

Notes of the Parent Consultation Meeting re: Academisation held at Cyril Jackson Primary School on Wednesday 19th June 2019 at 9.00 a.m.

GOVERNORS PANEL

Sue Stollery (SS) Chair of Governors
Ross Tranter (RT) Governor
Gill Kemp (GK) Headteacher
Aleya Sattar (AS) Parent Governor
Rani Begum (RB) Parent Governor

1. INTRODUCTIONS

GK introduced the meeting which she noted was the same as the meeting due to be held at 2.45 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.

GK stated that all parents had received the consultation document and provided a summary of the historical context of both local and national education which had led to the current consultation. GK invited SS to explain the Governors' process.

SS advised that the Governing Board considered future strategy and collaboration as part of its role on a regular basis. SS noted that it had been considering collaboration and academisation or alternative routes. SS advised that it had convened a working party to consider developing a list of potential academies taking into account the alignment of culture and ethos and that it had short listed five. SS stated that following further research and meeting with the Chief Executive Officers (as they wanted to ensure that CJ could retain its autonomy and day to day responsibilities), it had selected the University Schools Trust as the best fit.

SS noted that the process had occurred over a period of two years with extensive research and consideration.

GK opened the meeting up for questions.

2. PARENTS' QUESTIONS

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

PQ	<p>A Parent noted their concern that they were only being presented with the pro-academy response. Parents referred to growing concerns regarding academies as evidenced in the BBC Panorama programme and the Guardian.</p> <p>The Parent suggested that there should be a longer consultation period with other opposing views and opinions provided to support a democratic decision.</p>
----	--

GPR	<p>GK stated that the decision was informed by research and careful consideration and that, despite some criticism, 75% of secondary schools and 26% of primaries were now academies.</p> <p>GK stated that parents might want to consider why schools were moving away from Local Authorities.</p>
PQ	A Parent asked why the school wanted to leave the Local Authority.
GPR	<p>GK stated that the services from the Local Authority had been significantly stripped back, including Human Resources, Data, and SEND support. There was no economy of scale.</p> <p>GK stated that the LA were also withdrawing services for cleaning and catering.</p>
PQ	Parents stated that the only economic gain was £25,000 with no other funding increase.
GPR	GK advised that there were also pooled services for which currently the funding went direct to the Local Authority.
PQ	Parents stated that there were also high salaries of £145k.
GPR	Stated that this was comparable to secondary school Headteachers in the LA.
PQ	Parents stated that joining a Trust would increase salaries and staffing costs, which were the most expensive resources, so how could the decision present economic benefits.
GPR	GK stated that they would have economies of scale across smaller resources areas through collaborative ordering but that there would be savings through central services for the provisions of high cost areas such as HR, Cleaning, Catering and School Business Services.
PQ	Parents asked if there was any other way to collaborate without joining an academy and moving into a different legal entity and a permanent change.
GPR	GK stated that she did not think there were other options available and noted that her colleagues across the Local Authority were facing considerable challenges.
PQ	Parents suggested there was a lack of alternative options offered, which was a concern.
GPR	RT stated that he had been part of the Governors Working Party. RT said that they had considered a range of set criteria, looked at a range of trusts and that the trust they had selected met the criteria considered particularly geographically and ethically.
PQ	Parents stated that they thought the UST was an empire builder and did not like the idea that the pupils went from Nursery through to University and that they did not develop the skills to transition.
GPR	It was noted that there were considerable benefits for the offer, and that parents always still had the choice for secondary transfer applications.
PQ	A Parent asked who the owners/shareholders of UST were.

GPR	GK stated that they were a charitable trust and provided a summary of the Members and Trustees. The Clerk noted for Parents' benefit that the information would also be on Companies House.
PQ	The Parent requested the charity's number to enable them to ensure they were looking at the correct information.
PQ	Parents asked what other schools were in the Trust.
GPR	GK provided a summary of how the Trust started with St Paul's Way, which was a failing school which had its Governing Board removed, the Local Authority had put an Interim Executive Board in place provided by Queen Mary University which had brought an ethical strength.
PQ	Parents asked in what way they brought an ethical approach.
GPR	GK stated that it was an ethical university who had been responsible for the research which led to the London Living Wage as an example. GK continued that the Headteacher of St Paul's Way, the first school, had been a regular visitor to Cyril Jackson and the school now provided the top results.
PQ	Parents stated that CJ was not a failing school at risk of closure.
GPR	GK stated that there were other schools which were not failing that were still being closed such as Raines.
PQ	The Parent stated that CJ was not being closed, and was not at risk.
GPR	GK stated that it had a reducing roll, and the Local Authority were in discussion to close schools across the borough and that it was lucky not to be in that position. GK shared local context of schools: which were reducing in form entry; who were federating; as well as those in other parts of the borough who were being encouraged to look at partnerships. GK stated that being a single school was no longer viable. GK stated that she genuinely believed that UST was the best solution.
PQ	The Parent asked if they could have other positions presented.
GPR	GK asked Parents to suggest who they would like to attend from the Local Authority.
PQ	Parents suggested it did not have to be someone from the Local Authority and that there had been a school which had successfully opposed UST.
GPR	GK/RT said that was factually incorrect, and that following due diligence UST had withdrawn from the process due to the financial risk due to the DfE refusing to support for costs related to premises.
GPR	GK provided a summary of the process for St Paul's Way to become an Academy, which had been to enable them to support Royal Greenwich who had now supported over 200 students who had failed their GCSE though re-take exams, of which she was very proud.
PQ	Parents acknowledged the academic excellence which was important for children but noted that St Paul's Way had high staff mobility under the current Headteacher, and that there had been also a lot of staff reduction when he had taken over and that staff had to apply for their jobs. The Parent stated that they were concerned about the impact on staff wellbeing.

GPR	GK noted that there had also been staff reductions when she had started at CJ, which was sometimes necessary. SS stated that was not due to academisation but that it had happened when Grahame Price became the HT at the school.
	RT stated that they were at the start of the consultation process, that they were also encouraging parents to email questions for those who had to leave.
PQ	The Parents noted that they were concerned about the impact on staff which was most important as they contributed to their child's success.
GPR	GK noted they were also consulting with all staff and unions and that all staff would be TUPE over to a new contract. RT noted that the contracts also considered the Burgundy Book which underpinned LA contracts and UST was replicating those and therefore the terms and conditions were similar.
PQ	Parents asked how it affected SEN.
GPR	GK advised that the SEND funding was currently under review by the Local Authority who currently provided school top up which they thought would change and that there would be potentially be significant reductions to the top up support. GK clarified that funding for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan would still be received.
PQ	Parents asked what the drawbacks were for joining UST.
GPR	GK stated that she was clear that, with a depleted LA and against a backdrop of already reduced services and a strain on social care (which was in special measures), she thought the LA were seriously depleted and could no longer support schools sufficiently. GK said that the LA had £68m in cuts and there were more which had to be made.
PQ	A Parent accepted there was austerity but said they failed to understand the cost savings to be made.
GPR	RT stated that the line by line savings would be identified as part of the due diligence and noted that as an example they would save 25% on insurance.
PQ	Parents noted their surprise that UST operated out of CJ.
GPR	GK stated that they paid rent of £30k per year and also paid four days of her salary.
PQ	Parents asked GK in what capacity she was attending today.
GPR	GK stated that she had been at the school for 14 years and provided a summary of her time at the school and its achievements. She was passionate about CJ who would always be her priority and therefore she was there as Headteacher of CJ. If asked if she thought UST was the best choice for CJ then she had to say absolutely.
PQ	A sibling who attended on behalf of Parents stated that they were concerned about the financial impacts on Parents if they had to contribute to the school.
GPR	RT clarified that UST was not a fee-paying Trust and that there would be no financial impact on families.

	RT explained how funding was delegated to the Trust which had more autonomy to achieve better value as they would have more autonomy.
PQ	Parents noted that once they became a different legal entity those current autonomies could not be guaranteed as the Trust could change them.
GPR	GK provided examples of the lack of support by the Local Authority, her role in supporting schools that had faced significant difficulties as well as examples of a number of schools which were failing financially and set deficit budgets. GK stated that as CEO and Director of Education at UST they had regular executive team meetings which reviewed Key Performance Indicators and finances to ensure all areas were strong.
PQ	Parents suggested that CJ was painting a picture of an absent Local Authority.
GPR	Parent Governors who worked in the Local Authority supported GK's view of the significantly reduced provision. GK provided examples of reduction of posts and provision in the Local Authority.
PQ	Parents asked GK why she could not continue as an outstanding Headteacher under the Local Authority.
GPR	GK stated that she had to consider workforce strategy, CPD, staff retention and LA support. GK said that they had to be able to offer staff a decent package which provided opportunities and professional development.
PQ	A Parent suggested and discussed with GK a further meeting with others who had been through the process.
GPR	GK asked who Parents would like to attend.
PQ	Parents suggested teachers involved in the process and other opposing views or union reps.
GPR	GK stated that she would not be comfortable with union reps attending Parents' consultation. RT suggested that Parents look at the Regional Schools Commissioner Meeting minutes which were public documents and noted that there were currently 9-12 schools going through the process in the current geographical area. RT/GK acknowledged that there were some schools which had bad experiences in a specific trust but that it tended to be those who were failing and essentially being taken over.
PQ	Parents said that they would like to have examples of other offers and what they could provide.
GPR	GK advised that was not part of the consultation.
PQ	A Parent asked if GK thought the school and staff would manage the transition well, as she was aware that some schools struggled at first.

GPR	GK said that she believed they had capacity to manage well and provided an example of how the transition was supported. GK noted that the vision and values were aligned and that there would be no struggle for teaching and learning.
PQ	Parents acknowledged the strength of CJ teachers particularly SEND.
GPR	GK noted that historically they had been very inclusive for SEND and that they had recently had to start turning pupils away who were outside of the school's catchment. GK stated that UST was equally inclusive.
PQ	A Parent noted a family member's experience of applying to six schools in the LA for her SEND child and all had refused and recommended CJ. Parents acknowledged the significant work of the school and stated that was what concerned them about the change and potential impact.
GPR	SS stated that was why they had carefully considered the options to protect the identity and ethos of the school.
	GK stated that they were less likely to be able to remain the same if they did not join an academy. GK said that she would not be making a recommendation which would expose the school, its pupils and families to risk. GK stated that they had looked at academies eight years ago, and at the time she had opposed it but that the landscape had changed and that she now believed it was the best option.
PQ	Parents recognised GK's passion for the school and noted that she made a strong case but they were concerned about a conflict of interest.
GPR	RT stated that GK had not been part of the working party and that they had very segregated roles and responsibilities.
PQ	Parents noted concern regarding how GK would manage the division of roles.
GPR	GK said that there was a strong leader at the school as Head of School, GK stated that she also had to grow leaders and that she was committed to the Trust until her retirement to ensure stability and quality provision which was already very difficult due to the funding crisis and reduction of provisions such as Place2Be. GK noted the only way to improve the financial position was through economies of scale.
PQ	A Parent reiterated the concern about lack of other options and the timeframes.
GPR	RT stated that they had taken considerable time and considered carefully.
PQ	Parents asked if they could be given an extension on the consultation.
GPR	SS said that they had followed the recommended four weeks and that the GB would then meet to decide if to proceed to the next stage of due diligence and the process could take six months or more as it included lots of assessments including buildings and financial.
PQ	Parents asked if due diligence was a yes / no to joining the Trust.
GPR	SS stated that it was a decision to either join the Trust or stay with the Local Authority.

PQ	Parents noted that they wanted to have the opportunity to look at other options and asked how views were being collated.
GPR	GK provided a summary of how the views were collated and that the notes would provide a record for frequently asked questions.
PQ	A Parent confirmed then that the GB made the decision and the consultation was only to hear views.
GPR	SS confirmed that was correct. GK stated that doing nothing in her opinion was not an option
PQ	The Parent asked if Academisation could be considered in the future.
GPR	GK stated that if they were to move into the Trust now, they would be leading in the primary sector and that if they were to take no action it was possible that the LA would tell them to amalgamate as they were with schools in the west of the borough.
PQ	Parents stated that they had not had time to absorb the document or the range of information available.
GPR	GK reiterated that the LA were not in a position to provide strong support which was sustainable and referred to a PowerPoint which had been sent to Headteachers to ask them to consider options for next three to five years.
PQ	Parents requested time to engage with papers, research the Trust and have another parent-led meeting and discussed how they could communicate with each other.
GPR	GK said that the school was happy to provide the facilities for a meeting but that the school could not share contacts due to GDPR. GK noted that the Trust also had linked with the Drapers' Company who had a history of supporting schools in areas of high deprivation In response to questions Governors stated that they would not extend the consultation and that they were following the DfE guidance.
PQ	Parents noted that they did not feel they had been involved in the process for research; that the decision was made and there was no presentation for both sides and lack of information about risk for Academies such as increased exclusions, decreased staff satisfaction, financial misappropriation and lack of independence in the curriculum.
GPR	GK stated that they would like to utilise senior teachers from the Trust to improve curriculum in areas such as MFL, Science and PE. SS provided a summary of the consultation process of which this was stage 1. The Board would then decide whether to submit a register of interest which would then lead to stage 2 which was a more formal consultation which included TUPE, unions, UST and due diligence.

3. CLOSING REMARKS

GK thanked Parents for attending and noted that although there had been significant challenge from a few Parents present she was mindful that the majority had not asked any questions or opposed the suggestion. GK stated that she had also had several positive comments from Parents.

Cyril Jackson
19th June 2019 at 9.00 a.m.
Parent Consultation Meeting

GK concluded to commit to providing facilities for another meeting for parents, to which she suggested the Governors Panel was invited.

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE:.....

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