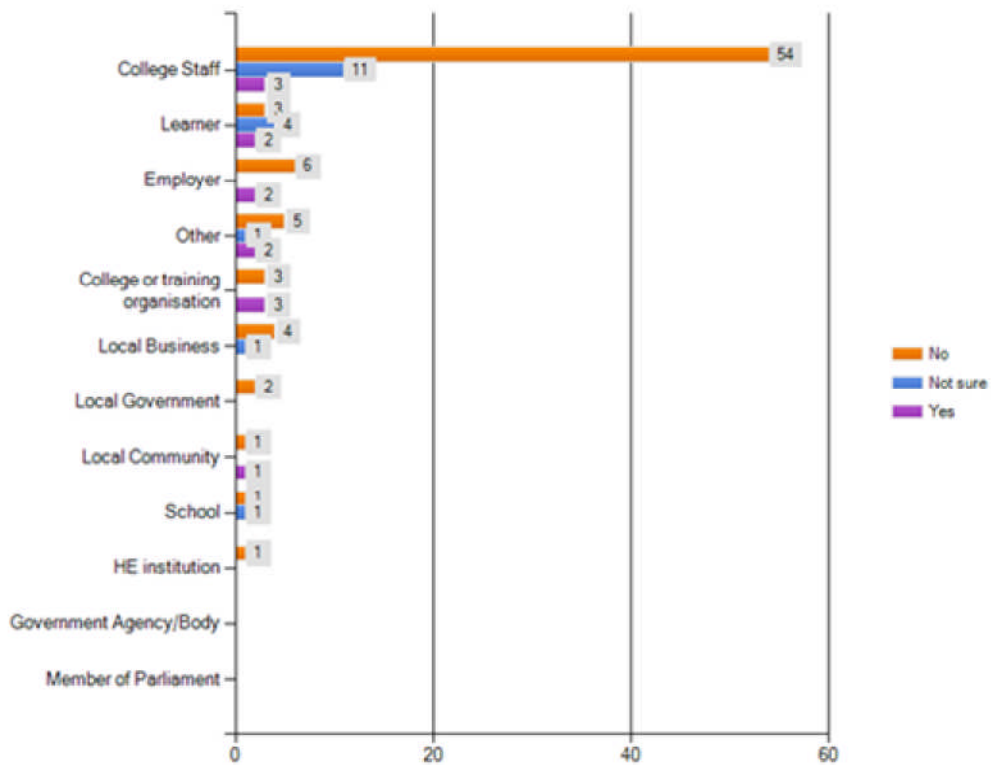


Chart 12: Distribution of the 'Yes' (79), 'No' (18) and 'Not Sure' (18) answers across respondent types (in the 111 cases where type is known)



Conclusions from the answers

- The first chart shows that 72.8 per cent of respondents said learners would **not** be affected adversely by the proposals.
- 11.4 per cent of respondents said learners would be affected adversely and 15.8 per cent were not sure. The 'Yes' and 'Not Sure' answers therefore amount to over 27 per cent.
- The second chart shows that of the respondents who confirmed their type, almost half were college staff saying that learners would **not** be affected adversely.
- The respondent types who said that learners would be affected adversely were college staff (three), learners (two), other (two), college or training organisation (three), employers (two) and local community (one).

Summary of comments

52 This is a high-level summary of the comments made by respondents:

- Not clear how competition between the new college and other providers in the area will affect students.
- Support for traditional subjects, such as the Arts, is less clear than for new subject areas.
- Learners will be affected if the changes are not made; the merger protects their choices.
- Choice will improve if provision is maintained on both sites. If courses are offered on one site only, students will face difficulty attending and will need support with transport.
- Existing students could be asked to switch to the other college or find themselves at a larger college they had not chosen to attend.
- Learners appear not to be disadvantaged under the proposal.
- Only positives can be seen for the learners of the new college. Difficult to see any negative impact with the range of new opportunities, enhanced services and improvements.
- Clarification needed sports teams/academies to avoid confusion.

Question 9: Do you support 'South Gloucestershire and Cotswold College' as the name for the new corporation?

Summary of comments

53 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents**:

- Too long, not catchy and does not sound like a single college.
- Not clear if there will be an abbreviated version.
- Current names are well-known and should not be lost.
- Does not correctly reflect the area that the new college will serve. Stroud College is not in the Cotswolds.
- Good and far more embracing than 'Filton' and 'Stroud'.
- The new college will continue to use the current college names for marketing purposes to emphasis continuity and identification.
- May confuse potential students about the identities of both Colleges.
- The new college should trade using the two existing names.
- May not reflect coverage of West Gloucestershire/Cotswold Vale; a key area to reach.
- 'Filton' links the college with Bristol which has value – the new name could deter international learners for example.

Question 10: Do you have any other comments?

Summary of comments

54 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents**:

- Other providers in the area should be involved in the planning and implementation of the merger. The local history of working together for the benefit of local communities should continue.
- Both Colleges need to continue to improve services for local businesses.
- Merger must not lead to the loss of what is currently excellent, special or individual at either College. Both Colleges should keep their names and allow local communities to have an influence.

- Mergers that support small colleges to manage reductions in funding, make savings, invest in resources and offer new provision and services should be encouraged, as long as they benefit local communities.
- This merger of two good colleges should safeguard both and lead to greater opportunity and choice for young people and for adults needing to re-train, especially students living south of Stroud.
- Merger should support improved recruitment of apprentices.
- More accountability to local businesses and communities is encouraged.
- The Vale of Berkeley College site may be an option for the Dursley, Wotton, Thornbury and South Gloucestershire areas.
- Uncertainty regarding the impact on staff, for example redundancies and changes to terms and conditions.
- The merged college should invest in high-quality careers guidance for young people and in providing support for students.
- The new name will give the merged college a new identity.

Non-online responses (10)

- 55 There were 10 letters containing views on the proposed merger.
- 56 Using the options for describing area of interest from the online survey, the 10 responses can be categorised as follows:
- Learner (0)
 - Employer (0)
 - College staff (0)
 - Government Agency/Body (2)
 - Local Government (3)
 - Local Community (0)
 - Local Business (1)
 - School (0)
 - Member of Parliament (1)
 - HEI (0)
 - College or training organisation (2)
 - Other (1).
- 57 This is a high-level summary of the comments made **by respondents**. The responses have been shared in full with the Colleges to take into account when developing the FMP:
- i. A local council supported the merger and committed to working with the merged college to increase responsiveness to local employer needs and student demand. It wanted to be involved in the development of the new 'mid-area' centre and explore plans for meeting the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The diverse communities served by the current Colleges must be represented on the new corporation.
 - ii. An FE college confirmed no objections to the merger, assuming that appropriate reassurance on financial viability, risk and quality assurance were available.
 - iii. Another college offered broad support but identified issues in relation to the curriculum and the proposed college name that needed to be discussed with them and addressed in the FMP.

- iv. An MP fully supported the merger.
- v. A government agency/body saw no reason why the merger should not go ahead.
- vi. A Sector Skills Agency had no comments because the Colleges did not operate in their sector.
- vii. A district councillor fully supported the merger, highlighting advantages including a wider curriculum for local students and the potential for the merged college to extend opportunities for FE to the southern part of Stroud District.
- viii. A district council fully supported the merger as a choice which ensured Stroud College would continue to serve the needs of the community whilst also developing new provision in the district. It should not result in a requirement for additional travel or a larger carbon footprint.
- ix. An organisation representing business fully endorsed the proposal and said that it would be an excellent opportunity to build links across the county of Gloucestershire and enhance the services provided for both learners and employers and their communities.
- x. A government agency/body gave support in principle to the merger but expected a full consultation to take place with local authorities and relevant key stakeholders, should any future plans for site development and/or location changes be proposed.

58 All 10 non-online responses were therefore in support of the merger or had no objection to it. None was opposed to the proposed merger.

Consultation activities at the Colleges

59 Details were received from both Colleges of activities to raise awareness of the merger and encourage responses to the consultation. In both cases senior staff met with staff and learners to explain the plans and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

Filton College

60 At Filton College the key discussion topics were as follows:

- potential for increased travel by staff and students
- changes to the curriculum
- potential for redundancies for staff
- benefits of merger for the Colleges
- potential impact of any sharing of specialist staff
- plans to merge with any other colleges in the future
- potential for current sites to be sold
- expected impact on Ofsted inspection.

Stroud College

61 At Stroud College a series of meetings were held:

Date of Meeting	Department
8 February	All Staff Meeting
23 March	All Staff Meeting
26 April	Staff Liaison Group
10 June	College Managers' Meeting
15 June	Staff Liaison Group
16/17 June	All Staff Meetings
17 June	Estates
20 June	Finance, HR and Customer Services
23 June	MIS, Construction
24 June	Joint SC and Filton CMT
27 June	IT
28 June	Access to Learning
29 June	Business, Care and Lifestyle, School of Art
1 July	College Managers' Meeting

62 One member of staff was opposed to the merger but would support it if it was approved. Discussion topics were:

- requirement to travel to Filton each day
- likelihood of redundancies
- line management arrangements

- Stroud representation on the new SMT.

63 There were also positive comments as follows:

- excellent new opportunities
- see this as a way forward
- recognise the need to grow provision in the Stroud District and surrounding areas
- recognise the need to establish more provision in the Dursley area
- look forward to working with people from Filton and sharing ideas/good practice.

Annex A: Questions asked in the online consultation survey

Questions which were mandatory are indicated by an * (but respondents could leave the survey without completing it in full).

For each main question, respondents were given a choice of 'Yes', 'No', 'Not Sure', unless otherwise stated.

The follow-up questions all allowed free text to be submitted.

Main question	Follow-up question
* Do you support the proposed merger?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you support the objectives of the merger?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you support the new college's vision?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you support the plans for developing the curriculum?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you believe that the proposed merger will sustain and extend learner/employer choice and access to high-quality provision, meeting the needs of customers, within the area served by the new merged college?	If you feel that choice and access to high-quality provision will not be enhanced by the proposed merger, what are the reasons for this?
Do you support the proposed arrangements for governance and management?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you think the proposed merger provides value for money?	Do you have any comments on this?
Do you think any group(s) of learners would be affected adversely by the changes?	If so, who and why?
* Do you support 'South Gloucestershire and Cotswold College' as the name for the new corporation?	If you do not support the name, what are the reasons for this?
* Do you have any other issues or comments? (Yes / No)	If so, what are they?
* Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?	
* Which of the following best describes your interest?	Choice of: Learner, Employer, College Staff, Government Agency/Body, Local Government, Local Community, Local Business, School, HEI, College or training organisation, Member of Parliament, Other (If other, please specify)

Annex B: Statutory Consultation Notices x 3 (Dissolution Notices for both Filton College and Stroud College and a New Corporation Notice)

Statutory Notice - Further and Higher Education Act 1992

The Chief Executive of Skills Funding hereby gives notice, in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the Act) as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, of the draft proposal that the Secretary of State under section 27 of that Act should by order provide for the dissolution of the further education corporation of **Filton College** and the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation to a newly established further education corporation.

Dissolution of the corporation is proposed, at the request of the corporation of **Filton College** in order that the college may be part of a new further education corporation with **Stroud College**.

The date proposed for the dissolution is **1 January 2012**.

Provision will be made for all students at **Filton College** who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution to complete their studies at the newly established further education corporation.

A copy of the draft proposal is available free of charge from me and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to me by **20 July 2011**. Representations can be made at <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/allthelatest/consultations/> or in writing to providerreorganisations@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk or to:

Geoff Russell, Chief Executive of Skills Funding
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Date: 15 June 2011

Signed:



Statutory Notice - Further and Higher Education Act 1992

The Chief Executive of Skills Funding hereby gives notice, in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the Act) as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, of the draft proposal that the Secretary of State under section 27 of that Act should by order provide for the dissolution of the further education corporation of **Stroud College** and the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation to a newly established further education corporation.

Dissolution of the corporation is proposed, at the request of the corporation of **Stroud College** in order that the college may be part of a new further education corporation with **Filton College**.

The date proposed for the dissolution is **1 January 2012**.

Provision will be made for all students at **Stroud College** who have not yet completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution to complete their studies at the new further education corporation. A copy of the draft proposal is available free of charge from me and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to me by **20 July 2011**. Representations can be made at <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/allthelatest/consultations/> or to providerreorganisations@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk or in writing to:

Geoff Russell, Chief Executive of Skills Funding
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Date: 15 June 2011

Signed:



Statutory Notice - Further and Higher Education Act 1992

The Chief Executive of Skills Funding (the Chief Executive) hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (the Act) as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills Children and Learning Act 2009, of the draft proposal that the Secretary of State under section 16 of the Act should by order provide for the establishment of a body corporate to establish and conduct a new institution.

The establishment of the body corporate is proposed in order that **Stroud College** may merge with **Filton College** and that the respective further education corporations may be dissolved. It is proposed that the property, rights and liabilities of both corporations should be transferred to the proposed new corporation.

The date proposed for the establishment of the corporation is **24 October 2011**.

Provision will be made for all students at **Stroud College** and **Filton College** who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolutions to complete their studies at the new corporation.

A copy of the draft proposal is available free of charge from me and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to me by **20 July 2011**. Representations can be made at <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/allthelatest/consultations/> or to providerreorganisations@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk or in writing to:

Geoff Russell, Chief Executive of Skills Funding
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Date: 15 June 2011

Signed:



Annex C: Stakeholders notified of the consultation on the proposed merger of Filton College and Stroud College

157 Group	MP for Bristol East
Abbeywood Community School	MP Bristol North West
Alliance of Sector Skills Councils	MP Bristol South
Archway School	MP for Bristol West
Asset Skills	MP Filton & Bradley Stoke
Association for College Management	MP for Forest of Dean
Association of Colleges	MP for Gloucester
Association of Learning Providers	MP Kingswood
Association of National Specialist Colleges	MP for North East Somerset
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	MP North Somerset
Aviva	MP for Stroud
Bradley Stoke Community School	MP for The Cotswolds
Brimsham Green School	MP for Thornbury and Yate
Bristol Old Vic Theatre School	MOD
British Chambers of Commerce	Nampak Plastics
Bupa Care	National Star Centre College of Further Education
Castle School	National Union of Students
Chipping Sodbury School	National Union of Teachers
Cirencester College	New Siblands School
Cirencester Deer Park School	Norton Radstock College of FE
City of Bath College	Ofsted
City of Bristol College (College Green Centre)	Omega Workforce
Cogent	Order of St John
Construction Skills	Patchway Community College
Creative and Cultural Skills	People 1st
Culverhill School	Proskills UK Ltd
Delphi Diesel Systems	Rednock School
Department for Business Innovation and Skills	Renishaws
Energy & Utility Skills	Ruskin Mill College
e-Skills UK	SEMTA
Financial Services Skills Council	Severn Vale School
GL11 Community Project	Sir William Romney's School
Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils	Sixth Form Colleges' Forum
Gloucestershire College	Skills Active
Gloucestershire County Council	Skills for Care and Development
Gloucestershire County Council	Skills for Health
GoSkills	Skills for Justice
Government Skills	Skills for Logistics
Greenbanks	Skillset
Hartpury College	Skillsmart Retail
Hewer Facilities Management Ltd	South Gloucestershire Council
Higher Education Funding Council for England	St Brendans Sixth Form College
HOLEX	St Peters Catholic High School
Improve Ltd	Stroud and District Chamber of Commerce
Institute of the Motor Industry	Stroud District Council
Katharine Lady Berkeley's School	Stroud District Council
Lantra	Stroud High School
LEAFEA	Summit Skills
Learning and Skills Improvement Service	Thomas Keble School
Maidenhill School	UKCES
Marling School	UNISON
Marlwood School	University and College Union
	Vale of Berkeley College
	Vale Vision
	Weston College
	YPLA

