

**Notes of the Parent Consultation Meeting held at Cyril Jackson Primary School
on Friday 5th July 2019 at 9.00 a.m.**

GOVERNORS PANEL

Peter Heathcote (PH) Chair of the Trust
Christine Whatford (CW) Interim CEO
Gill Kemp (GK) Headteacher
Sue Stollery (SS) Chair of Governors
Phillip Moss (PM) Support for Consultation Process
Hodo Darir (HD) Head of School
Ross Tranter (RT) Governor
Darren Smith (DS) Employee of the Trust
Aleya Sattar (AS) Parent Governor
Rani Begum (RB) Parent Governor

1. INTRODUCTIONS

GK opened the meeting, welcomed the parents and introductions were made.
GK informed parents that she had generated a slide deck presentation following the meeting of 19 June because the same questions kept arising from parents.

See slide deck.

The presentation outlined what the situation was within Tower Hamlets as borough.
There were a number of schools with licensed deficits.
There would be 400 extra reception spaces within the borough in September and all schools had been asked to consider their position. The situation had never been this extreme in GK's 14 years at the school.
Some schools were merging because the head teachers were retiring and it made sense. The process was saving money as there was no money being spent on hiring a new head teacher.
Tower Hamlets had seen the most cuts than any other borough in London.

The floor was opened to questions.
PM agreed to referee the process.

2. PARENTS' QUESTIONS

Parent Question/Comment – PQ
Governors Panel Response/Comment - GPR

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| PQ | A population reduction overall in the borough would not impact whether the school decided to remain a school or if it transitioned into academy; what was the thinking behind going for an academy model? |
| GPR | There would be better facilities highly skilled staff. The school was not currently oversubscribed but moving to an academy model would mean that the education standard provided would be higher. The only year that was at capacity was year 4. |

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| | <p>The admissions process admittedly needed streamlining. The school was looking into how.</p> <p>There were 60 vacant places in Poplar at present.</p> |
| PQ | <p>It was clear the borough was at crisis; would there not be a division in the community by eliminating certain areas from applying if the academy model were adopted?</p> |
| GPR | <p>We were not a priority area. Parents would not be able to get their child into the secondary school that was local to them which was St Pauls. The things we needed to consider was the enrichment opportunities we could offer to the pupils in conjunction with St Pauls? It was an important consideration.</p> |
| PQ | <p>What had changed within the education system overall that made us consider whether we should become an academy?</p> |
| GPR | <p>It had come from the government that by 2020 all schools would have to become academies. Since 2010 we had declined and in 2017 the school and the governors began looking at things with the local context in mind. During the May Full Governing Body Meeting a Resolution was passed for the school to opt into an academy model with the Department of Education.</p> |
| PQ | <p>What was the difference between the old/new systems?</p> |
| GPR | <p>Tower Hamlets had lost a considerable amount of their budget since 2010; there was still more savings to be made within the local authority. Previously the LA assisted schools with HR, payroll, finance, safeguarding, building and maintenance and data. The departments were still around but were massively reduced. There was simply not enough money within the LA to provide the service. 50% of the school in the borough had become academies. As services were removed the schools had become vulnerable. The ability to share back office functions was no longer viable.</p> |
| PQ | <p>It seemed it was a privatisation of the system; it looked great, but academies were getting into financial trouble too and were being taken over by other bigger academies. The initial step did not look bad, but it created competition. It was important to consider what may happen in the future say for example in 5 years' time.</p> |
| GPR | <p>MAT's were charitable trusts. There was no profit motive. It was important to keep focussed on the aim of the schools ethos and to promote the wellbeing of the pupils and staff, and Cyril Jackson was a school that cared about both equally.</p> |
| PQ | <p>The commercial mechanism had gotten stronger over time regardless of whether the academy was a charity. A bit like Virgin Health. They were a good example of an expanding MAT. It is not something I wanted for my children.</p> |
| GPR | <p>The charity the school would sit under was led by Queen Marys University in London, who had the public interest at heart. They offered the schools the networks they had access to which would be of great benefit. The aim was to improve the outcome for the population. Not spend extra resources on reinventing the wheel.</p> |

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| PQ | You would go bust eventually and be taken over; it looked good now because you had the money to make this move; what about when financial problems arose where and who would the academy look to? |
| GPR | The assistance being provided by the universities had no commercial interest. They had a policy to give back to the communities. It was a different model compared to the health services who were allowed to make a profit. |
| PQ | The Trust may not be allowed to make a profit but there was nothing stopping the suppliers from making one. |
| GPR | The school had to declare an interest even as individual governors. Records were kept within the school. The information was not published but was available to parents upon request. It was important to realise that everyone had connections and nothing was bought into the school without the support of the governors. |
| PQ | The MAT itself could not make a profit but it had to provide a lot of services. There was no prohibition to prevent the MAT going to any provider. This would mean it was profit making. The current appointment of trustee's regulation was broad. There was political sway behind it. The funding regarding each pupil would not remain fixed. It was a one way train. The current trustees would be changing within 5-10 years and with that things would also change. |
| GPR | Any school could go to any supplier even if they were still under the LA. This was not a new thing. |
| PQ | The accountability was different though? |
| GPR | The LA had not noticed deficit plans submitted by schools; this was their mistake. The school trustees were more robust in drilling down the problems so there would be the proper oversight and accountability even if it was different. |
| PQ | It was easier to find a local authority member than find a governor or trustee of a MAT online. A parent had tried to find information online and had not succeeded. Even if the governor or trustee chose to list themselves now would they still want to in 5 year's time? Where would we find the information? |
| GPR | The role of the LA had changed significantly. The interest of the governors was for the betterment of the children and the education they were receiving. It was the motivation for the governors and the trustees. It was difficult to say where the LA's would be within the next 5 years. |
| PQ | One parent had google searched the Trust and found it difficult to establish names of those managing it. What was the consultation process? It seemed like these meetings were just to tell us what was happening, not asking for the parent's opinion prior to a decision being made. There was no one providing another view. It had become widely known to the parents that the teachers in the school were not happy with the changes being suggested; so although they may be good for children they were not good for staff. |
| GPR | The law was clear on how consultations were run. |

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| | The meetings were an attempt to listen to the views of stakeholders and parents. There would be a report published by the governors arguing for and against which parents could access. |
| PQ | Staff were unhappy. |
| GPR | The teaching staff had requested a meeting with their union representative. Their union representative also worked in an academy which only became apparent towards the end of the meeting. There were lots of questions asked regarding terms and pensions, hours of work and holidays. The support staff were in fear of losing all of those things. There was a letter that went out was inaccurate. The staff became upset because their names had been used in the letter which in turn impacted the decisions of the parents. The staff had since been spoken to and none of them had stated that they were unhappy. |
| PQ | They would not say anything though because they want to keep their jobs! |
| PQ | MAT's were funded by a fixed sum based on the pupil cohort. There was no additional money? |
| GPR | UST did operate by having a portion of the income. They had previously given money to the LA to run some services. In relation to salaries there was no one individual who was being paid beyond the salary scale. An HR service was desperately required within Tower Hamlets. The current system did not incorporate the latest policies. We were not up to date and therefore not compliant. It left the school exposed. We did not have access to UST and the school was now paying for consultants which was expensive and unjustifiable. |
| PQ | Under the academy model where would the pupil money go and how much of it; parents requested projections? |
| GPR | Previously the LA would take 3% but the MAT would take 5%. The difference would be marginal. |
| PQ | What was proper due diligence for the change to take place? |
| GPR | After the first stage the process could be stopped. |
| PQ | Was financial impact the only reason it could be stopped? |
| GPR | No there were other factors such as exclusions. There were no school improvement services. We had deployed staff to work to help other schools but it was not financially viable for the school so we had pulled out. The due diligence was not just about finance, it was about premises, and retaining good staff. |
| PQ | It seemed as though we were managing the government's financial problems for them? |

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| | We needed someone to explain the downside; we only have people who are championing the idea. |
| GPR | The cuts were running parallel with other cost rises. The LA took £5 from each pupil without our consultation last year. They now have a pot of money and could not do anything with it because they took the money without permission. In relation to hearing the other side parents had met with the Union representatives. |
| PQ | Parents wanted Alex to attend the next parents meeting; they felt they were going to get lost in the detail if he was not present. Teachers in the school were scared to speak up. Parents had told the governors what their concerns were. |
| GPR | Each academy had different operating models and the way they were transitioning. Cyril Jackson had fantastic teachers which it wanted to retain. In doing so we would want to ensure they were happy. |
| PQ | The process always started off well but changed halfway. Were there any guarantees? |
| GPR | LA's were in the process of changing their terms and conditions. They were looking at severance pay and pay grades and working hours. The consultation could happen in either camp. There were certain national legal rights staff had during the transition. Parents could see what had happened in Royal Greenwich Trust School and St Paul's Way Trust. It was true, MATs changed the terms and conditions themselves but our aim was to stay with the same ones. |
| PQ | UST's have had a larger turnover of Trustees what was the reason? What was our vulnerability of being taken over? |
| GPR | There had been a turnover because people had retired or left their posts in the Trust organisation. All academies were registered at Companies House. The organisation had stayed but people had moved on. Most of the members were also members of the Trust We were not allowed to have an LA as a member. In the end we changed the numbers so that we could have the relevant governors and trustees on board which reflected a reduction and large turnover but this was not the case. |
| PQ | Did we know our success failure rate after the first stage of the due diligence process? |
| GPR | No it was difficult to say. |
| PQ | There were issues around who would fix the school premises before they transitioned. |
| GPR | Agreed that this was a problem. |
| PQ | What if the trust began running out of money? |
| GPR | We had only set one deficit budget in 13 years. There had been significant reductions in staff. |

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| | <p>Tower Hamlets will no longer provide the cleaning service from September 2020.</p> <p>The trust has already procured a new provider to services the schools in Tower Hamlets and Greenwich. It was possible to build economies of scale across all the schools.</p> <p>No school or MAT should ever get into deficit.</p> <p>There were ways of supporting a MAT that was having financial problems.</p> |
| PQ | Who had the capacity to provide more funding to those in deficit? |
| GPR | <p>The Education and Schools Funding Agency.</p> <p>All trusts had a reserve and planned 5 years ahead. It was on a national level not something specific to the borough.</p> |
| PQ | <p>In relation to the staff/ teachers; if the teachers were opposed to the change parents would go with them.</p> <p>Staff needed to be represented sufficiently by their Trade Union</p> <p>We needed to find out why they were unhappy.</p> <p>Perhaps a longer consultation period could be implemented?</p> <p>A meeting with both sides with pros and cons would also assist.</p> <p>Was it possible to hold a secret ballot for staff and parents?</p> |
| GPR | <p>As a school we had what was needed to go to the next stage.</p> <p>A secret ballot was not going to help.</p> <p>Staff that had left had gone to work at academies.</p> <p>We had to think about the children, not a group of adults who may or may not stay with the school in the next few years</p> <p>The consultation period being adopted was the correct model.</p> <p>Adding extra time was not going to help.</p> <p>Parents had requested a meeting during which documents were to be presented and translated but nobody turned up.</p> <p>There was regular engagement with the union representatives.</p> <p>All the e-mails that had been received from staff were positive.</p> <p>Some staff who were anti-academy in principal but that did not mean they were unhappy in their job.</p> |
| PQ | It was not fair to blame the politics within a school as the trust had its own political environment to deal with; it was all relative. |
| GPR | It was not. It was about the pupils. |
| PQ | <p>Parents could not see where the extra money would be coming from/ how could the school transition successfully based on this lack of information?</p> <p>A small MAT was of concern and could be taken over. It seemed that education was becoming a competition.</p> <p>The models of privatisation drove the direction conditions and pay took.</p> |
| GPR | Judge UST on what they had done over the 3 years. It was important to look at the evidence. |
| PQ | <p>Parents felt the period to consider the transition was too short.</p> <p>UST were going to have good reports because if they had been assisting failing school the only way was up.</p> |

Cyril Jackson
5th July 2019 at 9.00 a.m.
Parent Consultation Meeting

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| | It was not a good example. |
| GPR | Schools were amalgamating with schools not of their choice; the merging was led and managed by the LA. Cyril Jackson were not in that situation. |

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| PQ | Who had paid for the Tower Hamlets Partnerships? |
| GPR | The schools had. |

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| PQ | It seemed like this school did not want to work with any other school; parents needed more time to think and find out what other schools in the borough were doing. |
| GPR | PM assured parents that the school and the governors would provide more detail on the process as things moved along. |

3. CLOSING REMARKS

Parents were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was closed at 10:50

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE:.....

DATE SIGNED:...../...../.....