

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28th September 2017

UPDATE – HIGHER EDUCATION IN HASTINGS

I have been asked to give members a brief overview of developments around higher education in Hastings. For this purpose I have divided this into three parts:

- The operation of the University of Brighton in the town.
- The development of the University Centre and Sussex Coast College.
- Continuing contact with the University of Sussex.

Members will also be aware that Sussex Coast College is in the latter stages of considering a merger with Sussex Downs College, which is based in Eastbourne with other premises in Newhaven and Lewes. No formal decision has been taken whilst an extensive process of due diligence is undertaken. The move comes as a result of a review of Further Education in Sussex undertaken as part of a national process led by Government. The review process will lead nationally to mergers and restructuring and a fund has been set up to help colleges with the costs of merger and reorganisation locally. It is intended that this should ultimately lead to the establishment of an East Sussex group of colleges and academies delivering 6th form and vocational studies for young people alongside adult, Higher Education and apprenticeship delivery. This might be an item which members would also like to consider as proposals emerge. The process is managed through a transition board which includes the colleges, East Sussex County Council Chief Executive, University of Brighton and the chair of Team East Sussex which is the local devolved structure for the Local Economic Partnership and a business representative.

Operation of the University of Brighton

The University continues to work at a number of different levels. In terms of student numbers they are anticipating 350 to 375 for 2017/18 and c.150 for year 2018/19. The University is working to provide personalised plans for students who are unable to progress through their degrees at the normal pace.

Lacuna Place is now empty and the University anticipates tenants moving in shortly alongside developments involving SeaChange premises also. The college has a potential 3 year option on the Havelock Road premises if its numbers would support this but it is not possible to know if this will ever be taken up. There is nothing I can report about the fate of this or the main university site. The University report that satisfaction rates remain high amongst students. I will attempt to get feedback from the Students' Union to supplement this information for your meeting.

The University remains active in the local academy schools and the Brighton University and Hastings Academy Trust have merged to become the University of Brighton Academies Trust which now contains 9 schools in Hastings and St Leonards and a further 6 schools across East Sussex (this breaks down as 2 infant, 10 primary and 3 secondary). The Trusts website can be accessed at www.brightonacademiestrust.org.uk

The University is aware of significant issues relating to the alley down the side of Priory Square being a focus for the using of drugs and intend to gate the alley shortly.

University Centre Hastings

Sussex Coast College has concluded agreements to provide degree and other courses with the University of Brighton and has agreed the formal use of the name University Centre Hastings for the college's HE provision. Where Brighton cannot provide accreditation the University Centre can seek this elsewhere. With some financial assistance from the University and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) they have developed the substantial unused part of the college 5th floor to house new provision and have also remodelled a floor in the Ore Valley campus to provide dedicated HE space for Engineering, Computing and Access to HE courses. The University also has similar arrangements with Sussex Downs College. The courses currently on offer are:

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| BA Designer Maker | BA Fine Art Practice |
| Level 6 Health Care Management | PGCE/CERT ED FE and Training (F&P time) |
| Cert TESOL | BA Visual Communication (Graphic Design) |
| BA Visual Communication (Illustration) | BA Visual Communication (Philosophy) |
| HNC/HND Business | AAT Accountancy |
| HNC/HNC Computing / Systems | HMC Mechanical Engineering |
| HNC/HND Manufacturing Engineering | HND/HNC Electrical Engineering |
| HNC/HND Social Care | City & Guilds Catering Management |
| HNC Construction | HMD Art & Design (Animation) |
| HND Creative Media (Film) (Delivered in Brighton via Brighton Film School) | |
| BA Business (top up) | BSc Computing and Systems Development |
| BA Animation Arts & Practice (top up) | |
| BSc Mechanical & Manufacturing (top up) | |

Seven of these are new offers for 2017/18.

The University Centre's offer can be seen via the new dedicated website:

www.universitycentrehastings.ac.uk

The new term starts on 25th September. The college report that their application level has held up compared to a 4-5% decline nationally. This is an achievement given that the setting up of the university centre has meant they have not been able to market through a full recruitment cycle.

The college has obtained funding from the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) to develop a widening participation activities for young people to encourage greater take up of higher education.

Members will be aware that the university centres development is a long-term initiative. In the 2018/19 year the university centre will be developing a Foundation Degree in early years education and six new higher level apprenticeships aimed at the specific needs of employers and residents in East Sussex.

University of Sussex

Members may recall that the Council has had informal contacts with the University and these continue. Sussex runs a medical school in conjunction with Brighton University and is seeking

expansion of numbers. This is a competitive process for funding and the council would obviously support any expansion on the placements made here or if an opportunity existed for other growth. However this is early days and the University will need to plan in line with its long-term vision for its development.

The Council does have opportunities for expansion of higher education, potentially at White Rock as part of the master planning there or even the Harbour development if this concept is advanced. The key is to remain positive and seek materially beneficial opportunities as and when they arise.

General

It is worth saying that the higher education market is rapidly changing. The type of campus concept that predominated previous thinking is no longer universal. In the main government does not finance capital expansion, which universities must now mainly finance through earned income. Collaboration with business development and Government is often international and IT has meant much learning can be remote (which in itself is an interesting development with different aspects). Therefore our thinking and ambition will need to reflect these changes. Members may wish to revisit the study commissioned by Hastings Borough Council/East Sussex County Council/Rother District Council into the potential of higher education in the area which was produced at the time of the University of Brighton's decision to end its direct delivery. This is attached as Appendix 1.

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