

**Minutes of the public meeting held at Sullivan School to discuss the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan Primary Schools on the New King's site, held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 6pm**

**1. Welcome – Caroline Langton (CL) Former Chair of Governors of Sullivan School**

CL – Good evening everybody, it is really nice to see you here, I am pleased to say, that it is cooler than last week. My name is Caroline Langton; I'm chairing the meeting tonight as Sullivan is hosting the second of the two public meetings, which form part of the consultation process regarding the proposed amalgamation of Sullivan and New King's schools. Before we go any further, and before I say anymore, there is just one piece of housekeeping to accomplish, which is to tell you that the fire exits are positioned (CL showed the audience where the fire exits were located).

As I say my name is Caroline Langton, I have been a Governor at Hammersmith and Fulham for over fifteen years, at a number of schools, community and voluntary-aided, secondary and primary. I was Chair of Governors at Sullivan from 2004 through to 2008. In 2004 it was placed in special measures, which was why I was asked to join the Governing Body, it came out straight away and has done incredibly well ever since.

**Applause from audience**

CL – I have kept in touch with the school and its goings on over the past five years and I am very pleased to be helping with the campaign to keep the school from being closed.

CL – Sullivan welcomes everyone, and this evening we welcome members and officers from Hammersmith and Fulham Council who are here to answer our questions and address our concerns. We welcome children, parents and staff from New King's and we welcome local friends and residents who have turned up to be a part of this consultation and of course, with all of our heart, we welcome the children, parents, staff and supporters of Sullivan School.

**Applause from audience**

CL- The thing that is always obvious when you cross the threshold of Sullivan is not only how happy and contented the children are, but how very well behaved they are. We all want to hear the questions clearly tonight, but we will all want to hear the answers clearly too. So let's follow our well-behaved children's example tonight, as we do the business of the meeting, however, heated our debates becomes.

CL- Now the Council has generously allowed us a bit more time tonight so we have longer for our questions, from the floor. Let's use that time well and wisely for the sake of all the pupils and the staff at both New King's and Sullivan schools. I am going to ask everyone to introduce themselves starting with Georgie's end and the first person to speak tonight is Rosie Wait, Chair of Governors.

**The panel introduced themselves:**

Georgie Cooney, the Cabinet Member for Education for Hammersmith and Fulham;

Ian Heggs, Tri-borough Director for Schools;

Tobyn Thomas, Principal of Thomas's;

Miles Chester, Headteacher at New King's Primary School;

Caroline Langton;

Andrew Christie, Tri-borough Executive Director for Children's Services;

Rosie Wait, Chair of Governors Sullivan School since 2008;

Wendy Aldridge, Headteacher of Sullivan Primary School.

**Huge applause for Wendy Aldridge from the audience.**

- 2. Rosie Wait (RW) – Chair of Governors of Sullivan School – RW -**  
Well that was a wonderful welcome, and welcome to all of you to our lovely school. What I have to say is very brief indeed, as I want Wendy to have the opportunity to speak to you, and for you all to have a better opportunity to ask questions at this public meeting.

RW – So I just want to give you a little background. When the Council asked, at very short notice, to meet with Wendy and myself on the 9<sup>th</sup> July, we had absolutely no idea that they had already shared the amalgamation proposal with the Head and Chair at New King's in June.

RW – The Council refused to provide us with any information ahead of the meeting. They also refused to say what the meeting was about, other than it was vital for the future of the school.

RW – The first words used to open the meeting were those of Mr Ian Heggs, who told Wendy and me that he was closing our school, because our roll was seen to be low and parents were not selecting Sullivan School as their first or second choice. I wrote immediately to the Leader of the Council and I begged him to postpone the consultation. I asked if he would allow all parties and their advisers to

have preliminary talks, in an attempt to iron out an agreement. I also begged for the opportunity to read the documentation and I asked that he made sure that the September rolls for both schools were included in the public consultation. Well the answer I received was a firm no! But I was assured that it wasn't a fait accompli and the process would be very fair. So we received documentation at the same time as the printers, in its final format, with no chance to review or correct the statements.

RW- We have not received any documentation to substantiate a lot of what has been written or presented by the Council and we insist that much of the consultation is misleading. We are eight weeks into the consultation and still we have received no substantive information from the Council. We have received only three Freedom of Information responses, two of these they could not respond to and one we were provided with information, but it required further information. So this begs the question how can this be a fair process if we have to rely on the Freedom of Information Act to justify the information they have included in a public consultation.

RW – Finally, I personally, am horrified that the Council propose to sack Wendy so publically. She is a fantastic Headteacher, she is a great leader and she has been committed to this school for twenty-five years. The staff at Sullivan are talented, experienced and for me they are very humbling to know, from Emily as Deputy Head to Jean and John and the gang in the Foundation Stage to Lisa and Alison on Reception, to John Parent who keeps our school in such a wonderful condition and to Vanessa and the team in the kitchen, who cook such wonderful meals, we have an incredible team.

### **Huge applause**

RW – We have had 2000 people watch and visit our website, we have had 700 likes on our Facebook page to date and we have had a much larger following on our Twitter page than the Charing Cross A&E closure campaign. The support so far is very wide and they are all concerned for our school, including the Jamie Oliver Foundation who have asked us to be a pilot school for their national programme for primary schools – Learn your fruit and vegetables -. So I say to you all, as a committed Parson's Green resident, and your Chair of Governors, the only reasonable outcome is to keep our school on our site.

### **Applause from the audience**

3. **Outline of the proposal and the purpose of the meeting - Andrew Christie (AC), Tri-borough Executive Director of Children's Services** – AC –Thank you very much indeed Caroline. I am just going to say a few words, first of all to explain that this is the second public meeting that we, the Council, have convened and we are very grateful to Sullivan School for agreeing to host this meeting tonight. And this is a

public consultation, which the Council has brought forward, which is looking at the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan Schools on the New King's site. The point of tonight from our position is first of all for us to be able to provide you with a bit of information and I'll ask my colleague Ian Heggs shortly to provide a little bit of information about why the Council is bringing forward this proposal, then I would like to invite Miles Chester and Toby Thomas to say a little bit about the plans that New King's Governing Body have for their school, which includes academy status and the plan for a partnership with Thomas's Day Schools, but just before we do that and also I think we are going to hear from Wendy, just to explain a little about the mechanics of the process of the consultation. We opened this consultation on the 16<sup>th</sup> July it will close on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, the Council will then need to make a decision as to whether or not it wishes to proceed further with these proposals that will not be the end of the matter, because thereafter, if the Council does decide to proceed to the next stage the Council will be required to publish formal proposals and there would then be a further six weeks of consultation. There will be a series of subsequent public meetings, because I was asked this question by a parent on the door, would this be the last chance that anybody in this hall would have to bring forward, make their opinions known. And I can say it won't be. That is as far as I want to go at this stage, when we have heard all of the information we will convene the question and answer session.

**4. Council's case for launching a consultation on the proposed changes – Ian Heggs (IH) – Tri-borough Director for Schools Commissioning – IH** – Thank you Andrew. What I would like to do briefly is talk to you about some of the key reasons for the Council's proposals to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan Schools.

IH – The main reason we are bringing this proposal forward to you, is because of surplus places. Currently there are spare places in every single year group in both schools and that is based on the schools' census data from May 2013 and those are figures that the schools submitted to us. Currently there are seventy-five places on offer in total, forty-five here at Sullivan and thirty at New King's and in five out of seven of those year groups, as of May 2013, the combined total of places taken up was sixty or less. We are, therefore, proposing an overall reduction in the number of places from seventy-five to sixty, a reduction of only fifteen places in total and this would take effect from September 2015. Our proposal is then to move to a sixty place amalgamated school, a combined school on a single site, it is our view that this will reduce running costs, it will take advantage of economies of scale, in order to improve facilities and learning experiences for pupils.

IH- When we looked at those last school census figures in May 2013 it showed that classes across the year groups were not full in four of Fulham's Primary Community Schools, including Sullivan and New King's, and in fact at that calculation there were 384 spare places

available out of a total of 1260, and that is not including nursery places. So in fact we have currently have over 25 spare capacity in the system just in four of the local schools alone.

IH – The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for every child who wants one, and across the whole borough, as you can see, our predictions show that between now and 2016/17 we need a 134 extra primary places. These predictions are updated annually and take in to account actual primary applications each year and other factors including birth rates, mobility and new developments as well, and there will be new predictions for primary and secondary places published this autumn.

IH – In addition, and some of you will be aware of this; extra places have been provided in response to rising demand from parents. So in total, when all the places are full, there will be 660 extra places per year in some of the popular and oversubscribed Fulham primary schools, and those are places that have been introduced over the last four years. Just to give you some more details about those extra places, they have proved extremely popular with parents and have filled in every year group and this includes the eighty-eight extra Reception places each year. Just so you are clear where those extra places have been created there are thirty extra places created at St John's Walham Green School, they are a mixture of open and foundation places, twenty-eight places for the bilingual provision at the ecole in partnership with Holy Cross and Holy Cross School itself also has an extra thirty places.

IH – In terms of parental preferences, and it is really important for me to say this evening, that this is not a standards issue this is very much around school places, we fully acknowledge and recognise that both schools, Sullivan and New King's, are rated good by Ofsted, but the issue here is that parental preferences are low by comparison with other local schools and this is at a time when overall demand is increasing.as I have just shown to you. So this low preference data for New King's and Sullivan, suggest that changes are needed to meet more parents preferences and free up resources where they are most needed.

IH – The Council's Schools of Choice agenda is very much driven by parents, those that are here this evening and those across the borough, telling us what they want when they apply for places. We are trying to increase the number of schools that are outstanding, as judged by Ofsted, and are achieving high standards and are oversubscribed each year. We are also committed to improving school buildings and facilities and we fully acknowledge that both this building and the building at New King's would need significant investment to maintain them.

IH – Now in terms of our proposal, our amalgamation proposal to create a single sixty-place school on a single site, we believe that proposal to create a new school on the New King's site makes sense. We conduct condition surveys of all of our schools and the condition survey for Sullivan has shown that the buildings are nearing the end of their useful life.

**At this point there was significant disagreement from the audience**

IH – That's...that's what the survey has shown us, the survey has also shown us that the buildings at New King's School are also in need of significant repair.

**A member of the audience accuses the Council of being asset strippers.**

IH – If we are going to create a new single school and provide that investment, what we would want to do is consider the cost, and it is our estimation that to create a new primary school here, we would have to replace the buildings with a new primary school building, hence the cost of £6M, our proposal here is that the New King's building, whilst it is in need of repair, is a prized school building and could be significantly improved. The Council is prepared to invest in the buildings, but it has to provide value for money as well. We are proposing to invest in one site rather than two, given the spare places issue.

IH – When we met with New King's, I want to pick up on the points that were raised earlier, it is important that you understand the dates. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, I received an email from Miles, the Headteacher at New King's, explaining that the Governing Body had made a decision to convert to academy status working with Thomas's London Day Schools as a partner, and he sought a meeting with the local authority to discuss that proposal further. Cllr Georgie Cooney and I met with Miles and his Chair of Governors on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013, we then arranged a further meeting, which took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013 when we had the opportunity to meet Toby Thomas, and hear all about what the Thomas's offer would be for New King's. At that meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> July, Cllr Cooney and I explained to New King's that it was our intention the following week to put forward a consultation proposal regarding the amalgamation. I had already contacted Wendy and Rosie and we had a meeting planned for the following day, the 9<sup>th</sup> July, to explain that we were beginning this proposal at that time we were drafting the document, we didn't have a draft to share, but we spoke to the schools within twenty-four hours of each other.

IH – The main part of the proposal from New King's also involved a timeline to explain, to staff and parents, this plan in July. We the Council asked New King's if they would delay their consultation on

academy conversion with Thomas's until this consultation on the amalgamation was completed and both New King's and Thomas's agreed to that.

IH – We have also set out in the consultation document, some additional benefits of the proposal should it go ahead. Some of you will know that Parayhouse, an independent special school is also based in the New King's building, for some time they have been looking for a more suitable site and if this proposal were to go ahead, we the council would work with them to find new premises. In addition, given that we would move from two sites to one, there would be the release of a site that could be used to meet established demand for secondary places in Fulham. Some of you will know that the Fulham Boys CofE Free School has received over 500 signatures from parents stating that they would put the school as their first choice should it open. The Council is fully supportive of the proposal, which is line with the Council's Schools of Choice agenda; it has been approved as a proposal by the DfE, but has been unable to find a site. If this proposal goes ahead, then the DfE has confirmed it will fund the building of the new school at a cost of approximately £13.5M for the benefit of children and parents here in Hammersmith and Fulham. At this stage I am going to hand over to New King's to Miles Chester.

**5. New King's plan for moving to academy status in partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools – Miles Chester (MC) - Headteacher New King's School and Tobyn Thomas (TT) – Principal Thomas's London Day Schools.**

MC – Thank you and good evening. We're here because there are genuine issues facing both schools, there does need to be significant change. If we unite these changes can be, most definitely a positive one for all of our children. Last week I explored how New King's came to the decision to consult with our own parents on academy status, both schools were approached by the local authority back in 2011 and asked to consider a range of options to address our low pupil numbers. Various federations and groupings were discussed, but none quite worked beyond the existing, informal collaboration that the schools had been engaged in for that period of time. At New King's, faced with continued low pupil numbers we decided it was necessary to build on our existing strengths and to improve the offer that we were delivering to our pupils, in order to become a clear school of choice for local parents.

MC – We generated an innovative proposal, by partnering with Thomas's we developed a vision for the Parson's Green Academy. The next step for New King's, retaining our excellent academic results and continuing to build on an approach built on the very latest educational research, maintaining an inclusive, community led ethos, but adding that extra something through the support of Thomas's, so that our children could experience a genuine fantastic education. Now these

plans did not originally involve Sullivan at all, however, our original plans have now been augmented by the Council's proposals to include the staff and pupils at Sullivan. By doing this not only will Parson's Green Academy be a larger school with the capacity to deliver an outstanding offer, we would also have a better funded school, both in terms of investment in the building and for daily frontline delivery. I fully respect the right to campaign to save Sullivan, but having lived, breathed the life of these community schools for the last five years, I know that neither school can look forward to a sustainable future without some significant change. Just like the parents and staff here at Sullivan, we love our school and we have always worked extremely hard to do the very best for our children, sometimes that just isn't enough, sometimes it is necessary to innovate, and if necessary to collaborate.

MC – The proposals that we have put forward in conjunction with Thomas's is exactly that, we can retain what is great about our schools and we can add to that to make it a really outstanding school of choice with a sustainable long term future. We the support of the local authority, we can also look forward to the largest investment they have ever made in a community school.

MC – I believe this new school will bring fantastic opportunities for local children, subject to further consultation we would enter into a formal partnership with Thomas's who fully share in our ambition to deliver the very best for our children, the resulting school would still be in the state system, but would be quite different from ordinary state, church or independent schools. The new school would be lead by a new leadership team, augmented by many of the fantastic staff here at Sullivan and it will be aiming to retain as many of those key staff as possible, to provide them with genuine positions of responsibility and to build on the good practice of both schools. We would continue to develop an international focus to our approach, based on the very latest educational research, we would continue to follow the International Primary Curriculum and we would build on our pioneer work with the Maths Mastery programme, which is the maths curriculum based on the successful approaches in Singapore, to build an innovative, effective and highly relevant approach for our pupils. Changes will include a broadening of the curriculum to include a particular focus on science and music and the immediate benefits of specialist teaching will be felt by all of the children, there will opportunities to learn languages, to learn a how to play a musical instrument and take part in a wide range of supporting activities. The opportunities for pupils developed in conjunction with Thomas's will be exciting and varied from joint musical events, sporting fixtures and charitable events, lessons alongside their peers from the Thomas's schools giving them the opportunity to share their ideas with an even more diverse community.



MC – The local authority have committed and investment of at least £2M to completely refurbish the New King’s site, this would allow us to provide fantastic opportunities for children to learn in state of the art facilities, which would otherwise be completely unavailable, including specialist teaching spaces, brand new junior science lab, creative art rooms, recording studios, video editing suites. The outside spaces will also see a particular focus to ensure that pupils retain the opportunity to bring their learning outside, to plant and tend a garden, to search for mini-beasts in the local school pond.

**The audience queried where this would be as there is very limited outside space at New King’s.**

MC – I appreciate that and I think that that is something that needs to be explored further. When we move on to the questions and answers that will be a useful thing to explore.

MC – If the decision is made for New King’s to amalgamate it will create opportunities and challenges moving forward. We have a great staff, great families and great ideas, but we don’t have a great deal of time. It is essential that we immediately join forces to ensure that we provide a consistent approach for these children, to ensure the inclusion work of both schools is continued, helping children from all backgrounds, abilities and special educational needs, to ensure that the staff, who are ultimately responsible for making the schools such fantastic places are properly treated, all of these aims are achievable, the draft staffing structure for instance at the new amalgamated school gives teaching positions with genuine responsibility to the majority of current Sullivan staff

**Audience – apart from the Head – Miss Aldridge will she be the Head of this new school then?**

MC – large numbers of support staff will also be retained and the excellent standards at both can be maintained and improved as we move forward, the curriculum can be enriched, the building and school grounds can be developed and we can provide a wonderful learning environment to inspire all of our children. All of this is possible and together we can deliver an outstanding school with far greater strength and depth than either school can provide alone. I would like to close by extending an invitation to parents and staff from both schools to look closely at the opportunities this proposal could provide for all our children. The current consultation offers for us a unique chance to develop a great new school together, but we absolutely require your active participation, nothing has been decided yet,

**Many of the audience disagree with the statement that nothing has been decided yet.**

MC – Nothing has been decided yet, but if we are going to make the most of this opportunity then we have to start planning as soon as possible, deciding on the staffing priorities, deciding on the most appropriate opportunities for the school to offer ensuring a smooth transition for all of the pupils. I am working with a great team at New King's on all of these areas right now and I would be delighted to have the genuine input from people here at Sullivan. Whilst I fully respect the right to protest against this proposal, I urge you to start thinking about how we can be in the best possible position should the decision go ahead for the schools to merge, I have left my email address up there and I would be very happy to hear from anybody who is interested in joining the group, to look genuinely at how this can be taken forward for the benefit of all of the children. I'd now like to turn to Toby to explain more about the support of Thomas's

**There was a small trickle of applause from about six members of the audience. The rest of the audience were silent.**

TT – Thank you it is a pleasure to be here and for those who haven't heard me previously, my name is Toby Thomas, I'm a principal of Thomas's London Day Schools, which was started by my parents a former actress and army officer, who sold our house, our family house, to start educating eleven children and two teachers in 1977.

TT- By embracing change and making the most of every new opportunity, Thomas's has evolved to provide an independent co-educational, education of largely outstanding quality, in Victorian buildings to 2000 girls... boys and girls from 2 ½ to 13 supported by hundreds of teachers in Battersea, Clapham, Kensington, Fulham and Pimlico. Some of you also know the work of the Thomas's Schools' Foundation, an independent charity, providing educational and extra-curricular opportunities for children in the local communities of Thomas's London Day Schools.

TT – We are here because, as Miles explained, in late June of this year, for reasons already said, and further to discussions with Governors and Heads of New King's, a decision was made to seek approval for the establishment of the Parson's Green Academy, in partnership with Thomas's. In our discussions we came to understand that we share a vision for the school and that we possess all necessary academic, financial, administrative and logistical expertise required to be an effective partner to it.

TT – New King's School, like Sullivan, is a very good community school, with a clear ethos, strong management, leadership and good to outstanding levels of teaching. As excited as we were about helping, Thomas's had three requirements for our involvement: the first was that to deliver the key aims of widening the curriculum for children yet further, it is an essential requirement that the school employs more excellent teachers, these staff can only be afforded if the school gets

bigger. Our experience of running schools makes us absolutely certain that the new school needs to grow as quickly as possible to over 400 pupils, because this affords the realistic chance of giving staff the colleagues, budgets, opportunities and timetables that they require to provide most effectively for the pupils across the curriculum. Larger schools are simply better at being able to deliver a broad curriculum, which is why, so long as the best of both good schools can be retained in the new school, we believe that this proposed school merger is in the best educational interests of your children. The initial plan was to enlarge by opening one new class each year for the next seven years. However, due to the continuing issue of low pupil numbers in both schools this concept was superseded by the local authority's proposal to invest, significantly, into the merger of Sullivan and New King's as this achieves the coming together of two very similar, good schools, to make an enlarged school, with an enhanced staffing structure and refurbished facilities. This is ultimately what is on offer here, a fully staffed, refurbished, resourced, appropriately sized, good to outstanding primary school, of a size which allows it to be master of its own future and not a hostage to it.

TT- Our second requirement was that Miles agreed to remain Head for the foreseeable future

**This caused disquiet amongst the audience who felt that an Independent School was dictating who should be the Head in a state funded school.**

TT – The Governors and school leadership at New King's school are prepared to accept the risk of change to their school, because they are relentless in their pursuit of ever-higher educational standards. All teaching and learning requires inspirational leadership and we believe that Miles provides it, this is not to say that Wendy is not a marvellous Head, she clearly is

**Huge applause from the audience**

TT – but it is to say simply that she was not in the picture when this decision was made.

**This caused the audience to ask why not and if not then why not now**

TT – Our final requirement was that we would always look to the current school leadership, Head and Governors to continue to lead their school, we see Thomas's potential role as being that of supportive partners and enablers and not leaders of the new school. It will be a genuine partnership and no take over. The Chairman of the Board of Governors took this plan to the local authority in early July, he responded with a meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> July with a radical, wide-ranging and inspirational plan, which I personally congratulate them on as it

significantly enhances the educational opportunities for many, many children. To make it happen however, Sullivan must give up its wonderful premises,

### **Boos and jeers from the audience**

TT – Thomas's has taken over and merged a successful school before, this school was called Lady Eden's and we needed its premises to enlarge our own school in the area. The process is always agony in the short-term and the feelings of shock, anger, frustration are only too natural, the challenge for us here, however, is not to let these feelings and the emotions involved in a possible break-up of a close-knit community, err the reality of the situation or the opportunities before you. Done right the ends will more than justify the means and this is not just for Sullivan children, New King's children, children at Parayhouse, and a potential 800 boys would also benefit enormously from the transformed educational provision. Any campaign to save Sullivan needs to demonstrate how these interests could otherwise be better provided for in order to have a realistic chance of success. And if you are not successful, then the schools will be merged next September and a successful merger will not just happen, it takes planning, good will, leadership, expertise, hard work and time. I strongly urge those involved to engage with the process now and not leave it until after a decision has been made or there may not be enough time left to ensure success and failure can never be an option. And Thomas's has done all that you are about to do. This is a bold and ambitious project, which requires time and detailed planning to succeed. The maxim that you don't plan to fail, but you fail to plan is blindly apt. As in all planning the devil is in the detail and getting that detail correct takes time, the time is one thing we do not have that much of, so we need your engagement now please. I therefore end with a plea, is that whatever you feel about it all, please realise that what unites us is far stronger than what divides us, the two schools are very similar, they are both good and getting better thanks to the efforts of their teachers and pupils, their premises may be different, but little else is. We are here because we want to see a plan succeed that improves the educational provision of all children, the future can be stronger as part of a larger whole. If you do not believe that then you won't accept a single word that I have said, but if you do believe it then I urge you to seize the opportunity given to you to take control and plan for the future and to let us make it happen together. As Henry Ford said, "If you think you can or if you think you cannot, then you are right." Thank you for listening.

CL – Thank you – The final person to speak is our very own Headteacher – Wendy Aldridge.

**Applause and cheers from the audience.**

## **6. Wendy Aldridge (WA) – Headteacher, Sullivan School**

WA – I am the Headteacher at Sullivan and I have worked at this school for twenty-five years. As I look out into this audience I can see children, parents, staff, governors, colleagues and members of the local community, past and present, who have come here to show their support to us this evening – and are testament to how established Sullivan is in our diverse community.

WA – We are committed to providing an outstanding education for the children in the local community, supported by the families who have chosen this school for their children.

WA – Each year our school improvement plans builds on the excellent practice in all areas of learning – our last Ofsted was good, we are now well on the way being outstanding and I can tell you that at Sullivan outstanding means everything Ofsted states and a whole lot more.

WA – The skilled, dedicated and passionate staff team and governing body work tirelessly to provide outstanding provision for our children. Our staff team is unique and every one of them plays a special role.

WA – You cannot show statistics for the ethos of a school, but I want to tell you that every visitor who enters our building states what a happy, friendly and supportive learning environment this is – whether it is an enquiry about dinner money, a teaching assistant teaching an intervention programme, a mid-day meal supervisor serving lunch, a teacher teaching a lesson, a senior manager leading some training, every member of staff plays a vital role and I value every single one of them. It seems the council does not!

WA – Our setting is unique – it is the perfect learning environment for primary aged children who live in the south of Fulham. For many of our children it is the only chance they have to sit on grass, connect with nature and our grounds are just as much a part of the school as any classroom.

### **Applause from the audience**

WA – Each part of the school has been developed to provide excellent learning opportunities for our children.

- Bright, airy well-resourced classrooms, learning bases for music, ICT, reading and intervention rooms for special needs.
- Access to two playgrounds, an extensive inside and outside classroom for Foundation Stage children, the unique science lab in our wildlife garden and a children's kitchen

WA - If you ask parents and primary education specialists to write down what they want for a primary school – we have it

- A happy, safe learning environment – we have it
- High standards and expectations for every child – we have it

- An exciting curriculum with excellent enrichment opportunities – we have it
- A dedicated, passionate and nurturing team of staff – we have it
- Opportunities to play and learn in extensive outdoor spaces – we have it
- A school vision to be outstanding – we have it

WA – However, it seems leading a good school that is consistently improving and is well on the way to being outstanding is not good enough, and what we don't have is the support of the council

WA – I am totally opposed to the council's proposal to close Sullivan

- The LA say we are not a school of choice and the building is coming to the end of its life. I say we have done everything we can to become a school of choice and an independent building survey will show that the building is not at the end of its life. The building is well maintained to an excellent standard by our extremely dedicated site manager.

#### **Applause from the audience**

- Last year we were asked to increase our roll, we have done that, today there are 279 children on roll in Reception to Year 6 an increase of 10%

#### **Applause from audience**

- Therefore with our Nursery children we are a school of choice for 324 children and their families
- The school is now 89% full – we are full in Nursery, Reception and Year 2.
- We have a permanent waiting list for Nursery places.
- If we were able to increase the number of Nursery places from 26 to 40 to match the one and a half form entry in the rest of the school – we would be full. Last year we asked the LA if we could do this, as it only needed one more classroom, but the answer was no – therefore stopping us from being a school of choice for parents who wanted to join our Foundation Stage.
- 76% of Reception parents for September 2013 put Sullivan as their first choice.

WA – I would question – is it fair to use data to say we are not a school of choice, when parents often put down a choice that is unavailable to them? This is how the council judges us.

WA – It seems that by closing Sullivan it will mean a reduction of primary places in real terms

WA – You have heard about the proposal to create a new academy on the New King’s site. Miles has chosen this route, as he believes that this is the best opportunity for his school – let him continue on that journey.

### **Applause from the audience**

WA – You have heard in the consultation about the proposal to create a CofE secondary boys school – I have no issue with this – but not on our site

### **Load applause from the audience**

WA – What you haven’t heard about in the consultation is that the council are saying that this site is too good for our children, but just right for secondary school boys.

### **Cheers and applause from the audience**

WA – What has not been taken into consideration is that the success of Sullivan is about the children who attend the school, the team of staff who work here and the local community that supports us – it is not transferable!

WA – Sullivan should not be a political victim – this is an educational issue not a political one.

### **There followed a standing ovation and cheers of ‘Well done Wendy’**

### **Question and answer session**

AC – Thank you Wendy and thanks to all the speakers, there is a lot of food for thought for all of us. We would now like to move to the stage of the evening, I think it was something a number of people wanted us to devote as much time as possible to, we have managed to keep an hour and a quarter for questions and points of view, because this is the opportunity for you to both ask questions of people sitting on the platform but also to express your point of view and I would ask you, if you are going to ask a question or raise a point of view, to keep it, I know it is quite difficult when you feel strongly about things, to try and keep it brief and to the point, similarly with your questions. Now what I would also say is, because I recognise a number of people in the audience who have been to the previous session, and I welcome you, but I am sure you would agree with me, you had the chance to ask questions last time, it is really important that perhaps, also to make sure and encourage other people who haven’t yet had the chance to make a point of view or ask a question, to have a chance to do so, not stopping other people from asking questions or making points but I would just like to make sure we involve as many people as possible. As

I said one of the things we are doing is taking notes of the kind of comments and questions that are being made as this will all be part of the material that we will use to inform our decision.

**Nicholas Coates (NC) – resident**

I have never stepped foot inside Sullivan before although I have been based a few yards away for twenty years. What I would say is that one question is simply not going to be enough, today covers education, finance, social questions and I am sad to say political. I also add, I am probably conceited enough to say that I am only person in the room who was a Headmaster who had to close a school. So I do have one or two thoughts, none of which, this is something I would very much like to share with the people here, are emotional. If Sullivan is going to win this battle, it must cut out the emotion and bring in the practicality and the rational, that is how to win the argument, cheering I am afraid is not going to win the argument.

NC – Now, my first point, as I said, I have no connection until a leaflet came through my door, now if that note is true, either the council has exceeded its authority or it has ignored proper procedure

**Applause**

NC – If either of those two are the case somebody somewhere should pursue a judicial review.

**Applause**

NC – Now the question this evening is more than just the merger or the closure, it is to do with a new school and all schools in the area. Now promises were made when the French came in, which were not quite kept and as we heard from the council officers this evening, can ask if they and a couple of traffic wardens attend three times a day in term time, they would make a fortune because they don't pay their parking permit and it would keep down council tax.

NC – If this new school comes across there is going to be noise and dirt

**A member of the audience asked that Ian Heggs stop talking to Georgie Cooney and listen to NC**

IH – Excuse me can you let the gentleman speak please

**There was jeering from the audience as IH had been whispering to GC and appeared not to be listening to the gentleman speak**

NC – disruption and then these are questions that are more Head magisterial than many people I am afraid would want to consider. 800



new secondary pupils, bussed or carried in in the morning which will make the traffic even worse, of an evening making it even worse and during the day, buses, coaches to go for this, that and the other. Now let us put it this way, the new school, a free school, is going to be very proud of its uniform, they are going to come from everywhere, especially non-local and that may produce a culture clash, for religious reasons, socio-economic reasons and if my counting is right we probably have about five and two half schools within three quarters of a mile. Now if they come out at the same time, the traffic will increase, there is going to be the possibility for what already happens, I know this because twenty plus years ago I had to change the uniform policy of my school because my kids were being picked on in public, and especially on public transport. Now less than five years ago, or maybe a little longer, a poor child was stabbed to death on the corner of the estate we don't want the possibility of envy, we don't want, what already happens to some of the girls from Lady Margaret, they're picked on and I am not making that up because there are parents in this hall today who have told me about it. And last, but not least, as a Headmaster, spare a thought for Hurlingham and Chelsea

### **Huge applause**

NC- If I were its Headmaster, or a Governor or a teacher or a pupil or a parent of a pupil, to be polite about it I would be scratching my head saying, £14M, £6M, a fraction of that would transform my school.

### **Applause from the audience**

NC – Thank you for your patience I now will finish, one last question, 800 pupils nobody has mentioned if it will have a sixth form, what about Hurlingham and Chelsea, they don't have a sixth form do they, is this new school going to have one? Whose children is it going to serve?

### **Applause from the audience.**

AC – Thank you very much, as I have said tonight is about the opportunity to make comments as well as to ask questions and there were quite a few comments and questions outlined by the person who just spoke. I am just going to make a few comments in response, but some of it will have to be pursued elsewhere because some of it relates to other school issues than those being considered tonight.

AC – The first point was has the Council exceeded its authority or gone outside proper procedures, I don't think we have, I would say that wouldn't I, because I am responsible for it. But of course the Council is aware that in any very complex decision-making process such as this, we are absolutely, it is absolutely open for anyone to take us to court in the form of a judicial review. So we therefore take very seriously proper process. I think we are very clearly following the defined process in respect of a consultation to consider a closure plan or proposal so that

is what we are doing and why I explained the next steps. I think a lot more of the comments and questions then related to the proposal in respect of the Fulham Boys CofE School, well that of course a proposal about that is in the first instance considered by the DfE not the LA if that plan does proceed, then one of the things that will absolutely have to happen is for the proposal to also go through a consultation process, and that will have to include all sorts of things and amongst them it will have to include things related to traffic movement and also the issue of impact on schools in the area. So that is my kind of response to the first question.

**Anthony William (AW) Member of the standing committee of PRARA (Peterborough Road Area Residents Association)**

AW – (To AC) I am sorry you were not able to attend the meeting with the committee recently; Ian Heggs did with Cllr Cooney. The reason we requested that meeting is because our footprint as a residents association includes four schools: Thomas's; Hurlingham and Chelsea; Sullivan and the ecole/Holy Cross in Clancarty Road, we have just outside our footprint, but affecting us, Lady Margaret's and petit ecole. We also have three nursery schools in our area. We expressed concern at that meeting, as those two people know, about the loss of a community school, but we are not able to comment and come back on that, because we are not educationalists, so we leave that on one side. Our main concern, as you know (directed at IH and GC) was to ask has the Council considered the implication of changing this site from essentially a 300 pupil primary school to an 800 pupil secondary school, which will bring with it additional staffing and additional issues. And have they put that into the context of what is already happening in this area: increased numbers at Hurlingham and Chelsea; more than doubling the size at the ecole/Holy Cross; more pupils at Lady Margaret's. When we asked the question about the implications of that particular part of your proposal, you made it very clear that that is for stage two, we think there should be answers given to us on that score before you go down the road of expensive consultations, because we are very alarmed at the thought of potentially, of a thousand more children, plus everything else, coming into this area, if you live in this area, if you know it, you will know what the traffic is like in the morning; the road traffic, the pedestrian traffic, the rat run, all of these are already bad, to add on that the implication of a much larger secondary school is somewhat horrendous. There is also the issue, which I don't think should be ignored, is that the ecole/Holy Cross in the Peterborough building is about to start a major building programme, down at the end of Peterborough Road it is highly likely that we are going to get the tunnel, another huge, horrendous building works, add on that the fact that this proposal would like to demolish this site and build a school, putting another massive building project on here all at the same time. So our question to them is as the representatives of some highly effective people, we need to know what your logical answers are, going forward on these issues. If the amalgamation

happens, we hope it doesn't, but if it happens have you thought through would happen in this area, to the residents, to these communities if you proceeded with the free school.

### **Applause from the audience**

AC – Georgie you were going to answer

GC – Yeah, I just want to say thank you for the meeting we had the other day. From that meeting we took all of the suggestions you came back with, sorry all of the suggestions you gave us, we took them back to the council and we have agreed to commission a holistic survey of all developments in the area and their likely impact on the transport and the footfall, so that is happening.

AC – When are we going to start?

GC – It has already been commissioned

IH – That's right it will be starting shortly

### **The audience asked when it would be finishing and if it was independent – there was no answer from IH or GC**

AC – Let's move on to the next question.

### **Regan (R) – Teacher at another local primary school**

R – There are a lot of people here from other primary schools, because they are very concerned about what the future is for our schools, but the immediate issue is Sullivan. I would like to propose that we have a quick indicative vote, can I start by saying all those in favour of the Council's proposals to close Sullivan School please raise your hand (I couldn't see the entire hall, but I think I only saw one hand), all those against the Council's proposal please raise your hand (again I couldn't see the entire hall, but there was a sea of hands raised at this point). It says here (consultation document) that these meetings are consultations, feelings will be noted, and I think the vote should be noted.

### **Applause from the audience**

R – What I would like to say as quickly as possible is that what is behind all of this is a political agenda about academies and free schools and the break-up of genuine community schools

### **Huge applause**

R – And the people who are making the decisions about our community schools do not send their children to community schools

**Further applause**

R – No they send their children to private schools, where classroom sizes are far smaller. Why should a small roll at a school be a problem, it should be an opportunity, we can have more teachers, more time with our children. Why shouldn't our children get what the children of politicians and councillors get?

**Huge applause once more**

R – If there are millions of pounds to spend on free schools why can't millions of pounds be spent on our schools?

**Applause**

R – And I am saying to everybody in all schools in this borough; watch out, I'd even say to Miles watch out, there is no guarantee about your future. We are stronger sticking together, fighting to defend our community schools.

**Huge applause**

AC- I think I will take that as a statement rather than a question

**Donna Fine (DF) parent of a pupil at Sullivan School**

DF – I have recently transferred my daughter to Sullivan from an independent school, she wasn't settling well in the independent school, she wasn't thriving. I have looked at all of the numbers in the leaflet that has been handed out and I know they are wrong. The reason I know that they are wrong is because I called and asked for the pupil numbers for every school in the local area, because I am also a local resident and wanted to send my daughter to school locally. It was very important for me that she was able to settle into the local area, make local friends and be a part of the local community. Now obviously because I am also a resident I have some of the same neighbourhood concerns as the gentleman from PRARA raised, but just a couple of things that weren't mentioned, south Fulham has been marked as an area of re-generation by H&F Council, there are proposals to develop approximately five to seven sites in approximately the next seven to ten years, the current figures from the Council themselves is that there will be 2800 new residencies in the south Fulham area in the next five to seven years, and clearly that is going to bring a lot of new people to the area and there are going to be a lot more primary school places needed. The Conservative Party manifesto 2010, promised to give every parent access to a good school, and that their 'school revolution will create a new generation of good small schools, with smaller class sizes'. I am going to argue that Sullivan, well it's been proven, Ofsted said so themselves, is a good small school and it has small class sizes,

it is one of the reasons that I chose Sullivan, because I wanted my daughter to settle in a good school, where I knew she would get appropriate attention from the teachers. The Council's own proposals state that small schools attract less funding than larger schools, actually the funding per pupil is equal regardless of school size, the council's proposal also states that both schools have been hampered by their unfilled places, well I know this also not to be true because I know that New King's was full when I transferred my daughter, I have neighbours, I have friends who weren't able to get their children places in schools in Fulham and had to move, they weren't able to get Sullivan, they weren't able to get New King's or any other school. It is a clear fact that the numbers the Council have provided are inaccurate and in the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 there are thirty-seven more places filled than the Council state in their proposals. Cutting fifteen places per year leaves me with the fear that my younger child, if the amalgamation goes ahead, may not be able to go to a local community school or attend the same school as his sister. Not only that, the pure practical implications of amalgamating these two schools and causing children to travel further, puts further strain on local transport, it is also very impractical for young children. Now the proposal states that most of the parents don't live east of Wandsworth Road and that is why Langford is not being considered as part of this amalgamation, well I live east of Wandsworth Road and I know there are many, many Sullivan students in my area, I see them every day. The Council is saying that these surplus places, alleged surplus places, at New King's, Sullivan and at Langford, suggest changes are needed. Now I wouldn't want to bash another school, but I would not send my child to Langford because it has recently been rated by Ofsted as level 4, which is failing, if you need to make some changes perhaps you need to look at that first. I've looked at the numbers only this afternoon, at the applications that New King's and Sullivan received last year and they were roughly double the numbers available so I would dispute it is not a school of choice. We haven't really had the Council's projections for the 0-5 age population growth, but I would say that the predicted population growth in Hammersmith and Fulham, and in particular this area of Fulham, is in line with London and national growth figures if not at the high end, particularly for primary aged children. A report by the London Councils has warned of a chronic shortage of places forecast for the capital, a region already at over capacity, the National Audit Office has said that in excess of 230,000 primary places will be needed in time for the next academic year, in primaries that are already full or near capacity, the greatest pressure will be in London, which accounts, for a third of the places needed, roughly 75,000 and I would argue there are quite a number of those places that will be in Fulham. The DfE data shows that H&F is expected to be 6-10% over capacity by 2016/17 and these predictions were based on data before this year's growth and birth rate figures, which revealed the highest figures since the 1950's

**Applause**

DF – Now I have a couple of comments, then I will ask my question. I am going to quote your esteemed colleague, Nicholas Botterill, ‘We are very much of the opinion that if assets don’t yield benefits they can’t be justified and we need to sell them.’ I work in an industry that provides a public service, much like the Councillors I make decisions on public service projects in the £M’s and I know it is not all just numbers, there are subjective issues to consider. Given what I understand of the surveyors report on this building, this asset is viable and it yields not only a social benefit, but it yields a benefit to the community and we the parents of Sullivan are very much of the opinion that Sullivan Primary School does yield benefits

### **Applause**

DF – I want to ask if you agree with the statement: ‘Our vision is to create as green an environment as possible, with good open spaces; we want strong education, so kids come out of school and into work and not onto the scrapheap’. I want to ask if you agree with that, but I think and I think many other parents here agree with me that Sullivan does provide a strong education, in a small school, small classes in a green environment with open spaces and I would just like to tell you that Nicholas Botterill made that quote.

### **Applause**

AC – You made some very significant points both about policy and place planning and what I suggest, I think it is clear that this is an area where people have got lots of questions to ask, one of the things I have said we need to do, is produce the workings of how we produce our place planning requirements, so I will do that, but in the meantime, in the first instance I will ask Ian Heggs to say a little bit more about the place planning and then ask Georgie Cooney to talk about Council policy in relation to education.

IH – Thank you Andrew, well what you do have on your chairs are a set of our FAQs, and we have included for you in that document some details about our predicted demand. We have also set out for you statistics for spare capacity in local schools and also our plans, so I do urge you to look at those in detail. As I said earlier, we are predicting an increase in primary places, but we have a duty to meet that demand, but we do have to factor in existing spare places, and as I have said there are 384 spare places, just in four local schools alone, we are fully aware of the South Riverside development, I am glad you mentioned that, it is predicting an increase in the number of places, we need to see a bit more about the development to predict the requirements more accurately, but again we are confident that there are sufficient places in the system to meet demand.

**A member of the audience said that the estimated spare places in Sullivan and New King's was sixty places, which as a percentage of the 384 spare places was nothing.**

IH – Sorry I didn't make myself clear, what I meant was that in four Fulham primary schools between Reception and Year 6, I think from my notes there are 1260 places in total available and 384 of them are unfilled currently, now that might change and as I said we update our predictions annually, the point about the data, I do have to emphasize, the figures in the consultation document are based on the May census and were submitted to us by the schools themselves. Now you are absolutely right, this is a new academic year, we don't know yet if Reception classes at New Kings and Sullivan will be full or not, but as soon as we get that data from the schools of course we will provide the update.

AC – But what we will do, is we will set out the tables which describes exactly in those for schools what the numbers were at that May census what the figures were for each year group and then it will be clear to everybody.

**The same audience member said that IH did not answer the question and says 'so excuse my very poor maths, but it seems as if we are talking about sixty places for these two schools, so sixty from 384 is 324, so 324 of those spare places are nothing to do with these two schools.'**

**There is applause from the rest of the audience.**

IH – I do take your point.

**The same audience member 'so a multi-million pound investment is based on sixty places'**

AC – You have made your point, Georgie can you come on to talk about the policy, as I said we will publish the figures so that everybody can see the numbers of the May census.

GC – I think your question to me was about the Council's policy and you asked whether I would agree with the statement that we wanted to create educational placements that were green, had a green environment, as green as possible, with a strong education, did I agree that Langford had that, yes it does, do I think that schools of choice we are trying to provide as a Council

**The audience point out that it was Sullivan and not Langford that the question was asked about**

GC – I do apologise, I apologise, Sullivan, I apologise, clearly...

**The audience became very unhappy and GC was booed.**

AC – Can we allow Cllr Cooney to finish please?

GC – I can only apologise that I used the name Langford instead of Sullivan, I do apologise. The question is about the Council's view of schools for the future, first choice schools that would be outstanding and oversubscribed, do I believe, therefore, that an academy could also, the Parson's Green Academy, could it also provide a strong education, with...the future plans for the Parson's Green Academy, I think Miles described earlier,

**An audience member said NKS was on a main road and asked where the green space was**

GC – As I was saying, when Miles was describing some of the things an academy could have, part of that was an outdoor area, an outdoor space, and I approve of that too.

AC – Can I move on, what I did last time was identify three people so you don't have to keep your hands up all of the time, so I am going to identify three people again.

**Gary Piper (GP) who until April of this year, was Vicar of St Matthew's Church in Fulham and before that a teacher working in the Inner London Education Authority for twenty years including as Head of a primary school, and for most of the twenty-eight years as Vicar of St Matthew's took weekly assemblies in Sullivan School.**

GP – I have been strongly associated with Sullivan School and have seen Wendy come from a first year teacher to a splendid Head and I know what I am talking about, being the splendid Head that she is.

**Huge applause**

GP – I want to make one or two points then I will ask a question that absolutely surprises me. First of all with regard to the site here, I was Head of a school in Kentish Town when I first came to Sullivan and looked around I thought if only we had these facilities in Kentish Town, how much more we could have done for the children. This is a splendid site, wonderful for a primary school, which must not be lost.

**Applause**

GP – I am astounded, I have no problem, well I suppose I do, I have no problem with schools amalgamating, although I think legally you can't do that you have to close and open a new school.

AC – Yes that is essentially what this is.



GP – Right so it is not an amalgamation. Thank you I wanted that.

### **Applause**

GP – I understand Miles and Toba discussing together the future, but discussing together and coming to the agreement that Miles had to be the Head...in all my years of being associated with the LA I have never, ever, heard of such a thing. When did the authority cease to become equal opportunities?

### **Huge applause**

GP – As a way of treating somebody, well all of the staff at Sullivan, although I am told there will be job opportunities for them, but I know they are feeling insecure, but speaking of Wendy, is this the way the authority treats somebody who has worked so hard for the children of this borough.

### **Huge applause**

GP – If this is the way somebody like Wendy can be treated; those of you who are paid by the borough must be feeling insecure. Finally I would like to believe that because there are things going on that shouldn't have gone on here, I would like to believe this is a genuine consultation and this is not a stitch up, please be honest with us. Thank you.

### **Applause**

AC – There were two statements and a question, there were two statements one of which was your statement about the future, the second was about is this an honest consultation, you will just have to listen to me saying that we are here to listen to people genuinely, we are consulting, you can choose whether to believe me or not. The third and the most important and I am going to answer the question, is about Miles' position. Let me explain, and in fact in your statement about the regulations you have the answer therein, and I don't think it is fair or right that anybody here should say that Miles and Toba made a decision about the Headship in respect of the proposals we are talking about, and it is for me to explain the proposals we are talking about and, therefore, for me to explain why it is Miles we are talking about. The fact of the matter is that you are dead right about the regulations, there are really only two routes open to the LA to bring two schools together, one is for the LA to close one of the schools and leave the other open, and this is what we said last week as well, and the other is to close both schools. The proposal as it stands, the Council is proposing, that the school that is closed is Sullivan and New King's is the school that stays open, and therefore,

### **An audience member says how convenient**

AC – This is the proposal, this is what we are here to consult on, because I think it would be unfair of you to go away from the meeting tonight and think that this was something that was engineered by Miles and Tobyn, because it absolutely was the case that it was the LA that made the decision to consult on the proposal that New King's remains open and that Sullivan closes and, therefore, in law the position is that the Head of the school that is staying open remains Head of that school. Can I come on now to Phil Cross.

### **Phil Cross (PC) Headteacher Hurlingham and Chelsea.**

PC – Forgive me many of you will know that there is a real sense of deja vu for me, because in December 2006 I was also called to the Town Hall, they didn't come to my office and I was told that they were going to shut my school. I just wished you guys had learnt the lesson, I thought you had, because much of what I am going to say, I could stand here and talk about the impact on the local community etc., but the thing that concerns me here is the process, because if I reflect back to 2006 there were four people who wrote in to the consultation in support of the closure of Hurlingham and Chelsea. From my recollection, I don't have the figures here, there were 17,000 people by hook or by crook, that said do not close this school, but the closure notices went up. We did go to judicial review, we lost, spending a lot of money and it went to the wire, and about six months after we won that, the legislation we used to stop the closure of Hurlingham and Chelsea, was promptly removed from the statute book nationally. Now the thing that really worries me here is, why did the Council and the LA officers not trust the professionals or people in the local community, sit us all round a table as Rosie has already said, and say let's thrash out a plan.

### **Applause**

PC – I am concerned that if this is a proper amalgamation, I heard what you have said Andrew, but all the other amalgamations I have heard of, I haven't been involved in any, usually what happens is the minimum you would do is advertise the Headship nationally and people are free to apply.

### **Applause**

PC – So my question to you this evening is please, please, please will you stop the consultation, I am not saying that as the Headteacher of Hurlingham and Chelsea, that you can't have a free school or can't reorganise pupil places, what I am saying is let's sit down and come up with a proper plan, in short I don't think this is a proper plan. I would say there are three impacts to this proposal, there are three things you are consulting on, one is about a free school, another one is about

reorganising primary places and another one is about getting another academy, we shouldn't forget that. As well as the impact on the local community let's look at impact on primary children. As I understand it from the documentation I've read, we are going to take some children from New King's, then we are going to put them in Sullivan whilst that is refurbished, and all of the staff are expected to get on and work together, I'm sorry, but I think that is going to be exceptionally difficult for the staff in both schools. Then they are all going to move back again, think of the disruption on those primary pupils.

### **Applause**

PC – Forgive me for once if I am the voice of reason, I am also concerned about secondary provision and I go back to the Schools of Choice agenda, I have heard that now for seven years, schools of choice. I ask you, if this proposal goes ahead, what schools of choice really means is selection, and it means selection by faith, by gender, by social class and by where you live. Now if this proposal goes ahead, you'll have, I've got a lot of parents and staff from Hurlingham and Chelsea here, ever since I have been Head since 2004, somebody mentioned the murder, I arrived at Hurlingham and Chelsea two months after a lad was murdered at the corner of Sullivan Court, not a nice time. In 2006 I was told that Hurlingham and Chelsea was dead in the water, it was failing, its results were terrible, it was empty. In 2011 it was judged outstanding, so actually

### **Applause**

PC – the fact that Sullivan is already judged good means they have less of a journey to travel than we had to at Hurlingham and Chelsea. The impact on Hurlingham and Chelsea is obvious, as a the result of the Schools of Choice agenda, when I went to the school in 2004 there were exactly the same number of boys and girls. As a direct result of council policy we've now got twice as many boys as girls. That has a big impact on a secondary school. If you build a school with 800 CofE and make no bones about it, some of you sitting here will not get your children into that school, and you'll live next door to it, ask the parents who live next door to the Oratory. What I would also say is that Hurlingham and Chelsea has not gone through a period of stability since I have been Headteacher, it has gone through special measures, threat of closure, academisation, some deal with the French, yes for the person who mentioned Langford, for the last year I have been involved as Executive Head, that school's results are improving, that school will improve rapidly and will become outstanding. My issue is that if you put that school here and you empty out Hurlingham and Chelsea, which is highly likely I would say, what you will create is the schools of choice for some, and actually, what you will create is a school, where do you go as a parent if you are choosing, mixed, multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, community education.

**Applause.**

PC – So my question is simple, please withdraw this consultation now, we can come back to a consultation in six months' time, give us a period of time, as a group of professionals, to come up with one plan for the south of Fulham, one plan, not we make it up as we go along. In answer to the question did New King's trigger this, well in the introduction that is exactly what was said, actually your consultation is on hold while the Council seizes the opportunity to knock this school down and build a free school. I think we are playing with words, so let's have one plan so there is a school of choice for everyone.

**Applause**

AC – I am just going to say that Phil you made a series of statements, and a proposition about halting the consultation while further discussions take place. As I said this consultation is about answering questions and about considering views that are expressed and that is obviously a view that has been expressed.

**Sullivan Parent** - I am Sullivan parent and I would just like to know what guarantees you can offer to a child with mobility difficulties, that her needs will be met in a five storey Victorian building. (The parent was quite emotional and upset) And also Langford and New King's were not in my top five choices and I live next door to Langford.

**Applause**

GC – You will see in the FAQ's some of the vision for this new academy

Sullivan Parent – But you can't make a five storey building on one floor

GC – Please let me answer, one of the very big parts of it is to make it exceptionally inclusive including a lift in the school

Sullivan Parent – Sorry, but that isn't inclusion, my child will be in a lift with maybe one teacher, one helper, the rest of her class will be going another way to where they have to go

**Applause**

GC – The school will be designed so they have an inclusive environment, although the route to the classroom will be different

Sullivan Parent – But these are children we are talking about

GC – I understand that

Sullivan Parent – Social interactions are done outside of the lesson, if she is separated from her class friends while she goes up and down in a lift, she is going to be secluded not included

**Applause**

GC – I just want to emphasise that one of the very big parts of the vision is to make it extremely inclusive with multi-sensory room

Sullivan Parent – But you can't make a five storey building one level, no matter what you do

GC – That is true

Sullivan Parent – Sullivan is perfect, there is no place in this school that she cannot access

**Applause**

AC – OK thank you very much, I think you made your point very well indeed.

**Maryam Hussain (MH) pupil of Sullivan**

MH – I'm learning in Sullivan School, I am very sad to say that I am very sad because Miss Aldridge has been teaching at this school for twenty-five years; I am very ashamed to say that this school is closing. I want to say to all teachers, thank you for teaching children. Miss Aldridge, I want to say thank you for being the nicest Headteacher. I don't want Sullivan School to be closed; I want it to stay open. New King's is a nice school as well, but Sullivan is also a nice school. We don't want Sullivan School to close down; we want Sullivan School to stay open. All children have been working hard so Sullivan School doesn't close down.

**Applause**

AC – That was very well put indeed, we will have to make sure we get it absolutely right what you said.

**Viv Bird (VB) – former Chair of Governors at Sullivan, LA Governor at a number of schools, including Chair at Phoenix.**

VB – I am thinking about your appeal not to make things emotional and it is hard for everybody, and I think you need to accept that this is a very emotional occasion for all of us who have had close involvement with Sullivan Primary School, over many years. I have always been impressed at the way the LA has taken quite a strategic view about education, I am trying to grapple with my horror and my emotions today, when I hear about some of the things you are proposing to a

school that is so well loved, that has pupils that talk passionately, teachers who speak passionately, parents who know how much they value the education this school offers them, under the incredible leadership of Wendy. Wendy taught both my daughters, she gave extra help to my older daughter when she had a brain tumour, and gave her help with reading and it was Wendy's support, she was Deputy Head then that helped us deal as a family with the huge challenge we had. I know what it is like as a parent to deal with situations, and you need schools, not just as schools of choice, but schools that care passionately about the pupils they are working with, who work with the families, with the community, to make sure that those children get the best possible education that is available, and have the choice to go to schools not very far away. They don't necessarily have the option to go in cars, so I would appeal to you as a council to listen to the very good advice, to seriously reconsider, this is a bad decision, it is a bad decision and I look to you for your professionalism, to find a way around, it shouldn't be enough that because the Government has decided on the basis of a consultation, that a free school should take over the needs of a primary school, clearly serving the needs of the local community. I would ask councillors to go back and search their hearts and consciousness's about whether this is the best thing or not.

### **Applause**

#### **Tony Bird (TB) Father of former pupil and local resident**

TB – My daughter went to Sullivan School and was taught by this wonderful lady (WA) she is wonderful

### **Applause**

TB I want to say a few things about New King's School, because I know that very well, I used to train young lads in the evening there. There are two things people should be aware about, it is a really high pollution spot, I think any parent that thinks about putting a young child there, think again. No matter what you do about refurbishing that building, the rooms are really pokey there, it is small and I don't think they are proposing to demolish it and rebuild it. Second thing I want to say is that I live around the corner to Thomas's, it has always fascinated me as to what their interest is in this, I mean Thomas's is an all-white school, all white, I understand you pay £16,000 to go there, I suspect they are looking to get a hand-out to have their fees paid, can you deny that that is not part of your agenda?

TT – I can absolutely deny that

TB – Because I understand you are struggling to fill places there. I think there is another dimension, the issue of a new school in the area, well there used to be a CofE school in the area, St Mark's it was closed down as there wasn't enough kids there, every picture I see of people

who want to go to the free school, they are all white again. If people want a school in Fulham, there are places in Fulham, one down by Fulham Palace Road. So I want to know, what is the position of the Church of England on this and I think people should be deputising and going to Justin Welby, because they're supporting something that is breaking up this school, I don't suppose they have thought through that, because it sounds quite nice, let's have a CofE school in the area, but if there is not a site why steal this one. What it is about for this council, this is a mixed community in this school, they have kids of all faiths there, what they are saying is, this site is too good for them. I support what Phil Cross says about having a plan, someone mentioned that a lot of areas are being zoned for regeneration and there are lots of building happening there, but what there isn't in those buildings is affordable housing.

### **Applause**

AC – Can we just focus on the issue on hand rather moving to housing policy, no matter how important that might be?

TB – These plans and policies are not for regular or low-income families, it is for the rich kids

### **Applause.**

MC – The concept that New King's is a high pollution site, it is in a more built up area than Sullivan I agree, and we have to make sure we can make the best of that situation. We have already over the last five years invested in a lot of green into the site and it has become a lot more green over the last five years and this investment that will come in, will definitely be able to increase that. I would like to address this concept as well that somehow the approach that the Parson's Green Academy is putting forward doesn't support this multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual community education, that is exactly what we are supporting, that is exactly what we are putting forward, all of that and it will be extremely well funded. I would like to keep on the case of the greening of the site for just one second, just to think about the approach that is currently being taken. I sometimes find that I am on a slightly different page to a lot of people, because my role is to see that if it does go ahead, my job is to see that it all works. So therefore, I am thinking a little further ahead than some people are, at the same time it is quite likely, it is quite possible that this goes ahead and if it does, that pond over there could be lost. Now what I am suggesting is that this is the time for people to come together, there are opportunities here and Sullivan as a group of parents and as a group of stakeholders, you hold a lot of the cards at the moment in this negotiation. I'll give you an example here, Phil has said that children from this school will find it very difficult to get into the free school; you are in the perfect position at the moment to make the new school (Parson's Green Academy) a feeder school to the free school.

**There followed boos and jeers from the audience who consider the suggestion a bribe**

MC – You could guarantee places for your children should you wish to have them at that school. Another condition just as an idea, should you wish for the beautiful pond over there, which could easily be retained as a nature reserve, and you are in the negotiating position to establish that. It is the case of working with the people who can make those decisions for you to get the best out of the situation.

**Naomi (N) – resident**

N – I must be the only person in the room in favour of the boys' school, but my question is, I've been looking at street view and I never realised before that there are so many wide open spaces in Fulham all covered up with bricks, isn't there anywhere else in Fulham?

**Applause**

N – The thing is, this is terrible, I don't want Sullivan School to close, but at the same time my boy, my son needs a good school, an outstanding school with really high standards and so I feel that the council has pitted the Church against the community. Like National Government has pitted the strivers against the claimants, the able-bodied against the disabled. It is really unfair that you have allowed groups to be pitted against other groups and also I want to say the Thomas's proposal is excellent they've got excellent schools and they will drive education for pupils to its fullest potential, but I don't want Sullivan School to close.

AC – The very specific question is there another site actually should be answered by the proposers of the school scheme, but my understanding is they have done a very thorough search for a site thus far. You have identified a very difficult issue for all of this, sometimes, people like me in the role I have, kind of have to think about competing demands and competing priorities, sometimes there are some very difficult decisions to make.

**Patricia Hicks (PH) resident**

PH – I founded the PRAR, I am now 84 and have retired. I have heard some very good points tonight. I wonder if you were not able to clear this site for an 800-place secondary school, would you be able or unable to proceed with your amalgamations. Secondly if you do shoehorn 800 secondary school pupils up to the age of nineteen on this very small site, will you be compensating residents with reduced council tax?

**Applause**



AC – I definitely can't answer the second question. The first question, which is a very good question, not that the second wasn't, the answer would be that the proposal the council is making is not predicated on the free school proposal. The proposal the council is making is based, fundamentally, on the issue we have going forward about having sustainable primary schools in the area and the issue of spare places that my colleague Ian, has explained.

### **Emily Gennochio (EG) Teacher – Sullivan School**

EG – I am strongly, deeply, with every fibre of my being opposed to this proposal. My vocation as a teacher drives me to provide the best care and education for children at our school. I believe that Sullivan is a rare gem, a precious place for all children in Fulham.

### **Applause**

EG – I fully understand the realities of the ever changing, complex world in which we live, but making a decision based on political agendas and out of date retrospective data is not good enough for the children in our school

### **Applause**

EG – It is my professional duty to protect the best interests of our children and to ensure that they received the best education, an education they deserve

### **Applause**

EG – Therefore, it interested me to see that on page two of the proposal document it states, that the new school will give: 'all pupils a better quality education'. If I were convinced, without doubt, that our children would receive a better quality of education, in a new school, I would open the cage doors and let our little birds fly. Until I am convinced, I will not be swayed. My question is to Councillor Cooney, can you tell us, and please give us specific examples backed up with real numbers, not just vague aspirations, how the new school will provide better education for our children, although we have been told this is not a proposal based on standards, but on economics, the families and children of Fulham deserve to know that their futures are safe and will not be sacrificed.

### **Applause**

GC – First of all this is a consultation so I am listening and I have heard what you have to say. Erm your question about whether er I believe this proposal could provide a better education

### **Jeers from the audience**

EG – My question is can you tell us, as stated in the proposal document, give us specific examples, backed up with real numbers and not just vague aspirations, how the new school will provide a better education for all pupils

GC – Well ok, first of all, there is the much-disputed fact that it would cost £6M in order to

**There is a lot of disquiet in the audience as GC does not appear to be answering the question or does not appear to have understood it**

GC – I can only give, we are saying we would give at least £2M for this new academy

**The audience re-iterate that GC is not answering the question**

GC – You asked me for figures

EG – I asked you for figures to explain to us how the education you are proposing to provide, will be better, what about it will be better, and back that up please, quantitatively

GC - OK erm, I think you need to give me an example

**This leads to jeers in the audience**

GC – I am sorry, give me an example

MC – Do you, can I, just take the question

GC – You’ve got to bear with me I am trying to answer your question

EG – I understand you are trying to answer it, yes Cllr Cooney

MC – I am happy to answer it

**The audience call for GC to answer the question**

GC – I want to answer this, I really want to answer it

EG – How will it be better?

GC – I need a bit of guidance

AC- Just to be fair to everybody, we have run out of time

**Audience jeers and boos**

GC – I am happy to answer, I want to answer.

AC – I am just making the point that the question will be answered, if people are quiet, then I wanted to fit in that gentleman, who has been waiting throughout the evening. I am first going to ask Cllr Cooney to answer the question, and then I am going to ask Miles Chester to add to it.

GC – You want exact figures, but my issue is that we can provide evidence that this will reduce the running costs ok

**The audience state that that was not the question or the figures that were asked for.**

GC – It is a fact that a two-form entry school would, it is better. You know my position is I am a councillor, I represent the residents and I think about the tax payer as well, right, so this is why economies come into it, so everyone who lives here would be a tax payer, so you have to think about how your money would be used most effectively, ok. This lady in the front row (Naomi) is absolutely right, I can't, I don't have the exact number for a specific

EG - I am asking how the education will be improved

GC – Ok I can give you lots of examples of how the education could be improved, I did try to do that to begin with, people need to listen, if you want answers you need to listen. So some of the three, the main things I would say if this were to go ahead, what I envision, is as I mentioned earlier, a superior, inclusive school, inclusivity would be, with multi-sensory, state of the art resources

**Member of the audience states that Sullivan has a multi-sensory room**

GC – You do have a sensory, you do have multi-sensory resources, I am talking about opportunities that no school has, that you could get, with this investment, so, so, we have as I mentioned this lift, which would be accessible for everyone

**At this point the audience laugh**

GC – no, no I am sorry, the lift which would be part of the resources for special educational needs, the multi-sensory room, all the resources, brand new resources that no other school has, an outside greenhouse, junior science lab, specialist rooms, with specialist resources, which schools do not, other schools do not have the opportunity of having unless it is

**The audience ask if GC has been to Sullivan as the school has many of the things she is outlining**

GC – Yes I have been round, twice, I have already said you have many of the things here, we are talking about first class resources that we could provide in this academy, this is one example to do with inclusion

EG – Could you outline some of the resources you are talking about, but haven't seen at Sullivan?

**AC calls a halt to the question, which leads to unhappiness in the audience.**

GC – I am very happy to put all of this in writing, with more specific examples including figures.

MC – If I could just answer the question very quickly because I think it is an important question, and you are absolutely right in highlighting your professional duty to make sure that all of these children have the best possible education, and the school has a sustainable future and I would argue that as Headteacher of that school that would be my professional duty too. Now working together we do have the potential to improve on where we currently are, both of these schools are good, but neither is outstanding and it would easily be possible for us to achieve an outstanding school. Now I am not saying that that outstanding provision could only be provided on the New King's site, of course not, that outstanding provision could be provided here, but if the decision does mean we come together, we are going to have to collaborate, we are going to have to work together to put together an excellent plan, we are going to have fantastic back up and fantastic resources, we are going to have a really strong partnership and support from a wide range of different agencies. This is a fantastic school and so is New King's and I would suggest that if you bring these two together, you have the potential of an absolutely outstanding school.

AC- Last question this evening

**Rodney Harris (RH) resident of 45 years and parent of a current student, and of a former student.**

RH – My question is to Miss Aldridge, as someone we trust with our children's education, can you give us an honest, not council, opinion, on how this will affect our children's education, that's New King's children and our children, while all of this is going on, because at no point have the children been taken into consideration. We have not been told how our children are going to be affected, most people in this room have children and you have not told us what is going to happen to their education, while all of this is up in the air. Miss Aldridge you'll give us an honest answer

WA – I certainly will. My honest answer is that there will be, there already is disruption for the children, they are already unsettled, whether they are at New King's or at Sullivan, they are already unsettled. As I think it has been mentioned already, I think we have another year, if the consultation goes ahead, of complete disruption, when you are going to put children who do not know each other in one building, with again, still stating, most of the teachers not being offered positions, there will be huge disruption. Behaviour, research shows that if there is disruption for children, behaviour will decline, there will be a natural rivalry between the children because at the moment we are saying Sullivan is the best, New King's will be saying New King's is the best, it will be a huge problem. You've then got to deal with the culture change for staff if they choose to join the new school; you are going to have a group of children who do not know their teachers. All of the support staff here are trained to do high level intervention programmes, I don't know if that is to be part of the agenda, so the children may not get what they need. I do think you can't transfer what happens here into another school

### **Applause**

RH – So when my daughter comes back in September, what will be the name of the school she is coming to?

WA – I am afraid I can't answer that question for you

AC – Thank you very much for your questions,

### **The audience asked what the name of the school will be in September**

AC – What will name of the school be in September, when all the children come together on one site, as I understand it, the proposal the council is proposing on is to close Sullivan and all the children will be offered a move to New King's, so as it stands at the moment it will be New King's School, I think

### **Member of the audience – New King's School on Sullivan's site?**

AC – That is the answer to the question I think.

AC - That is the end of this evening, but as I have said this is not your only opportunity to have your say. Can I just close by thanking Sullivan School for hosting us tonight and can I also say thank you very much to all of you who came out tonight, took the time and trouble to attend and to all of you who were able to ask questions, thank you. Can I also say I am sorry to those who didn't have time to ask questions, but as I say there will be other opportunities.

**A member of the audience said that whether the council listen or not will be made clear by their actions, as everybody is against the proposal.**