

## Meeting for New King's staff

### **New King's Primary School**

**16 September 2013**

### **Notes of questions raised by New King's staff on the implications of the proposed amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan schools.**

The panel outlining the position and responding in the Q&A session were:

**Ian Heggs**, Tri-borough Director for Schools Commissioning

**Richard Stanley**, Tri-borough Assistant Director for School Standards

**Andy Inett**, HR Relationship Manager

Approximately 25 members of staff attended the meeting. Trades Unions representatives had been invited to the meeting.

New King's Headteacher Miles Chester (MC) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, introducing the panel and explaining that the meeting was to tell the staff where the consultation stood and to provide an opportunity to discuss what it means, what the implications are should the proposed amalgamation go ahead.

MC emphasised that the proposed conversion to academy status was a separate issue that would be the subject of a second consultation. The focus at present was the proposal to amalgamate with Sullivan on the New King's site.

Ian Heggs (IH) explained that the meeting was for all the staff at New King's and that the noted Q&A session would form part of the consultation, as was the case for a separate meeting for Sullivan staff the following week. IH gave the rationale for the Council's proposal, describing capacity issues and the council's intention to provide more choice for parents – schools that parents would want to choose. He said that the Council was very supportive of the academy plan when informed recently by MC, but asked that it be delayed so that the Council could consult on this proposal. The view of the Council was that it should invest in one 2FE School, that maintaining the two schools as they were was not the best use of resources. It believed that it would result in better provision, an outstanding school. It would mean that money could be used in different ways, to provide all the technology needed, for example, and front line teaching.

IH described the implications for New King's staff, saying that the default position was that their jobs are fairly secure. He said that MC has plans for reorganisation of the staffing structure.

Andy Inett (AI) said that all staff had received a letter informing them of the proposal. He explained that most staff were secure; certainly teaching staff, though there would be some overlap in support staff roles if the proposal went ahead. *If* that was the case, there would be more detail and further consultation on what the new structure would look like. There might, in a few cases, be two just posts available for three people.

Some support roles may change, but in general the prospects were quite positive, with most New King's staff going forward into the new structure.

IH outlined the process for the potential restructure: planned new structure ready for January; 30 day consultation period, with staff meetings to which trades unions would be invited; responses would be looked at; structure would possibly be tweaked as a result; then there would be an incremental process with staff starting to take up some of the posts. The proposed structure announced in January would be very detailed.

Richard Stanley (RS) said that this would be a stage-by-stage process. Understandably, staff wanted more clarity, but at this stage it was only possible to give an outline of how the process would work. There are set methods for job assimilation, but the precise detail of the structure was still to be determined, following the outcome of the current consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools. HR services would be available through the process to give any clarification staff might need.

MC said that if the proposal went ahead, the school would remain and be enlarged, which would result in a bigger staffing structure and mean posts were fairly secure, but in some cases roles would be more complex. He emphasised that all the posts would be consulted upon in January to make sure they work.

### **Questions were invited.**

**Q** If it happens, I am wary about how cohesive it will be. Our parents have been unsettled by how aggressive the meetings have been and because of that many have left the meetings. They are worried about how they and their children will get along with their Sullivan equivalents. I know you can't answer that.

**A** (IH) We are in the middle of a consultation that the Cabinet Member Cllr Georgie Cooney decided to hold. It closes on 8 October and Cllr Cooney has then to decide whether to move to the next stage, posting statutory notices and starting a period of six weeks that give a further chance for representations. If, in December, the full Cabinet and the leader take the difficult decision to amalgamate, that is the key time to make the best of this, make something that is even better. My sense from Sullivan staff is that they will do that if and when the time comes. If that were the scenario, it would give the two-term period from January to September to win hearts and minds, to do everything necessary to build bridges, to work on the curriculum with Sullivan colleagues.

(RS) If this goes ahead, the focus of meetings will be different; it will be more about managing the change. Yours is a useful observation, though, lots of work is needed to build bridges, working with parents and the community.

(Member of staff) Yes, I am sure staff would come together; it is more about the wider community, the parents.

(MC) Those meetings have been tough for your parents. That is why we are having an informal meeting for our parents on Friday morning. All involved with Sullivan are fighting this proposal now. Fair enough. If it goes ahead, however, things will start to change. There is a discussion to be had about integrating, about a transition plan, but that would be something for the future.

(IH) Staff would be key contributors to transition planning.

**Q** Perhaps not a good question, but what would the school name be when on the Sullivan site?

**A** (MC) It is a good question. It would be an issue, as New King's would remain open and Sullivan technically close. Let's wait and see what happens, don't want to muddy the situation, as is the case with the academy proposal.

**Q** There is a lot happening and some of it is a bit foggy for parents. We are getting questions about changes of name and uniform.

**A** (MC) If it goes ahead we need to think in the new year about making it work. It is the practical issues and the relationships that count for parents. Managing behaviour will be really important.

(IH) This is very much a long term plan, the benefits would really become apparent in five or so years time. In the shorter term, we would need to plan for managing the disruption.

**Q** Does New King's only get this money if Sullivan closes?

**A** (IH) The Council has a responsibility to do things like keep the schools watertight. Because neither school is oversubscribed, however, they don't meet the criteria for more capital investment, there is a limited pot available for that.

**Q** How does this affect New King's staff? What proportion of non-teaching staff will be lost?

**A** (IH) We really can't say yet, we simply don't know that detail. It would depend on the proposed new structure, which has not yet been drawn up. It is possible that there will be some cases where there are two posts at present, but only one will be needed.

**Q** When will we know? How

**A** (AI) January.

(IH) I must emphasise that this is not a major change. The number of pupils would be the same as the combined total, only changing to 60 in the future. The budget will not be vastly different. This is not like the complete closure of Peterborough, where had to try to find positions for staff elsewhere if possible, in this case it would be the consolidation of two schools on one site, with most of the staff remaining.

**Q** Would staff who didn't get a job be dismissed? What happens?

**A** (AI) Must emphasise again that most staff will be OK. After the period of consultation on the new structure, some New King's staff would be automatically assimilated into the new staffing structure and some may be in line for new positions identified. Where unsuccessful, staff would be given three months notice.

(MC) There will be a very good budget and we would expect to have similar numbers of TAs and support assistants. The restructure will have more affect on other support staff as there will be more people than jobs. Many of the New King's staff don't have too much to worry about, but there will be some changes and there can be no guarantee.

(RS) There is a good chance, but we have to be cautious. In cases like this, you can't be certain of anything until you put a new structure together and compare it with current staffing.

**Q** Is it different for Sullivan staff if, as you say, most New King's staff are safe?

**A** (IH) The default is that you would remain open and there would be no Sullivan. If it happens, there will be change and it will be challenging, but we have no problem with standards at Sullivan - the staff team is good and we want to retain good, experienced staff.

**Q** So, how would this work? If we get a job, we would then move to the Sullivan site for a year with that job, then move back to this site?

**A** (MC) The new structure would be for the amalgamated school on the Sullivan site. It would be the same when the school moved back. It would be a separate consultation about the academy conversion. Moving between sites is a factor in the practicalities, but not in people's roles.

**Q** The plan is that we would move to the Sullivan site for a year, then move back here as Parsons Green Academy?

**A** (MC) The academy would certainly not be in place for September 2014. We will consult on that, probably in the summer term this year, before even moving to the Sullivan site. Perhaps it would be a clean slate, a fresh identity, coming back here as Parsons Green Academy. We can't be clear about that, there is a process to work through that involves a lot of partners. What is exciting is the potential for the years ahead, working with an excellent partner in Thomas's, with better resources and external links that would be really beneficial.

**Q** And a secondary school for our boys to go to *if* this proposal goes ahead?

**A** (MC) We must ensure that our children have a good journey through whatever change lies ahead. We have done a great job on raising standards and that must continue. The main reason for this meeting is for you to ask questions about the process that is under way, but we need to deal with this issue by issue.

(RS) Standards are very important: the key is to focus on that, to manage and support it.

**Q** Wendy Aldridge mentioned dips in behaviour. Even now, the changes may be fuelling that.

**A** (RS) Support is going to be a crucial factor in managing that. HR support for staff is one level, another is to support the leadership team and we would have a link adviser in place for each school through this process.

(IH) There may be opportunities in due course, even in advance of any move, for teachers to cross over and work together.

(MC) I hope that some of the Sullivan staff might start to see the benefits and the opportunities this offers, refurbished premises, working with Thomas's, better resources, professional development etc.

Things will be much clearer in January, but if you do have questions not for here, Please put them to me, Andy, or Rowan in HR. There will be ongoing opportunities to find out more.

(IH) I do urge you to respond to the consultation, you and your parents. Please do contribute, it will be taken into account.

**Q** Are we definitely off-site for only a year?

**A** (IH) We need to talk to property colleagues about spend decisions, planning, contractors etc. Potentially, work could start July 2014 to be completed for September 2015. The aim is to do it in a year.

**Q** Would we be in Portakabins over there?

**A** (IH) We need to look closely at the Sullivan site to see how best it could be utilised. There would be temporary classrooms, but they are excellent these days and the 'decant' and the accommodation would be carefully planned.

**Q** Is there a chance the consultation could be extended? Hasn't that been requested?

**A** (IH) We wanted to start the consultation as early as possible to give everyone the best chance to make their views heard. We gave an extended period of 12 weeks, much longer than usual, because we recognised that the summer holiday fell within that period. If the decision were to go to the next formal stage, that would give six more weeks in which representations could be made. You are correct, however, that it might be challenged. We don't know if it will, or if that challenge would be heard. We feel we have meaningful proposals and have got the process right.

**Miles Chester thanked everyone and drew the meeting to a close.**

He reminded colleagues that they could come to him or to HR with any questions. He said it was important to take the opportunity to comment to Trades Unions. There would be more TU involvement and opportunities to comment in January. He urged them to make their views known.

Terry Broady, communications and information officer for the consultation, noted the meeting for consideration in consultation feedback.