



**Stockton Riverside College
Progress Update**

June 2016

Presented to: Stockton Borough Council Cabinet

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last three years Stockton Riverside College has been transformed. This report presents the College's current position with a view to the future.

The report begins with a review of College performance, briefly discussing where it is now, framed by where it was, in terms of Ofsted, student performance, staff and financial performance indicators. The report summarises the College's position in respect of Area Review and the proposed merger with Darlington College; identifying the potential benefits and opportunities therein. Detail is then provided regarding the communities that the College serves. The report draws attention to the significant work that we do with unemployed people and our response to the recent SSI closure, via the retraining of its staff. Also featured in this report is the extensive work the College does with business, our exponential growth in apprenticeships and the work we are now doing with NETA. Throughout the report the criticality of collaboration is celebrated, not least of which being the exceptional relationship the College has with the Local Authority.

That the College has completely repositioned itself is certain; that our governors have led this process without question. However at the heart of what we have achieved, and what we will achieve in the future, is the flexibility and skills of our staff. Similarly, without the support and challenge of our partners our transformational journey would have been at best more difficult, at worst unsuccessful and it is for this reason that we unashamedly name, in this report, some of our partners as a small gesture of our appreciation.

We hope the report provides Stockton Borough Council members with a level of assurance that College strategic and operational activities are in line with their own ambitions. That we make no claims around being perfect and recognise that we still have much to do, but that members recognise their local College for what it is: aspirational but with humility, a College that creates real skills for real jobs, and a College that is proud to serve its local communities.

REPORT DATED: 14 June 2016

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Overview of College performance *(See Appendix 1 for a range of performance indicators)*

Over the last four years the College has demonstrated sustained performance improvement. In 2011/2012, staff morale was low, student achievements were well below national averages, and the College had received two consecutive 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted grades. In 2011/2012 a new Chair (Steve Cossins) was appointed along with a new Vice Chair (Mark White). Steve retires in July 2016, after twenty years' service, and Mark will then become our Chair. In 2011/2012 both colleagues set about on a radical change agenda. Since then, the College has achieved a 'Good' Ofsted grade and liP status. Staff survey results evidence impressive improvement and are now very high (national upper quartile). The College has grown 16-18 student numbers, dramatically increased apprentice numbers, and grown the number of students studying at higher levels. Student achievement rates have been consistently in the national upper quartile and student surveys evidence high levels of satisfaction. In a sector where income has been declining, due to public sector funding cuts, the College has successfully diversified to maintain its income levels and in recent years grow. Borrowing as a percentage of income has been significantly reduced and a rigorous approach to business planning and performance review has also enabled the College to reduce pay/income ratios. Subsequent cash levels have facilitated capital investment, and the acquisition (without borrowing) of an Independent Training Provider (NETA). This has all been achieved in, arguably, the most competitive region in the country (10 colleges within a 15 mile radius).

Area Review

During Area Review Stockton Riverside College was a preferred partner for a number of colleges. The College's approach has been commended for its rigorousness, integrity and its community based perspective. Throughout the process our Local Authority CEO, and our MPs, provided support and challenge. At the end of the process our preferred option is, subject to a process of due diligence, to merge with Darlington College. Between the two colleges it became clear that there was close alignment of organisational values and aspirations. The merger will result in enhanced levels of financial sustainability and the potential to significantly improve learner outcomes and services to business. Localised decision making framed by an overarching plan for leadership and management, will be critical in ensuring we grow business engagement and increase curriculum specialisation at higher levels. A larger college will provide greater capacity for curriculum development and sharing best practice, and will benefit staff through enriched workforce development opportunities. The merger will enable enhanced procurement with greater purchasing power. There will be no dilution of the visible post 16 offer within either Darlington or Stockton with a coherent, viable, and high quality curriculum from level 1 to level 3 remaining at both sites. Current positive relationships with schools, academies and the charitable and commercial sectors will be built upon. We will develop high quality specialist pathways aligned with the area's economic needs and agreed with our Combined Authority, Local Authority, Teesside University, our neighbouring colleges, schools and local businesses. To support the above we will make significant capital investment. The key principles that support the emerging business plan are to be cautious in both forecasting growth and savings.

Services for 14 – 16 year olds, vulnerable young people and working with local schools

The College provides a comprehensive range of educational services for younger students and students with high needs. Local schools contract with the College to provide group and/or individual programmes of learning and on a range of activities we work with all secondary and many primary schools in the Borough. The College recruits approximately 100 students with high needs each year. In recent years we have successfully refocused provision from a 'social care' type service to a service firmly focused on enabling progression and independent living.

Study programme/16 – 18 full time curriculum

The College's 16 – 18 study programme cohort includes approx. 2000 students. We offer courses from Level 1 to Level 3 across almost all sectors. In recent years, we have invested in a robust infrastructure to deliver increased levels of English and maths; for example in 2014/2015 there were fifty enrolments for English and maths GCSEs, in 2015/2016 more than five hundred. We now employ dedicated work experience co-ordinators in every Department to ensure all of our students receive meaningful work experience. Enterprise related activities have increased significantly. We have created an Enterprise Board made up of local business leaders to support a range of activities that both increase the enterprise and entrepreneurial skills of College students going into employment, but also enable College students to access an enterprise academy where they can attend bespoke workshops to set up and run their own business. Increasingly, the College is ensuring students make positive progression through course levels and achieve positive destinations into employment or higher education. For example, in 2014/2015 86.9% learners left College to go to a positive destination, 9.8% of the remaining destinations were unknown; for Higher Education programmes 95% of students left to a positive destination. In achieving the above we have enhanced focus on teaching and learning, in particular the sharing of best practice (through our Learning Fair, and support from Learning Coaches); there is much more rigour in the performance management of curriculum staff and we have raised the expectations and aspirations of both staff and students. However, and importantly, all of this is underpinned by our commitment and focus on the protection of the vulnerable and the maintenance of a positive and inclusive learning environment. To reduce NEETs the College has entered into partnership with the Local Authority and Eaglescliffe School to create the Skills Academy in Billingham. The Academy is a bespoke resource for students not yet ready for mainstream college and offers a broad curriculum, primarily at Level 1. The Academy was launched in the summer of 2015 and in its first year it recruited approximately 75 students. At the Level 3 end of the 16 – 18 market, in addition to our extensive Level 3 vocational offer, the College has grown and developed its Sixth Form College (Bede) provision. High recruitment in 2015/2016 and a robust track record of student achievement have consolidated Bede's position in the market; Bede operates with a relatively high level of autonomy, being in itself the size of a small school. In recent times, the recruitment of Chinese students to Bede has been explored and we are optimistic we will have a small cohort of Chinese students joining us in the summer, living with local families. This complements the international work the College is doing with its partner College in Weifang, China. Weifang College will second a senior member of staff to the College, for a year, to research potential collaborations, for example the delivery of UK

qualifications in China and the potential for a business exchange/network programme putting local businesses in contact with Chinese businesses.

Higher Education

We have steadily grown and improved our Higher Education offer and now have over 300 students studying at Level 4 and above. Courses in teacher education, Health and Social care, Performing Arts, Sports and Computing provide a diverse portfolio enabling both internal progression and external recruitment. Our last National Student Survey results were exceptional. Our Access to HE programmes have proved particularly popular. In 2012/2013 we had 123 students enrolled on Access programmes, in 2015/2016, 235. In addition we have developed niche markets in areas such as leadership and management, the flagship of which being our work with PD Ports, where we provide a learning/career pathway from Level 2 supervisory skills to Level 5 leadership programmes – 43 PD Ports employees achieved associated qualifications this year.

Working with unemployed people and responding to the SSI closure

The College's work with the unemployed in respect of reskilling and upskilling is something we are particularly proud of. Our regional Prince's Trust provision regularly achieves national acclaim and recruits approximately 140 students each year. We work closely via sub-contracting with specialists such as Fairbridge and various YMCAs – Prince's Trust targets those most hard to reach aged 16 – 25.

In 2015/16, across all programmes, 1,600 unemployed people engaged in a range of courses with us, from the traditional FE type programmes, covering a year or more, to short sharp intervention programmes such as health and safety, first aid, food hygiene etc. All of the courses are specifically aimed at improving employability. The College works closely with the DWP, with whom we have an excellent relationship, to meet both employer and student needs. Of particular note is our work in response to the SSI closure: since the closure 575 ex SSI and supply line workers have completed courses with us.

Engaging with businesses

In recent years this has been a priority area for us. We have developed and executed an aspirational business engagement strategy. As an example of our investment, in 2011/2012 we had a Business Development Unit staffed by a couple of people, we now have approximately fifteen people working in the Unit, not including those staff dedicated to business engagement in the Curriculum departments. This has manifested in significant apprenticeship growth (from 41 to 2011/2012 to almost 700 in 2015/2016). Strategic relationships have been established with a number of local companies, including PD Ports, SK Foods, Nifco, KP Snacks and Thirteen Group which has informed College services. The College now provides a range of services, including staff recruitment, sector based work academies and bespoke training services to well over 500 businesses. Individual department structures are increasingly becoming focussed on external engagement and we have increased considerably the number of work based learning co-coordinators and assessors that we employ. To ensure an efficient and coordinated approach, the College has introduced a highly advanced Customer Relationship Management tool, which is currently being rolled out across all operations.

NETA

The above is complemented by the strategic acquisition of NETA, completed in the summer of 2015. NETA is an Independent Training Provider with specialist provision in Engineering Construction – an area that previously the College did not do - hence providing excellent strategic fit. With a long history of business engagement (for example, working with businesses such as Jacobs, AMEC, Huntsman, Axiom, Meldrum, Fabricom) via both apprenticeships and bespoke commercial training, we expect that over the next few years, significant added value will be available to both organisations via ‘cross-selling’ and being able to provide a ‘one-stop-shop’ for local businesses. For example, working with NETA, the College gained access to new employers in the Logistics sector. This led to the formation of the College’s Logistics Academy where, through a Local Area Board made up of employers such as Devereux and Clipper, and, along with our specialist partners such as Tyne and Wear LGV Training and Cleveland LGV Training, we are developing a range of bespoke products targeted to reduce logistics skill shortages; including providing young people with mentors (e.g. Asda) and intern opportunities (Stillers and AV Dawson - amongst others).

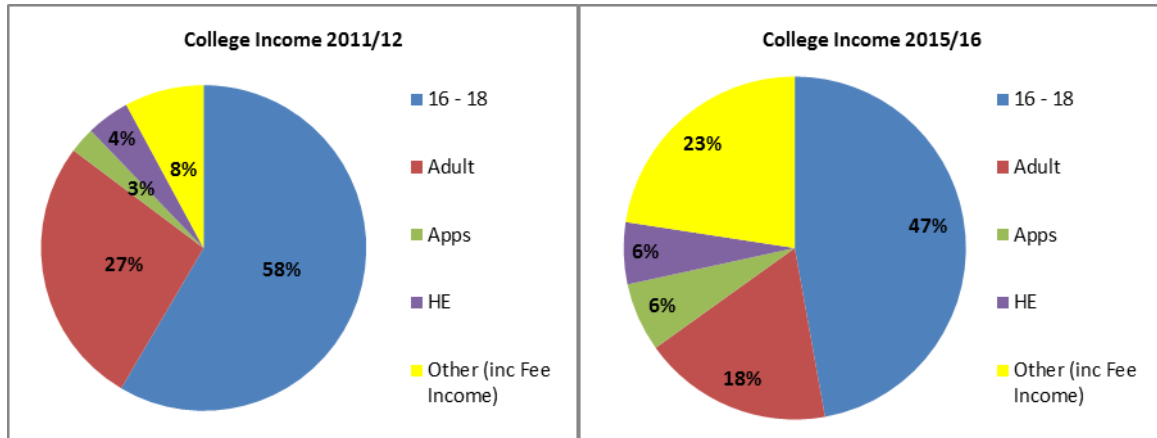
Summary

Over the last three years Stockton Riverside College has been transformed. This report presents the College’s current position. At the heart of what we have achieved, and what we will achieve in the future, is the flexibility and skills of our staff and our Values (*see Appendix 2*). Accountability, transparency and a transformational approach to partnerships drive our behaviours and we recognise that without the support and challenge of our partners, our transformational journey would have been at best more difficult, at worst unsuccessful. However we know we still have much to do. In future years we need to continue to improve student performance and we need to consolidate our relationships with local businesses. We will endeavour to create a financial position that enables the flex to provide high quality services for young people as well as meeting local business skills needs in terms of capital investment and bespoke services. And it is with the above in mind that the merger with Darlington College makes sense for both parties.

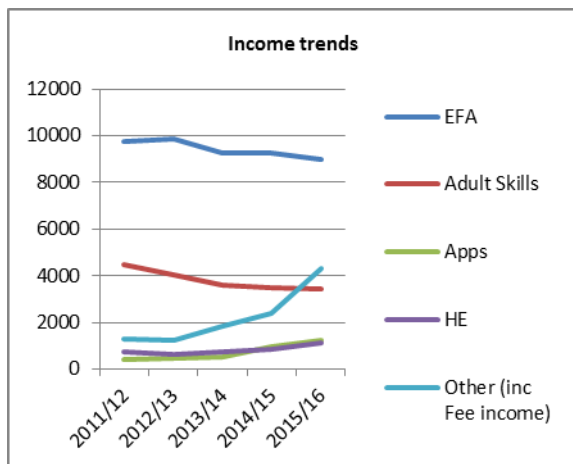
Appendix 1: Key College performance Indicators

(Note: data is not provided if either the data is unreliable and/or methods of measurement have changed)

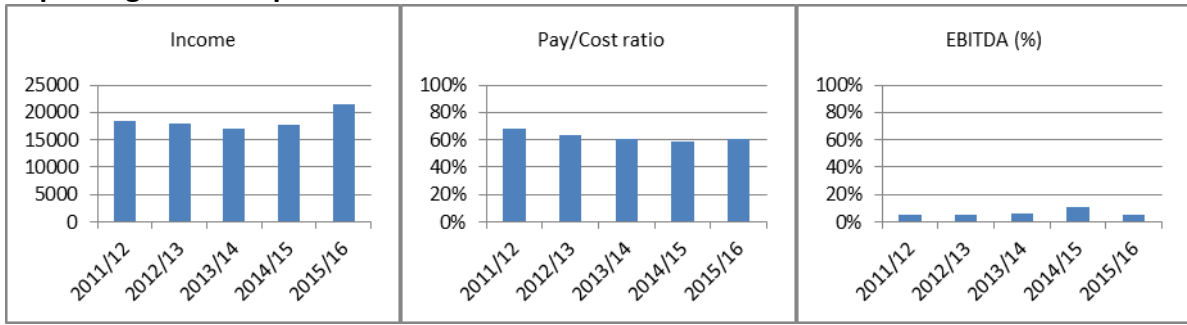
Increased diversification reducing reliance on discrete government funding strands



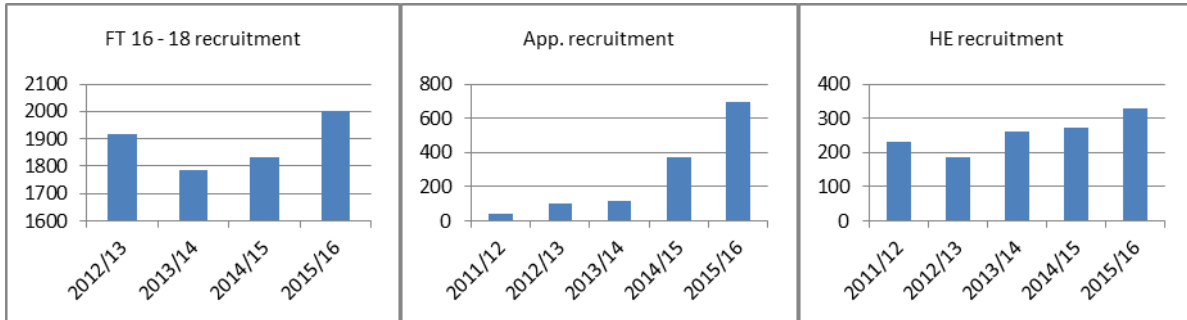
A reduction in EFA funding per learner, and significant reduction in Adult skills funding via government policy. Counter balanced by significant growth in apprentices, HE and 'other' income.



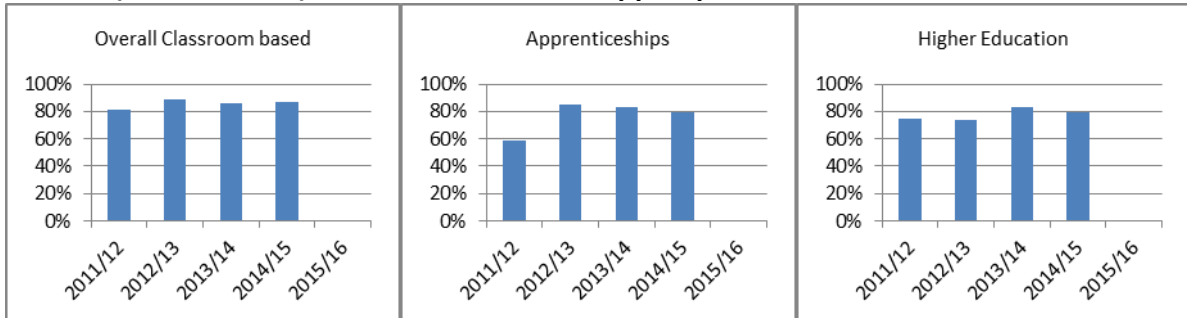
Improving Financial position



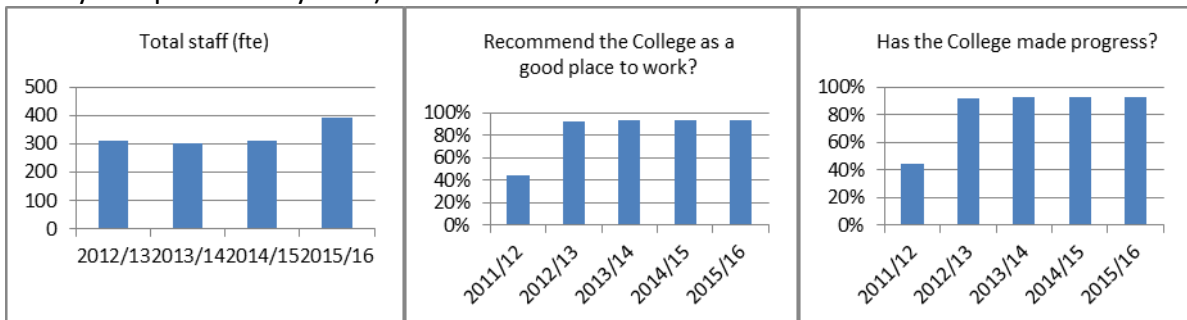
Growth in Student Recruitment



Success (Achievement) rates consolidated in upper quartile



Well motivated and growing workforce (Graphs 2 and 3 are from the College's annual staff survey completed every Dec.)



Appendix 2: Stockton Riverside College Values

- It's All About You
- High Performing but with Heart
- Quietly Confident with Absolute Focus on Success
- Building Real Skills for Real Jobs
- Proud to Serve our Students and Communities
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- Aspirational but with Humility