

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2020

**ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor James King (Chair)

Councillor Sufia Alam (Vice-Chair)

– Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education

Councillor Kahar Chowdhury

– Scrutiny Lead for Health & Adults

Councillor Dipa Das

– Scrutiny Lead for Housing & Regeneration

Councillor Tarik Khan

– St Peter's Ward

Councillor Peter Golds

Councillor John Pierce

Co-opted Members Present:

Halima Islam

– Co-Optee

Joanna Hannan

– Representative of Diocese of Westminster

Khoyrul Shaheed

– Muslim Faith Community

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Danny Hassell

– Cabinet Member for Children,
Schools and Young People

Apologies:

Councillor Marc Francis

Councillor Andrew Wood

James Wilson

– Co-Optee

Neil Cunningham

– Parent Governors

Fatiha Kassouri

– Parent Governors

Call In Members

Dr Phillip Rice

– (Church of England Representative)

Ahmed Hussain

– (Parent Governor)

Officers Present:

Adam Boey

– (Senior Strategy & Policy Manager -
Corporate)

Sharon Godman

– (Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy)

	and Performance)
Debbie Jones	– (Corporate Director, Children and Culture)
Christine McInnes	– (Divisional Director, Education and Partnership, Children's)
Layla Richards	– (Head of Strategy and Policy – Children and Culture)
Jonathan Solomons	– (Strategy and Policy Manager - Children and Culture)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

The following Councillor declared an interest that must be registered and withdrew from the meeting:

- Councillor Bex White.

3. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

2.1 Report on the outcome of public representations received in response to the statutory proposal to close Raines Church of England Foundation School

The Committee noted that the decision made by the Mayor in Cabinet on Wednesday, 29th January 2020 in respect of agenda item 6.2 'Report on the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposal to close Raine's Foundation School' was 'called in' under the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution by co-optees of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Dr Phillip Rice and Mr Ahmed Hussain ('Call-in Members').

Accordingly, the Committee considered:

- the Cabinet Report 29th January, 2020 on the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposal to close Raine's Foundation School;
- the Mayor in Cabinet Decision published on 31st January, 2020;
- the "call in" requisition from the Call-in Members (dated 7th February, 2020);
- representations by the Call-in Members; and
- representations from the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People, Cllr Danny Hassell.

The Committee also noted that the decision, published on 31st January, 2020 had:

RESOLVED

1. That having considered all of the supporting documentation: particularly, the statutory notice set out at Appendix 1; the comments and objections raised by

the eight respondents at Appendix 2; the Equalities Assessment (EA) at Appendix 3; and the report on the alternative options set out in Appendix 4, the proposal, presented by the Local Authority and London Diocesan Board, to close Raine's Foundation School with effect from the 31st August 2020 be approved.

In addition, the Committee noted the following alternative course of action proposed in the call-in:

- To determine to keep Raine's school open until August 2021 with a full Year 7 Admission number to allow for the Trustees to explore all options to keep the school open. Particularly to ask for a more vigorous initiative from all parties to find faith school partnerships that can share the assets;
- That Overview and Scrutiny should undertake a review of how the Council supports schools in similar situations and how the process that can lead to closure is managed; and
- To note that should the decision be confirmed that the school be closed there is a 4-week period where specific individuals/organisations can challenge the decision with the Schools Adjudicator.

The Call-in Members then presented to the Committee their reasons for the call-in and above mentioned alternative course of action, and they also indicated that they:

- Felt that there were Interim Executive Board (IEB) failures;
- Presented their view on the Schools Adjudicator letter; and
- Why they sought to keep Raine's school open a further year.

The Committee then posed a number of questions concerning:

- The benefits of a one-year extension/delay, and what could be achieved;
- The impact of sending pupils to a poorly/under-performing school;
- The effect of further investment in a failing school;
- The proposals to merge – faith partnership; and
- Year 7 intake/further intakes

The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People, Councillor Danny Hassell, then summarised key points about the Cabinet decision:

- 1.1 The Lead Member stated that the Council's responsibility around sufficiency planning, and confirmed the reasons for closure were concerned with falling pupil numbers, school's financial situation, and falling/low performance and standards of education.
- 1.2 The Lead Member also confirmed the Diocese support for the decision.

Committee members then posed a number of questions concerning:

- Helping students;
- Other options - working with other schools;

- Lessons learned;
- Next steps – for future of building assets;
- Chance of turning current situation around;
- Current financial status – deficit;
- Support to parents; and
- Previous investment in school.

After hearing from both the Call-in Members and the Cabinet Member, the Committee considered the following issues and concerns:

- Whether the matter sits within the Budget and Policy Framework;
- Ofsted's rating of Raine's School;
- Absence of support for the call-in by Diocese;
- Whether anything further can be done to make a difference;
- Whether the proposed one-year delay/extension will make a difference; and
- Absence of proposal for a merger.

As a result of discussions the Chair moved and it was **RESOLVED** that the decision be reaffirmed.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As the agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

**Chair, Councillor James King
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**