

## **Minutes of the public meeting held to consider the consultation on the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan Primary Schools on the New King's site held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 6.30pm**

### In Attendance as members of the panel:

Cllr Georgie Cooney (Cabinet Member for Education, LBHF); Ian Heggs (Tri-borough Director for Schools' Commissioning); Miles Chester (Head Teacher, New Kings Primary School); Andrew Fenwick (Chair of Governors, New Kings Primary School); Andrew Christie (Tri-borough Executive Director of Children's Services); Toby Thomas (Principal, Thomas's London Day Schools); Jo Copeland (Head of Curriculum, Thomas's London Day Schools).

### **1. Welcome – Andrew Fenwick (AF)**

AF - Welcome to New King's School, this is the first of two public consultations; the next one will be at Sullivan School next Tuesday at six o'clock. First of all I would like to introduce the panel alongside me. I am Andrew Fenwick, I am the Chair of Governors of New King's School, working from the right hand side, we have Georgie Cooney, who is a councillor and the head of the Education Cabinet at the Local Authority and next door to her we have Ian Heggs, who is the Director of Schools' Commissioning in the Tri-borough, next to Ian is Miles Chester the Head Teacher of New King's School, next to me is Andrew Christie who is the Director of Children's Services in the Tri-borough, next to him is Toby Thomas, Principal of Thomas's London Day Schools and next to him is Jo Copeland who is Head of Curriculum at Thomas's London Day Schools.

**At this point the meeting was interrupted by a member of the audience who explained that there were people outside who were being prevented from coming in and it was not yet 6.30pm. The meeting was halted whilst some of the people were allowed in; however, there was inadequate space in the school hall for everyone to be admitted. A significant number of people were left outside the school, but remained in the school playground until the end of the meeting. Many people were upset that not everyone who wanted to attend could gain access. Andrew Christie said that the meeting was not the only opportunity for people to**

have their say on the consultation. Members of the audience said that it was the only opportunity at New King's School and if the school and the Council had underestimated the strength of feeling that was their problem. Andrew Christie said - if we are going to do all that we need to do this evening then I do ask all of you just to bear in mind we want to give everybody the opportunity to have their say and for a public meeting like this on a hot night to be carried out successfully I do ask everybody to cooperate. Now the fact of the matter is that we cannot fill the hall beyond a safe capacity, we obviously regret the fact that there are some people that we have to say there is no space to come in. However, the point I would want to go on to make – at this point there were a number of interjections from audience members, who remained unhappy that a significant number of people were unable to gain access to the meeting – Andrew Christie said - we could have an evening where people interject and take every opportunity to shout or we can have an evening where the people here can provide you with information and then there will be an opportunity for people in the hall to ask questions and to make comments and we are likely to get more opportunity for questions and comments if you allow us to proceed with the first stage which is one of information giving. As I was about to say there is another public meeting scheduled for Tuesday of next week at Sullivan School starting at six o'clock and the same people will be at that meeting to provide the same information and to give a second opportunity for people to ask questions and have their say. So on that basis if we can proceed, I would just like to hand back to Andrew to conclude the welcome from the Chair of Governors point of view.

AF- Thank you very much Andrew. So the running order this evening is this, I am going to say a few words, then Andrew is going to make some remarks, Ian Heggs will give a presentation followed by one from Miles Chester and closing with one from Tobyn Thomas after which as Andrew has said there will be a full and open Q&A session at which you can ask questions or make comment. Before we start it is obviously a very hot evening, but if you can all just turn off mobile 'phones so we don't get interruptions from 'phone bells ringing stopping proceedings.

AF – I would like to say a few words from the New King’s perspective, the Governors and the school management at New King’s have been looking at how to take New King’s forward for a number of years. We have been very encouraged by the improvements in results; these are evidenced by last year’s Ofsted which rated New King’s as a good school with outstanding features and in our academic record where New King’s had the best results for pupil progress across Hammersmith and Fulham last year and the school has just recorded another excellent set of SATs results taken last term. Twelve months ago we formed a working party to look at how we could build on this progress, by making New King’s a school of choice for pupils and parents in south Fulham. In March we were introduced to Thomas’s London Day Schools who have built an excellent reputation for the quality of education at their four schools. These meetings resulted in our decision to apply for academy status in partnership with Thomas’s, we would like New King’s to become the Parson’s Green Academy. In June having taken this decision we approached the Local Authority to tell them of our intention, at this meeting they told us of their proposed consultation of an amalgamation between New King’s School and Sullivan. This is the reason that the meeting this evening has been called. Whatever the outcome of the consultation, our aim at New King’s is to offer an outstanding education to pupils in south Fulham and to continue to build on the strong ethos of the school. I would now like to ask Andrew Christie to make some opening remarks from the perspective of the Local Authority.

## **2. Outline of the proposal and the purpose of the meeting – Andrew Christie (AC)**

AC – Thank you very much. As the Chair of Governors has just said this meeting is part of the public consultation that the Council has initiated to consider the possibility of bringing together New King’s and Sullivan schools. Now first of all I want to recognise and acknowledge that any very significant proposal like this inevitably causes worries, uncertainties, anxieties for parents, for carers, for children and for staff. The other part of what we would like to do this evening is to provide you with some more information because, in my experience, that for those who are involved in the potential for significant change, a

really important part of helping them to cope with that is actually being able to know and understand as much as possible about the detail of any set of proposals.

AC - We opened this consultation on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013, and the consultation will close on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Now that is a period of twelve weeks, which is actually twice as long as the Government regulations require. The Council decided to make it for that length of time because we recognised, first of all that during the period of the summer holidays it would be difficult for some people to be able to make their views known, and to meet, but secondly because of the significance and importance of what we are proposing, we want to give people as much opportunity as possible to make their views known. Can I then go on to say, one of the things I should say, therefore, as part of the process tonight, my colleague, Terry Broady sitting to the left, will be taking notes so that we can capture, as best we possibly can, the views and opinions that are being expressed. But this is not your only opportunity to have your say, to make your views known, because as I have said we have a second meeting next week on Tuesday at Sullivan School, but beyond that we also welcome written comment, and we kind of set up a variety of ways and means of you alternatively being able to make your views known. And another important thing to say, before I hand over to Ian to say a little bit more about the context of these proposals, is that this consultation process is only but one part, the first part of the process, if the Council decides after it has conducted its first consultation exercise to proceed with the proposals, the next step would be that once we conclude the consultation on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the Cabinet Member, Councillor Cooney and her colleagues then need to consider whether or not to proceed to the next stage and if the Council is minded at that point to continue to the next stage with these proposals, then in fact there is a further period of consultation, the start of which the Council has to formally publish its proposals and again there is another six week period in which all of you will have the opportunity to make your views known again, so in fact the total length of time that we are taking over this consultation will be something of the order of eighteen weeks. So as I said we are going ask a few people to speak briefly, to kind of tell you about some of the kind of most important facts of the proposal, so first of all can I hand over to my colleague, Ian Heggs, who is the Tri-borough Director for

Schools who will tell you a little bit more about the context of these proposals, Ian.

### **3. Presentation of the Council's case for launching a consultation on the proposed changes – Ian Heggs (IH)**

IH – Thank you Andrew. You have all seen the consultation document; the key area I wanted to focus on first of all is the issue of spare places, surplus places. As of May 2013, the last time we did the school census, there were spare places in every year group, both here at New King's and at Sullivan. Currently there are seventy-five places on offer in total, forty-five at Sullivan, thirty at New King's and in five out of seven of those year groups, as of May 2013, the combined total places taken up was either sixty or less. We are, therefore, proposing an overall reduction in the number of places from seventy-five to sixty. So a reduction of only fifteen places in total and this will take effect from September 2015, so seventy-five places are still being offered across both schools this year and again next year, September 2014. Our proposal is to move to a sixty place amalgamated school, on a single site. We believe this will reduce running costs, take advantage of economies of scale to improve both the facilities and the learning experience for the children.

**At this point a slide was shown outlining were there were spare places in four primary schools in South Fulham, Sullivan, New King's, Langford and Fulham Primary.**

IH – The figure you see there 180 spare places, an update today and our assessment shows there were 384 spare places in May 2013 out of 1260 places in total in those four schools so we do believe there is spare capacity in the system at the moment to meet the need.

**A further slide was shown outlining predicted pupil numbers in LBHF, which stated 2012 - 1588; 2013 - 1648; 2014 – 1660; 2015 – 1705.**

IH – You will know that the Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient places for every child that wants one and across the borough, the whole borough this is not just Fulham, across Hammersmith and Fulham our prediction show that between September 2012 and September 2015 we need just over 100

extra places. Now this is taken from our School Organisation Strategy for 2012/13, published last year, we do update our predictions annually and take into account actual primary applications, so we will look at numbers coming into all schools this week, in September and we look at other factors such as mobility of families and we will be releasing new predictions for primary and secondary places this autumn.

IH – In terms of what we have done already in Fulham to meet that rising demand, we have provided extra places, eighty-eight in total just down here in Fulham primary schools in the last four years.

**A further slide was shown outlining where those places were provided: 30 at St John's Walham Green; 28 Holy Cross/Lyceee Bilingual; 30 Holy Cross.**

IH – They have been extremely popular with parents all of them have been filled. So we have provided, in 2009 in fact, thirty extra places at St John's Walham Green, a mixture of open and foundation places; twenty-eight bilingual school places in partnership with the French ecole and Holy Cross, they are all open places based purely on distance from the school and also last year thirty extra places at Holy Cross School itself (all foundation places).

IH – In terms of parental preferences part of our proposal states quite clearly that we recognise that both schools are rated as good by Ofsted, but, nevertheless, we have also noted that parental preferences for both schools are low, compared with other local schools, and this is at a time when demand is increasing overall as you have just seen. So to us this low preference data for New King's and Sullivan suggests changes are needed to meet more parents' preferences and free up resources where they are most needed. The Council's Schools of Choice agenda is driven by parents telling us what they want when applying for places, our aim through this agenda is to increase the number of schools that parents can choose from that are outstanding as judged by Ofsted and achieve high standards and are oversubscribed each year.

IH – Another key part of our proposal is to improve school buildings and facilities, which we are doing across

Hammersmith and Fulham. We recognise, and the condition surveys that we have commissioned, have shown that both schools need significant investment to maintain their buildings. The amalgamation to create a new school on the New King's site to us makes sense and that is because through the condition survey, it has been shown that the buildings at Sullivan are nearing the end of their life.

**At this point there were significant interjections from the audience who disputed IH's comments that the buildings were nearing the end of their life.**

IH – If we want to go ahead with our proposal of creating a two-form entry school, in our view based on the study, we would have to build a new school on that site (Sullivan site)

**There were further interjections as audience members refuted IH's claims.**

IH – The costs for that (building a new school on the Sullivan site) are estimated at £6M.

**A member of the audience says - so we are going back to Victorian times with Victorian buildings, that's a good idea isn't it**

IH – Here at New King's we recognise, and the school, I am sure, would acknowledge that the building is in need of repair. Nevertheless it is a prized school building that could be significantly improved. The Council is prepared to invest in the building, but we have to provide value for money

**At this point the people outside in the playground who had been refused entry began to sing – We are still here- this continued for much of the remainder of the meeting.**

IH – So we are preparing to invest in one site rather than two, given the spare places issue.

IH – In terms of future vision I won't say too much about that because Andrew has referred to the correspondence with the Local Authority in June, but what I will say is that the Council is fully supportive of New King's vision to convert to an academy

status in partnership with Thomas's, what we would like is that opportunity, the vision you are about to hear about, to be available for more children, also the children at Sullivan. In terms of additional benefits of the scheme, some of you will know that we also have an independent special school based here, Parayhouse, and the intention is to work with them, they approached the Council, two years ago now, to help them find a more suitable site. Discussions have begun with them about site options. In addition, we recognise that as part of the proposals, the release of a site could be used to meet the acknowledged demand for increased secondary school places in Fulham. What we do know that is through the Fulham Boys Free School consultation over 500 parents supported the proposal (for the free school). The Council is fully supportive of it, it is in line with the Schools of Choice agenda and you will know it has been approved by the Department of Education, but they have been unable to find a site.

**At this point there were interjections calling for the proposed Church Free School to find an alternative site and leave Sullivan's site alone.**

IH – It would be helpful if you would let me finish then we can go to questions. The Department for Education have said they will fund this new school; they'll build it new in Hammersmith and Fulham and spend about £13.5M on it. Thank you very much.

**4. Presentation of New King's plan for moving to academy status in partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools – Miles Chester (MC) and Tobyn Thomas (TT)**

MC – Good evening and welcome to New King's School. So this consultation is on the proposal to close Sullivan School, the reasoning behind this proposal has already been outlined by Ian. New King's and Sullivan are both small schools, they serve families from a similar area, but both have unfilled spaces, despite both having being rated as good by Ofsted, both having excellent academic outcomes. By moving to a single site economies of scale come into play allowing facilities to be improved and a key element of this proposal is the provision of a new site for Fulham Boys CofE School, I don't think anyone can overlook that.



**A member of the audience asked for clarification on what could not be overlooked.**

MC – What can't be overlooked is that a key element of this proposal is the provision of a new site for Fulham Boys CofE School.

**A member of the audience points out that the provision of the site for the Church School was not outlined in the consultation. Further discussion in the audience about the statement MC made continues.**

MC – If you wouldn't mind I will continue, we'll be happy to answer any questions you have. The first question is really why change at all. New King's has been looking at ways to approach the issue of low pupil numbers for a considerable length of time, whilst we are very successful in terms of pupil progress as was said previously we were top of the Local Authority last year for that particular measure, we've got great pupil outcomes, we are well above Local Authority averages and above national averages, we've got a really successful Ofsted report, we've got a really positive group of families who really enjoy bring their children to our school, but we are not regarded as a school of choice. Now, despite all of our successes, we have spaces in most year groups and we don't fulfil the Council's School of Choice criteria, so, therefore, we struggle to attract investment from the Local Authority. We have been working to develop a strategy to highlight New King's as a school of choice, by developing some of the fantastic work we are already doing, but also by working in partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools to offer a brand new choice to parents, the resulting school will still be in the state system, but will be quite different from standard community, church or independent schools. What we are looking to do is to produce something that is completely different from what you have experienced before. So perhaps I need a bit more time just to explain a few more details of what that would look like. This new school would be called the Parson's Green Academy; it will remain a non-selective, inclusive school.

**A member of the audience shouted – and it will be empty**

MC – It will remain a non-selective, inclusive school, which will welcome pupils from the whole community. It will retain the excellent academic outcomes of New King's, but it will also be able to augment that offer through our partnership with Thomas's. The big question really is, how did all of this come to involve Sullivan.

**Members of the audience interjected that it was because Sullivan's site was wanted.**

MC – We approached the Local Authority to discuss New King's taking on academy status back in June and to re-launch as Parson's Green Academy, and this original proposal did not involve Sullivan School at all. However, it was at the meetings in June that we were first told that the Council was planning to consult on the proposals being discussed here today. Should the current proposals go ahead we would now expand our plans to form a two-form entry school and we would incorporate the pupils and staff, well lots of the staff, from Sullivan School into this new school. Now this next slide I think is very important, this was never intended to be a New King's takeover of Sullivan and in reality should plans go ahead we will be creating a brand new school, where pupils can benefit from the best of both, so I would like to continue for a few moments about our vision for the Parson's Green Academy, because I do believe this could bring fantastic opportunities for local children. We would enter into a formal partnership with Thomas's who will add significant support to enable us to deliver our vision of a unique school of choice for local parents, which will deliver a world-class education for our international community. New King's and Thomas's have a shared ambition to deliver the very best for our children and the aims of the Thomas's organisation, which is so apparent to anyone that has had the opportunity to visit any of their schools, is to offer a rich and broad education, which inspires enjoyment, learning and achievement and these aims dovetail very closely with our own aims at New King's. We are very clear that this partnership will offer opportunities for our pupils, contrary to what you may have read on various websites this is not a takeover of a community school by a private company, it is in fact a community school actively seeking to partner with an outstanding provider for the benefit of all of our children. Now there would be of course a separate consultation and dialogue with parents once a decision has been made on

the future of Sullivan School, so everything I have been talking about with regard to our academy is really a separate consultation to the one that we are here today to discuss. I think it is important for everybody to see the fuller picture rather than seeing one part at a time, but I am genuinely intending on trying to get as much of a feel of what people want from a new school in this area, I am not intending to railroad what has already been done at Sullivan, there is some fantastic work that goes on at Sullivan.

### **There was applause and agreement from the audience**

MC – Now what do we mean by a world-class education, we've been developing an international aspect to our curriculum for a number of years and we have been basing it on the very latest educational research, we'd continue to follow the International Primary Curriculum, we'd build on some pioneering work we have been doing with the Maths Mastery programme, that is the mathematics curriculum that is based on the approaches being used in Singapore and we'd be building an innovative, but an effective and highly relevant approach for our pupils. There is obviously concerns about the children who have been at Sullivan and the children who have been at New King's and ways in which we could make the move as smooth as possible, we are fully aware of that and we would be looking very carefully to make sure the teachers can work together to give the children the very best opportunities.

MC – So changes will include a broadening of the curriculum, increased focus on science and music, an area of particular strength at Sullivan. The introduction of more specialist teaching and more specialist teaching spaces, including a brand new junior science lab, creative art rooms and the involvement in a wide range of exciting and creative projects linked with our Thomas's partner schools, I feel this would bring an enormous amount of opportunities for the children at our current school. Should the proposals go ahead the Local Authority have committed at least £2M to completely refurbish this site, both inside and out and then we would be looking to establish as many opportunities within that space. We'd make sure we used that investment wisely to ensure we are providing fantastic resources for the children's education. So what will change for the pupils? The immediate benefit of specialist teaching of

pupils, opportunities to learn new languages, learn how to play a musical instrument, or take part in a wide range of sports teams

**Members of the audience said that these things were already on offer at Sullivan.**

MC – The refurbished site will provide fantastic opportunities to learn within a state of the art facility, which would otherwise be unavailable. The opportunities for pupils developed in conjunction with Thomas's will be exciting and varied, musical activities, sporting fixtures, charitable projects, lessons alongside their peers at Thomas's Schools and opportunities to share their ideas with an even more diverse community.

MC – We at New King's are committed to moving forward with these academy proposals, but obviously this would be open to a further consultation later down the line. If the decision is made for New King's and Sullivan to amalgamate there will be both greater opportunities, but there will also be greater challenges, there is no doubt about that. Pupils' welfare will be kept at the forefront of all of our decisions; our original plan was made with the children's best interests at heart and should the amalgamation proposal go ahead every effort would be made to ensure the pupils benefit from a smooth transition. We would suggest that mentors work across both schools in the summer term, with a focus on the vulnerable pupils. We'd like to look at cross-school inclusion teams, curriculum teams; working together to ensure the pupils' education is not unduly interrupted. We'll be looking at team building exercises and events in the autumn term to look to try and help cement those friendships across both schools, we'll be looking to include pupils in designing elements of the new school, gardens, playgrounds so they can feel real ownership of this new building. Now it is our intention to offer the very best education for the children in the local community and we believe that these plans enable us to deliver that. The proposal to close Sullivan was not in any way part of our proposals for this academy. However if the proposal does go ahead, then I would hope, genuinely hope that staff and families from Sullivan, New King's and Thomas's join forces to provide the best possible opportunities for the children to succeed and to flourish, but I fully understand that those sentiments, however well meaning,

they are, won't make a difference to teachers, parents, staff and pupils at Sullivan right now. Wendy and her team have done a fantastic job in making Sullivan the great school that it is today

### **Strong applause from the audience**

MC – The support that the school is receiving is testament to all the hard work that has been done. The issue is that having worked at New King's for five years and having worked closely with Wendy throughout that time, both school face very similar issues, both are good schools with excellent results, however, we are both struggling with pupil numbers

### **Members of the audience refute the suggestion that Sullivan are struggling with pupil numbers.**

MC - and given the fact that we are both on generous sites and there is a proven demand for this boys school, the Council's proposal does make sense and should the proposal go ahead we will engage fully with Sullivan staff, families and pupils to develop a shared vision for this new school, which allows every child to experience this truly world-class education. Thank you for listening, I am going to hand over briefly to Tobyn Thomas who can say a few words on behalf of Thomas's.

TT – My name is Tobyn Thomas and I am the Principal of Thomas's London Day Schools. I'd also like to introduce Jo Copeland, Thomas's Curriculum Head. Thomas's is a family owned group of four co-educational independent primary schools and two kindergartens. We provide an education of outstanding quality to 2,000 boys and girls aged from 2 ½ to 13 in Battersea, Clapham, Kensington, Fulham and Pimlico. The first Thomas's school opened in 1977 with eleven pupils and two teachers, by my parents David and Joanne Thomas, a former army officer and actress, who sold our home to start. They retired in 2000 and for the past thirteen years Thomas's has been led by me and my brother Ben, in turn supported by every member of our excellent school communities. Three things to best describe Thomas's: we offer a rich and broad curriculum to children, taught by specialist teachers wherever possible; we believe that happy and fulfilled children learn best; we have a single school rule, be kind; all the rest is on our website.

**A member of the audience said - That was rich coming from Thomas's after what they did at the Albert Hall, the Celebration of Childhood which was actually your parents fiftieth wedding anniversary, it was not anything to do with a celebration of childhood.**

**AC – We will give people the chance to ask questions at the end**

**TT – I look forward to replying to that in the questions and answers.**

TT – We have just heard some exciting possible plans and we are here to back them every inch of the way. Although this is not for now, we are also here to confirm Thomas's desire to play a part with them, should the school's community wish this to happen at some stage in the future. We see many benefits from enlarging schools: broadening its curriculum; widening its excellent staff body; refreshing its facilities and providing a school of choice for local parents by seeking to offer a world-class education for the international school community, with the strength and depth to be able to deal with whatever the future holds in store. Thomas's have established, and now run, four leading primary schools, three of which occupy transformed, purpose-built Victorian buildings, such as this. We have adapted these buildings to full, thriving schools of between 400-600 pupils. We run them daily, we are, therefore, experienced travellers on the path that is being offered to you now and we commend it to you. Bigger schools really can be better schools

**Loud cries of disagreement from the audience.**

TT – We have the necessary financial, academic, administrative and logistical expertise required for the task ahead and we would like to use it, in partnership with you, to help you to succeed. Why? Not for any profit making, but because we simply feel that we can and we should contribute. We are hugely impressed with the leadership team of this school and we share this vision and we would like to work with you. On a personal level, we are rightly proud of our record of academic and commercial success in the independent sector, but we place a greater emphasis on a set of core values which include

kindness, courtesy, confidence, humility and learning to be givers and not takers. We wish to enter into a genuine partnership because we believe that this will improve all schools, and will provide pupils here with a smashing school, it will provide teachers with additional responsibilities in terms of forging links and potential career progression, it will enhance both our pupils' understanding of the world, it will provide another opportunity for enhanced parental support and it will demonstrate a powerful embodiment of our values, most of all we believe working together will be worthwhile, we look forward to helping you grow and sustain your new school, if you wish us to. All that is for the future, but for now, it is good to meet you, thank you for listening.

## **5. Question and Answer Session**

AC – Thank you very much indeed Tobyn and Miles, now as promised it is the opportunity for members of the audience to ask questions and to make comments.

- **Caroline Langton (CL) – former Chair of Governors at Sullivan Primary School** – I'd like to address a question to the Chair of Governors please. The Governing Body at New King's were told in June of the LA's proposal to close Sullivan and amalgamate the two schools am I right? I wrote it down; you said it was announced to the Chair and Headteacher in June, why were the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at Sullivan not told until the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

### **There is loud applause and some cries of disgrace**

CL – The consultation paper had already gone to print when the Headteacher and the Chair at Sullivan were told of the plans. Confirm that you heard in June.

### **At this point the power for the sound system was lost. After a few minutes the sound was restored.**

AC – I will ask Andrew to respond in the first instance, but then I will let IH and Cllr Cooney (GC) respond as it is the LA's responsibility in the first instance to have the conversation with the Heads and Chairs of Governors concerned.

AF – As I said in my opening remarks once we had taken the decision as a Governing Body here to apply for transition into an academy, we then went to the Local Authority

CL – That is not what I asked, you said in June the LA discussed their proposal to close Sullivan

AF – No I said that we went to the Local Authority to discuss our decision to move to academy status, they then said they were looking to do a consultation on the proposal to amalgamate

CL – Was that in June

AF – I can't remember the date

### **Loud jeers from the audience**

MC – It was in June

AC – Can I ask Ian and Georgie to pick up

GC – When they asked us to come talk to them to discuss this proposal to become an academy, we went to meet them, we had the discussion, at which point we said we would like the opportunity they were talking about to be open to Sullivan as well

CL But you had printed the consultation document before you spoke to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at Sullivan.

GC – Sorry let me get the right date, we went in...

IH – We had two meetings here at New King's School when Miles informed me of the Governing Body's intention to move to academy status, we had an initial meeting at Miles' request to find out more about the reasons for the conversion, it is worth saying we're fully supportive of that. The school also shared with us the idea of having a partnership with Thomas's, so Georgie and I asked if we could also meet with a representative from Thomas's to find



out more about what the Thomas's offer would be, as part of the conversion. So there were two meetings, one here with Miles and his Chair of Governors and a further meeting with Tobyn. After that meeting we then took a decision to move forward with the consultation

CL – That isn't what you said at the beginning

IH – I'd like to finish the point if I may, so once we had heard from the proposal from the two meetings, we then decided to go ahead with the consultation, we decided to do that only after Cllr Cooney made that Cabinet Member decision, then a week in advance of the consultation we arranged meetings at both schools with the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors to tell them of our intention to consult.

**Audience jeered and accused the panel of lying**

GC – I am not lying, Ian's not lying.

CL – But you definitely said it was June

GC – We will find the dates

AC – We have answered that question

**Audience jeer - there are numerous calls that the question had not been answered**

- **Rosie Waite (RW) – current Chair of Governors at Sullivan School**

**Large round of applause from the audience**

RW – First can I ask for the slides to be provided to me?

AC – Yes we'll do that, we'll put them on the website with the FAQs so they are available to everybody.

RW – Yes, but if I could have them tomorrow.

RW - I'm a bit confused so I would like some clarification. The public consultation document is very misleading, is this

an amalgamation or is it a closure, and the question is for Ian.

IH – In terms of an amalgamation, technically under law this can happen in two ways when you are looking to bring two schools together; either you can propose to close both schools and open a new school, or you can propose to close one school and expand the other school. We felt it would be less disruptive to go with the second option of closing one school and expanding New King's; and one of the reasons we made that decision was linked to the exciting vision set out by Miles and Thomas's, secondly because of our desire to invest in the buildings and we feel that this building is the best one to invest in.

- **Karen Ross (KR) – Parent at Sullivan, who has had four children at the school.** KR – Given the shambolic process and the short time scale of the consultation process, can I ask you if this is a foregone conclusion.

AC – The answer is it is not, and that's why I explained the process at the beginning, there is this consultation which will run to the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013, we are really clear as I said originally that this is twice as long as we are required to have, then a decision will then have to be made as to whether or not we decide we still want to continue, then we have to publish formal proposals, so it is not a foregone conclusion.

- **Joan?? (J) A parent at Sullivan – J –** You have used a lot of buzz words, world-class, vision, and all that stuff feeds in well with the local council and it fits the Government's agenda, can you publish on your website who has worked with Sullivan on their vision, can you publish that? Everyone is sat there talking about preferences, choice and all of that stuff, and that is fine, but at the end of the day we all know, choosing a school is about word of mouth, Sullivan is an excellent school

**Applause from the audience**

J – Publish on your website, who from the LA has worked with the Governing Body and the Headteacher on Sullivan’s vision, why aren’t there two offers on the table?

### **Further applause**

J – This process needs to be more open and more transparent and you need to suggest other options?

AC – Can I ask Ian to make comment on this question, then this is probably something we will need to give further thought to after today. Today, tonight, is partly about asking questions, but it is also about making comments for us to give further thought to.

IH – Well we do have published on our website a series of frequently asked questions, and one of them does refer to the recent history of discussions with New King’s and a number of other schools, Sullivan and Langford. Three times in the last three years we have spoken to Sullivan and Governors about possible federation proposals with other schools, precisely because of the spare places issue. So I would put it to you, that we would want to continue that dialogue with Sullivan, but we have been discussing over three years now, the potential way forward given the spare places issue. It is on the website and I should say this is precisely what the consultation is for, we are putting out to you a proposal and we are looking for your views, some of you will have alternative proposals, this is precisely what the consultation is for, we receive them tonight and in writing, we can then consider them.

### **The audience ask if the Council will listen to their views**

GC & IH – Yes we will.

- **?? (Didn’t catch the name) A former pupil of Sullivan with a sister still at the school and a local resident.** – My question is to Miles, there is a rigorous process that Headteachers go through to be appointed, I would like to know how you have been appointed Headteacher of the new school already

### **Strong approval for the question from the audience**

AC – Miles is the appointed Head of New King's

MC – I will answer that question, the proposal as Ian pointed out earlier, is the closure of Sullivan and the enlargement of New King's

**A number of the audience are unhappy that there appears to be a lack of transparency and clarity over the dates of meetings, whether it is an amalgamation of two schools, the closure of a school, whether the amalgamated school is a new school and the process that had led to Miles Chester being the Headteacher.**

MC – As the Headteacher of New King's School it makes sense for me to continue

### **Numerous members of the audience as why**

MC – This could have been done in a different way, what could have happened is that both schools would close then there would be a competitive process to see who would run the school

**The audience appeared to feel that this would be more appropriate process.**

MC – If that happened, the most likely outcome there is that we would now be talking about opening an Ark Academy on one of these sites, and both schools would be lost. So what I am suggesting is that we work together, there is a misconception that this proposal involves the large majority of Sullivan staff being made redundant, but that is not the case they won't, the very large majority of Sullivan staff will keep their jobs and will be working within this school and the reason for that is so we can maintain standards

**Members of the audience complained that MC had not answered the question. It was suggested that MC resign so that all parties could apply for the post.**

AC – Can I just say again if everybody is to have the chance or as many people as possible are to have the chance

**The audience said that it was important that the questions asked were answered.**

AC – You have to let people have their say, then listen respectfully to both the question and also to the answer, because if the meeting just descends into a rabble of people shouting and yelling that will be unproductive for all of us. Now somebody down here has their hand up.

**The audience complain that the last question was not answered.**

**Hannah Weiss (HW) – Teacher at Sullivan – HW –** Recently our numbers have really grown; in Reception we are full and we have a waiting list, Nursery is full and we have a waiting list, and today we have had about ten new children start, prospective pupils just keep coming to visit so we are just wondering if that is taken into account.

AC – The straightforward answer to that is yes and we are and will continue to look at the numbers, we will continue to look at the preferences, everything is constantly under review so the answer is yes.

**Wendy Aldridge (WA) – Headteacher at Sullivan**

**A huge cheer and a round of applause came from the audience**

WA – I'm Wendy Aldridge I am the Headteacher at Sullivan Primary School and I am very proud to be the Headteacher at Sullivan Primary School

**A child in the audience called out that WA was the best.**

WA – I can completely understand how tense everyone feels about the situation we are in, but there are several points that I would like to make. Miles is correct, we had worked very successfully together, I thought, as a group of local Headteachers. I was completely unaware of him going to the

Local Authority and I am very happy for him to continue to do that, but what I am saying is let Sullivan continue on its journey, on the current school site, which is the best school site for our children. I fully respect the fact that Miles and his Chair of Governors want to take their school to an academy and I am very thrilled for them to do that, what I am not happy about is that we have an excellent site, we have a good Ofsted, we've got outstanding features, we've got a growing roll, we've got a group of parents who support everything we do and there are lots of things to be refuted, but Sullivan Primary School is an excellent school on an excellent site, so that is my main point, the other point I wanted to make was, on page 2 of the document it states that the new school will be building on the best of both schools, there is a lot of confusion, my staff who are the most fabulous team ever, are very concerned about their jobs, if the school is going to two forms of entry you will need seven more teachers, I've got fourteen class teachers currently on my roll, there is already scheduled a support staff re-shuffle, so even if my teachers do want to apply to the school there is no guarantee they will get the position. There has also been no consultation, no talking to staff about their well-being or how they are going to deal with the situation.

**Members of the audience called the situation scandalous**

WA – What is very clear to us is that it doesn't matter how good you are, how outstanding you are, when your site is available for a free school then you have no choice.

**Applause from the audience.**

WA – Again I have no issue with the free school, if that's what parents want I have no issue, but find another site. What you are saying is, that this site is too good for our school and our children, but it is good enough for secondary school boys. Find another site; leave us to continue doing the job we are doing.

**Huge applause from the audience.**

AC – Thanks Wendy you made a couple of statements, can I ask Ian to comment on the particular point you made about staff.

IH – Thank you Andrew. I think in terms of staff, I first want to acknowledge what Wendy has said, we are perfectly clear, this is a school places issue, this is not a standards issue and Wendy, as I said to her in a meeting, is doing a great job as the Headteacher. It is not about standards, it is about spare places. Now as I set out earlier, because we want to go forward with an amalgamation there are two ways of doing it, now we have set out one way of doing it, in the document we have made it quite clear that the reduction in total school places is relatively small, we are only proposing to go from seventy-five to sixty, we envisage as stated in the document that many of the staff at both schools, would retain their jobs, but the very difficult part of this proposal, which I fully acknowledge, if we are moving from two schools to one is there can only be one Governing Body, one Headteacher and inevitably there will be some staffing changes. I know there are some staff here this evening, you will know that we are getting letters out to all staff tomorrow, with details of the staff consultation meetings, which are happening individually in both schools, I've got my HR colleague Andy with me at those meetings so we can answer more of those questions. What will happen next if this consultation proceeded is that there would then be a process between January and August of next year, the amalgamated school's Headteacher would lead detailed staffing consultation of teachers, non-teaching staff and proposals around the new leadership team, but all of that is only to come if this proposal proceeds.

**Peter Craig (PC), resident, Governors, and former parent of Sullivan School** – PC – explained that both his children had been treated as individuals and had a bespoke education at Sullivan School, he said that this was what Sullivan provided, it was not what free schools provided. The June to August spell that was just talked about, the decision to close Sullivan was talked about at the meeting with New King's was in June, but by August a decision had been made to demolish a school, build a school, refurbish a school, how can a decision like that be made in three months, three months. So we have got the site for a free school, the

closure of Sullivan School, we've got the appointment of a Headmaster for the free school on the website that was advertising itself as a new school on the site of our school, before the consultation even started. So we have a budget ready for temporary location, refurbishment of New King's School, demolition of Sullivan School, construction of a free school, staffing structure of a new school, curriculum of a new school, consultation documents compiled and printed, location of the new free school published on the website. Everybody on the panel has been complicit in that particular set of events. We teach children openness, honesty, morality; the whole process whether it goes through or not has been carried out in an underhand, snide way, for want of a better word, by people who have left out the victims until the very last moment. You have just mentioned that the consultation, if this were to go through, would last from January through to August, you give eight months to consider the teachers and you give twelve weeks, six weeks of which are the summer holidays, for the school to defend itself. We are away from home here at the moment, we'll be at home next Tuesday, I think you can see the mood of these people, the whole thing has been done in a totally underhand, unfair way, we have nothing against this school and nothing against the free school, but we are a fantastic school, with fantastic results in an area where you need a community, why get rid of a perfectly good school, because statistics, Mr Heggs, statistics tell you that sixty places means the difference between £20M investment. It is not fair and I am not very happy about it and neither are these people. My question is could you answer that.

AC- If I can draw out what is the fundamental component of your question, which is essentially, that decisions are already made and we are complicit in underhand proposals, and I'll answer that question, because actually I think what we have done is to be completely open. We have been completely upfront right from the very beginning, with the consultation exercise we have to start with a position, we have to use and invest our money wisely

**A member of the audience says that it is not AC's money it is the audience's money**



AC – It is all of our money, and the responsibility laid at my door is to ensure that those scarce and precious resources are used in the most efficient way they possibly can. We've got a big issue, which is the issue of surplus places, I know it all sounds terribly bureaucratic, managers' speak, but that is the hard fact. What we have then done when we brought forward these proposals, is we have been completely explicit and if the decision is then made to go ahead with bringing the two schools together, and we have the described to you the thinking we have put in to why we are putting forward as a proposal, rather than close two schools, the proposal to close one school, but what we have also gone ahead and done is be absolutely explicit about it, and one of the consequences of it, is the potential, the potential, it can only be a potential, and it is absolutely right for you to say that there can be no presumptions made about that, but the potential, the opportunity that is created is to free up an additional site, which gives us the opportunity to add to educational provision for the community. That's my answer to your question, but you put your points very eloquently.

**Jean Tarran (JT) – Teacher at Sullivan School – JT –** I strongly oppose this proposal. This question is for Cllr Cooney. Hammersmith and Fulham are claiming it is their intention to make all schools self-governing, does this mean that we are the first of many good and outstanding schools to face closure, I know there are a lot of other Headteachers here who will be interested in your answer.

GC – No, it does not, we are dealing with a specific situation in a specific area, and this is why we are carrying out a consultation. There is absolutely no other plan at all, this is very much to do with the surplus places we have in South Fulham schools. Does that answer your question?

JT – Not really because it contradicts this document (not sure what the document was) where it says that it is the intention of the Council to make all schools self-governing, although it is quite hidden away in the document.

AC – But that wasn't your question, if I can be absolutely precise, your question was whether or not there are plans to

close schools, it is a different issue that you raise about the document.

**There is jeering from the audience**

AC – You have made your point and asked your question.

**There is more unhappiness and jeering from the audience.**

AC – We have six minutes left and I've got at least two other people with their hands up, can I ask you to quickly make your concluding point and then we can move on.

JT – You have visited New King's and Sullivan, which school would you choose for your children.

GC – Well first of all I don't have any children, I probably wouldn't want to make this personal, but answer from a cabinet member's point of view, but I have visited New King's and Sullivan twice and I fully respect both Headteachers, I have to say I thought the behaviour of both schools was outstanding, they were extremely warm and welcoming and both Headteachers were excellent, so the fact that I have the same opinion of both schools in their performance, would make it very difficult to choose a school for the children I don't have. I just want to point out that the idea that the Sullivan site was mentioned on the Fulham Boys School website

**Many members of the audience say the Sullivan site is mentioned on the Fulham Boys School website**

GC – All I am saying is I would be very, very shocked if it had been put up there before the consultation. I would be very shocked; the accusation was that it was on the website before the consultation

**A member of the audience said that it was not an accusation it was a fact.**

GC – If you give me the evidence that it was on the website before the consultation

**A member of the audience said this was taking up important time, this was a fact and everybody knew it.**

GC – If you can present me with the evidence that it was on the website before the consultation, because I find that very hard to believe.

AC – I am going to move we've got time for two more questions, Denis you've had your hand up for a long time.

**Denis Charman (DC) Teacher in the borough and NUT rep** – DC – I am Denis Charman, a teacher in the borough, I have worked with Sullivan in the past as an adviser on science education, but I have been asked to speak principally on behalf of the staff, because I also represent as a union representative, the staff at Sullivan, as I do for 1000 other teachers in the borough. I want to say something to you all up here (the panel), you said some interesting things, but there is one thing that is not absolutely clear to me, there are two reasons for going forward with this plan from the Council's point of view; one is because you have to, circumstances are forcing you to do it and you have no choice, or because you'd like to do, you think it will be a good thing, but I am not getting from the way you talk about the figures and the rolls, whether or not you feel your hand is being forced, because if it is this is what you should have done. You should have gone to the Sullivan Governors and said we've got a difficulty coming; we need to come up with a solution, let's get together with other schools and think it through. What would have happened then, is not an idea that has come down from above on the staff, parents, children and managers of those schools, but they would have been forced to come up with a solution themselves, which they could have worked on. What you have done by doing it this way, is you have divided that part of the community and that is very wrong. Another thing, we are six, seven, eight, nine weeks into this consultation and you turn up with figures that are not in the document, those figures and those facts and the facts from the Thomas's Schools, should have been there from day one of the consultation. I absolutely understand what Miles is saying about people working together, but that should have been worked out before

consultation was done. If you have to do it, that's fine, it has to be done and we will find a way, but what you have all done, is you've dropped a bombshell and when it has all blown over you are saying to people, all get together and see that it works, and that is going to be a very big demand.

### **Loud applause**

AC – Denis you actually asked the question either or and it is neither. The answer is a third proposition, we certainly feel we are faced with a significant issue, but it is still a question of judgement and consultation exercises are about the Council saying this is our judgement in these circumstances, but then we want to hear people's views and then we'll give further consideration to that.

**Grandparent of a child from New King's** – I just want to say thank you all for your time, there are not many New King's parents here, Mr Miles is an excellent Headmaster, if there hadn't been as much time spent on heckling there would have been more time for questions and answers and I hope next Tuesday it will be a much calmer atmosphere.

**Carina, Parent of a Child at New King's** – I have heard that New King's pupils will move to Sullivan while the work takes place at New King's, now during this time the children will have to deal with new teachers, new children, reduced space and they will be taught in portacabins, now this will all be happening when my daughter will be in Year 5. Now my question is to Miles, do you have previous experience of amalgamating primary schools and how will you ensure that my child's and every other child's learning is not disrupted.

MC – As you know Carina I don't have experience of amalgamating two primary schools, very few Headteachers do, but I do intend to work very closely with a large number of people who have had the experience of doing that and I am not the sort of leader who would go alone and say this needs to be done this way, I will be taking a lot of advice from professionals to make sure things were done properly. I think you've got a very good point about this particular challenge for children who are at the end of their primary education; it is something we will have to look very closely at.

I was looking at the size of the first Year 6 year group which was sixty-four as it stands at the moment, and I am absolutely sure that a lot of the excellent outcomes achieved at Sullivan and New King's have been down to really good staff ratios, making sure we know the children, making sure we are putting in everything we can. Both Sullivan and New King's have put in that work for a long time and that is why we are succeeding as we are. And we would be looking to continue that, we would be looking to continue keep working with exactly the same teams, we would be hoping to bring in as many as of the Sullivan staff into the school as possible, we would be looking to make sure that the children have as smooth a path through it as possible.

**AC closed the meeting at 7.50pm**