



Statutory Consultation – Public Meeting

Held at the Professional Development Centre on 11th November 2019 at
5:30pm

Independent Chair

Alan Parker

Panel

Debbie Jones, Director of Children Services
Christine McInnes, Divisional Director Education and Partnership
Terry Bryan, Head of Pupil Services and School Sufficiency
Kate Roskell, LDBS Rep

Also in attendance

Councillor Danny Hassell
Patrice Canavan – Executive Headteacher Raine's

Runa Basit, Head of Governance and Information
Farhad Ahmed, Training and Development Manager
Rochelle Clarke, Governor Support Officer (Clerk)

[There were an estimated 25-30 people (public) in attendance]

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair, Alan Parker, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Alan Parker stated that he had been appointed last summer to act as Independent Chair of the Joint Steering Group (Oaklands and Raine's).

It was noted that there was no planned fire drill so if the alarm did sound then the building would need to be evacuated using the clearly marked fire exits.

A record of the meeting would be taken, however, it was not normal practice to allow people to video or record without consent and attendees were asked to refrain from doing so.

A number of those in attendance will have attended one of the public meetings that had already taken place and this one would be broadly similar.

The Panel was introduced, Kate Roskell from the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS), Debbie Jones (Corporate Director of Children Services), Christine McInnes (Divisional Director Education and Partnership) and Terry Bryan (Head of Pupil Services and School Sufficiency). Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People was also in attendance and

would be listening very carefully to what was said and would speak later on during the meeting.

Runa Basit, Head of Governor Services and her team were also in attendance to ensure the meeting went as planned.

2. HOW RESPONSES WILL BE COLLATED

The Chair stated that an app was available for use during the meeting to capture comments in real time which would then be displayed on screen and recorded for further use.

Runa Basit gave detail of Slido, an app which would be used to capture any questions or comments people may have in real time. Instructions were given on how to use Slido. Runa Basit informed the meeting that comments would not be seen during the presentation but would be put up after this. There was also the option to 'like' a question or comment to avoid duplication. These questions and comments would be kept for future use. Attendees were able to use the Wi-Fi at the PDC and if anyone required any assistance they should speak to member of the team.

3. PRESENTATION FROM THE LA AND LDBS

Debbie Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that Christine McInnes would give a presentation which would outline the process, where we are and what would happen next.

Christine McInnes thanked everyone for coming.

In May 2019 the Local Authority and the Diocese shared their decision to consult on a proposal to close Raine's School. During June - July 2019 the LA ran a 6 week statutory consultation on a proposal to close Raine's School and expand Oaklands School for any Raine's pupils who wished to attend. Christine reported that there were a high number of responses from the public.

During August 2019, the Cabinet report on the outcomes of the consultation was drafted, to inform the Mayor's decision on whether or not to proceed to publishing a statutory notice regarding the closure of Raine's.

Originally scheduled to be considered at Cabinet in September 2019, the report was deferred to October 2019, following a legal challenge. This challenge was not successful and so in October 2019 the Mayor considered the Cabinet report and took the decision to issue a statutory notice. The notice is online and hard copies are available for those who would like a copy along with FAQs.

It was explained that a statutory notice is published when, following a consultation, the LA decides to propose school organisational changes. This notice is published on the LA and school websites, available at school premises and notified in the local paper. The notice provides details of the reasons for the proposal, the process and timescale for its implementation and will include details of how the LA will manage its impact on pupils and the wider community. The notice outlines the LA's intention to proceed with its proposal, unless

information is provided that would give good cause for a different course of action and, like the previous consultations, the notice invites the views of all interested parties.

The statutory notice runs for a period of 28 days from 4th November until 2nd December 2019. During this period any questions, comments and or objections must be sent to:

School Organisation and Place Planning Manager
Pupil Services and School Sufficiency
Tower Hamlets Children and Culture
Town Hall, Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent, E14 5BG
Email: school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

All of this information is included in the statutory notice.

Following the close of consultation in December 2019, a report will be drafted to be considered by Cabinet at the end of January 2020. This report will include all responses to the statutory notice along with the LA's analysis and final recommendations for the Mayor. The Mayor's decision will be published after the meeting.

If a decision is made to close Raine's School, then there will be a right of appeal to the Schools Adjudicator, but only for the following organisations: the Diocese and the School Governing Body or Trustees. The appeal must be lodged within one month.

At the end of this process, if the decision is made to close Raine's school is confirmed for August 2020, then in February 2020 the LA will formally notify parents, pupils and staff and begin arrangements for pupils to transfer to Oaklands or an alternative school of parents' choice from September 2020.

From March 2020 there would be no further intake for Raine's School and families who had applied for Year 7 entry would be offered an alternative school on 1st March 2020.

Between April and May 2020 the LA would confirm places for Raine's pupils at Oaklands or alternative schools for September 2020.

July 2020 will be the end of school year and Raine's would officially close in August 2020.

Christine McInnes informed that this was the end of her presentation and opened the floor for any questions or comments.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Question: I have two girls who had to leave Raine's to start Year 10 in another school. What about the impact this will have on their examination results? This

has not been taken into account. They are seen as the Raine's kick outs. What about these poor children? You have failed these kids, shame on you. Where will these kids go?

Question: Why Oaklands or an alternative school? Where is the equivalent of Raine's? These schools are not an equivalent. If I wanted to send my child to an alternative school I would have.

Question: Where is the pay-out for the children who are now behind as they are now having to study a new curriculum?

Answer: Terry Bryan said the LDBS representative will respond to questions relating to Anglican schools. He advised that there are other schools in the borough not just those that have been mentioned. It is up to parents to decide where they apply to send their children. The reason that Raine's may close is because it is not performing as it should and the LA cannot continue to put in further resources to support it.

Question: Has this got anything to do with the fact that the school took in all of those 'bad' kids?

Answer: No, this is not the reason. Unfortunately when a school is not full, which Raine's has not been for a number of years, then it is at risk of casual in year admissions.

Question: It is stated in minutes that 210 children had short term Child Protection Orders in 2017 with many in Year 7. Who was responsible for this situation? When Mr Woods came in he asked for a safeguarding audit to be carried out as he was concerned about this. Was this done and if so where is this?

Answer: Terry Bryan responded that he was unsure of this and would not be able to give a response without seeing the minutes from this meeting. The GB at the time would have been made aware of this but Terry was of the mind that it would have been highly unlikely that 210 children would be on a Child Protection Plan in one year group.

Follow up Question: Then why did Mr Woods ask for the safeguarding audit to be carried out?

Answer: As a new Headteacher I'm sure he would have wanted to know the demographics of the school population. This is not uncommon when a new Headteacher takes over a school.

Terry Bryan stated that it was recognised that when a school closed it was the children who were impacted the most. The LA's officers would prefer not to have to attend a meeting informing families that its plan was to close a school as its standards and pupil numbers were too low. It was unfortunate that the school could not be saved despite efforts from all parties. The LA had worked with a number of agencies from as early as 2013.

Question: Mr Woods was doing a good job, he started to turn things around and we could see an improvement. Why did you not ask him to stay?

Answer: Mr Woods made the decision to leave the school.

Question: We should get preference for other school places over other children because of the situation.

Answer: Pupils will receive preference if the decision is made to close the school and this will give them priority. However, Church of England Schools have their own admissions policy.

Follow on Question: This is not correct as when I called other schools they told me that I would have to apply like everyone else if I wanted a space.

Answer: That's correct at present as no decision has been made on closure. If the LA offered priority to Raine's children now, then it would look to the public that we were pre-empting the outcome.

Comment: Yes, but this is what happened with Year 10. You are gambling with our children's futures.

Response: In January when a decision is made then, if necessary, provision will be put in place.

Comment: That will be too late! This is not fair or right.

Response: I'm afraid we cannot do anything until a decision has been made but as the schools have stated you are able to apply to them now if you wish.

Pupil Comment: I spoke to you and you said that I would get the support I needed, I now go to Bow school and I have had no support. I get called names like the Raine's 'kick outs'. I had to choose from the options that they had left as I had started late.

Response: Terry Bryan said that he was concerned to hear this and would look into this individual case to find out what had happened.

Question: What support is being given to the children that have left the school to attend new schools? Are they being safeguarded?

Response: The children will be supported by their new schools safeguarding policy as each school will have their own as well as an anti-bullying policy. If there are any serious incidents, these will be dealt with. We have met with pastoral staff, Headteachers, Chair of Governors and Head of Schools of the likes of Mulberry school and Bishop Challoner and support is also being provided by the Behavioural Support Team.

When a child is transferred, information on the child is provided to the new school and as well as this, Raine's staff will also support with the transition, particularly with our Special Educational Need's children. If there are any other

parents or families who do not feel supported then they should contact Terry Bryan – so that these can be looked into.

Pupil Comment- all the teachers are coming up to me to ask is Bow better than Raine's. No one is supporting me.

Comment: I spent the whole summer deciding if my son would start Year 7 at Raine's this September. I wanted to support Raine's but in the end I jumped ship. My son has very bad asthma and Eczema and Bow school is by the fly over this is making my son unwell. Raine's was the best located school away from all of that pollution. If my son is not in school I will have the Attendance and Welfare Officer contacting me.

Response: Raine's is not sustainable and was not doing well and pupil numbers could not sustain the school. People were choosing not to send their children to the school.

Question: My grandson goes to Raine's, we received a phone call in September to ask if he was still coming and we said yes. We took him to school and watched him go. He had no timetable when he got in and was put in the naughty room to draw. He was not given a timetable until the following week and there were no lessons until the following week. Do you not have a legal responsibility to teach my child? Especially as we were called and asked if he was coming back?

Answer: The school did have things in place but with such small pupil numbers it probably did not meet your expectations.

Question: Are you aware that the numbers are wrong? The total number of students age 11-18 is 750 as the lower school has not been in use for a number of years now.

Answer: The school's capacity is 1050, you are correct that as the lower school was not being used the capacity is 750, however the only reason the lower school was closed was because it didn't have the pupils to keep it open.

Follow up Comment: No, we were told the reason the lower school was closed was to build a new Sixth Form building.

Answer: We approached the Diocese before any decision was made to consult on closing Raine's and use for a Sixth Form provision.

Follow up Question: How long before the closure was the Diocese approached by the LA to buy the lower school.

Answer: Our records show 2017 as the site was not in use.

Question: At that point you knew it wasn't going to be used, why did you not reduce admission numbers then?

Answer: Because we had not acquired the land at this time. Raine's receives money for both sites so we cannot take these numbers out of the equation.

Question: So when did they stop receiving money for the lower school?

Answer: They are still receiving funding for this.

Question: Why were we not informed of this? This information should be made available to us.

Answer: There are a number of things that we wish we could make available to you. There are a number of agencies and factors that led to the reduction in standards at the school and we accept that we could have done more.

Question: Did you ask Mr Woods if he wanted to federate with Sir John Cass?

Answer: This would not be a decision for the Headteacher and would be for the Sir John Cass Governing Body and Trust to decide.

Question: Why don't you publish all pupil number figures for all school including Oaklands instead of only Raine's?

Answer: This information is available on the Council's website.

Question: Let's talk about Oaklands; the 6th forms of both schools are affected with the lack of service. They're being taught in a school hall with no facilities or equipment as these have been locked away. This is impacting on children's health. Why isn't LBTH supporting them?

Question: Who is responsible for appointing a Headteacher?

Answer: The Governing Body.

Comment: There was no Head for a long time at Raine's.

Answer: There was an acting Headteacher in post.

Follow up Comment: Yes, but an interim one who was failing and then they appointed him permanently.

Response: The Panel were unable to comment on this but stated that the Governing Body presumably felt that he was the best candidate and chose to appoint him at the time.

Comment: I worked in that school before he started and he ran that school into the ground. Mr Bradshaw came in and left because he was appalled at the state the school was in.

Question: Why was there an interim Head for so long?

Answer: The Head was not interim for that long. It is often the practice that when a Headteacher leaves, an interim is put in place until recruitment takes place to appoint a suitable candidate.

I acknowledge your point that the school did have an unsuccessful patch.

Question: Yes and that's when there was a drop in numbers. Do you acknowledge that the construction work that took place in 2011-2014 which resulted in porter cabins in the playground affected admission numbers? As was written in the GB minutes? As well as the death at a school?

Answer: Yes these things would likely of had an effect on pupil numbers.

Comment: We don't blame the LA as the school was going downhill before you stepped in.

Response: We wrote to the school to raise our concerns some time ago but it was at this time the school decided to try and obtain academy status.

Question: Will we also get priority for school places in other Boroughs?

Answer: Once a decision has been reached you will receive priority for schools in this borough and we will work to make arrangements with the diocese to get priority for the two local Church of England schools, one in the borough and one in Hackney.

Follow up Question: What if there are no spaces?

Answer: There are some circumstances where schools can be given permission to go over their admission numbers. We will explore all options.

Question: What about children who travel to our school from out of borough?

Answer: They will be given the choice to look at options closer to home. There are other organisational changes going on in other boroughs and we will all be working jointly.

Follow on Question: What about academies such as Canary Wharf College? Are you also in talks with them?

Answer: Yes we are in talks with academies; however Canary Wharf is in temporary accommodation until 2022 and is already oversubscribed. There is nothing to stop you from applying to these schools for a place to coincide with the end of the school year if you wish to do so.

Comment: You should be getting these schools to give us priority now.

Response: The LA cannot do this at this stage, nor can they prevent moves initiated by parents.

Comment: I'm thinking about my child and planning for his future. He keeps coming home giving me updates and telling me that people keep leaving and there seems to be a Headteacher who is doing very little.

Answer: Terry Bryan said he would speak to parents who had concerns regarding their individual circumstances outside of this meeting.

Follow on Question: What will happen if the school closes in July? What will happen to the children then?

Answer: A decision will be made in February; if the decision is made to close the school then pupils will then be moved to the top of the priority list. Decisions on whether schools can go over their admission numbers will be made.

Comment: You are trying to get our children to go to different postcodes, why to get stabbed? I'm not moving my child to help you to reduce your numbers. I am not sending my child to a school in Hackney to get stabbed because she is from E14. You are putting our children at risk. Hackney is one of the worst boroughs.

Question: Sir John Cass is a Church of England School, why is it that Raine's was a Church of England and multi-faith school?

Answer: Kate Roskell confirmed that both Sir John Cass and Raine's were Church of England Schools.

Question: Bow Boys School and St Paul's Way were both failing schools and the LA had pumped them full of money and they were now doing well and have turned things around. Why can't you give Raine's a chance? Look at Langdon Park and Bow School; they all have one thing in common. The majority of the pupils are from a Muslim background.

Answer: St Pauls Way was one of the worst schools in the borough with police often having to patrol outside. But they have turned this around and have increased pupil numbers and are now oversubscribed. The issues at Raine's had happened over a longer period of time, approximately 8 years and were mainly due to issues beyond our control and included the Governing Body. It was not possible to turn this around in 6 months.

Question: Why did you change the admissions policy twice?

Answer: When Mr Bradshaw was Headteacher we worked together extensively looking at how we might increase pupil numbers. We made the school multi faith and focussed on school strengths such as maths and sports. We made people aware and tried to encourage families of multi-faith to send their children to the school.

Comment: Numbers started going down after that.

Response: No, numbers were going down before this, changing the admissions policy was not what caused this.

The Chair stated that the admissions policy at Raine's was determined by the Governing Body not the LA. In any event it would apply only when a school is oversubscribed. If there are available places then all children that applied would be offered a place.

Question: How are you safeguarding the children? There are a lot of children who have been put in this situation that didn't ever think they would be and a lot of them won't speak up about any issues they may be experiencing. I think the borough needs to set up a panel to go out and check on these vulnerable children to safeguard them over the next few years to help them integrate.

Answer: We have an Attendance and Welfare Officer who is monitoring the Raine's students. These children will be tracked and monitored to ensure they are integrating well. The individual cases which have been highlighted are a concern and will be looked into.

Question: Talking of safeguarding, we went to Oaklands on a visit and I was very impressed, the facilities were great but one thing made me change my mind. There was an incident where there was a lot of shouting about what students were going to do to Raine's pupils and the police were called. I was there and after that I decided I would not send my son there.

Answer: Christine McInnes responded that this was an unfortunate incident and as a result of this a complaint was made to Ofsted. The Police was also called. The LA investigated the complaint and its report was sent back to Ofsted who was happy with how the incident had been dealt with.

Follow up Comment: My son loved the school it had great facilities. We are being asked to go to this school and after that I told my son we weren't going to that school. The Headteacher did a great job of handling the incident but it should not have happened in the first place.

Response: Oaklands is a fantastic school and it has been for a long time I think the school is being given a hard time at the moment and I think this is slightly unfair. The feedback I am getting from parents who have moved from Raine's to Oaklands is very positive. Parents are pleased with the school and are eager for the school to progress. I have also received personal correspondence from some of the pupils who have moved and they are also very happy.

Question: Now that parents are aware of the issues at Raine's, going forward can we not market the school in a better way? My daughter went to Bishop Challenor for two years and developed asthma there but when she moved to Raine's her asthma disappeared.

Comment: I have a daughter who transferred to Oaklands Sixth Form and she is getting on great. It wasn't my choice but she loves it. She wasn't given the choice to go to Raine's Sixth Form, when she went to get her results she was told that she could not sign up for Raine's and would have to go along to Oaklands and sign up for Sixth Form there. She is happy and she says that everyone is nice.

Question: How many pupils have now moved from Raine's to Oaklands?

Answer: There were 520 pupils on roll at Raine's and now there are approximately 220 but the pupils have gone to many different schools such as Oaklands, Mulberry, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch and Bishop Challenor.

Question: John Babarinde, Liberal Democrat Candidate from Bethnal Green and Bow introduced himself and stated that he had sat back and heard many questions relating to safeguarding of the children of Raine's go unanswered and this was a real concern. This is an extraordinary situation as some of the schools that the children are being decanted into are not equipped for these issues that are being raised and this is leaving a lot of vulnerable children unable to speak out. It seemed that there needs to be an extra level of support for these children?

Answer: Debbie Jones said that the LA was proud of its safeguarding arrangements. However, she was aware that however good and robust systems were there could always be an issue that slipped through the net. Some of the pupils here today have raised some very good points and Terry Bryan would look into these individual cases. There were many departments involved in this process. No safeguarding process is perfect and we are doing the best we can to resolve any issues. We are picking up any issues, like the issues discussed today and we will pick up where there are vulnerabilities and try to resolve these. We have some pupils here at the meeting today who have been able to share their concerns but there are many other ways for children to raise any concerns they have.

Terry Bryan also commented that what Mr Babarinde had described was not a fair description of what had been said throughout the meeting.

Pupil Comment- I am rare as a lot of my friends can't speak up as they don't know how to. Unless I tell them nobody knows. Most teachers don't know what to do as they are unaware of what is happening.

Question: How do you backdate the education that she should have been getting? This is not fair on the children and is causing them unnecessary stress. It ruined our summer and has made my son sick at Bow School.

Comment: The Sixth Form results were well above expected in 2017/18 making the school 10th in London in some subjects despite what the children were hit with. Children now had to miss revision classes as they had to go to look at Sixth Forms. The Sixth Form has great teachers and this was reflected in the results.

Question: Why not use this to advertise the school? Why don't we amalgamate with Oaklands and use the Sixth Form teachers to teach across both schools? The progress 8 scores are better at Raine's than Oaklands.

Answer: Because Raine's is unable to sustain itself.

Question: The LDBS should be ashamed of itself. I wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury who was disgusted with what was going on here. You are in denial

you just want to shut the school down for whatever reason. You want to open a school in Bow, why can't they travel to Raine's?

Question: You sit there and nod your head but you have just messed up over 500 children's lives. Why did Raine's pay £70k to a partnership Christine McInnes is a Trustee of?

Answer: Christine McInnes stated that she was unsure what partnership they were talking about. Christine confirmed she was not a Trustee of the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership.

Follow up Question: Yes run by Tracy Smith, you gave them £1 million. Tracy pays herself £120k a year and charges schools £7 a child to join and charged Raine's £70k before the old governors were chucked out.

Answer: Debbie Jones informed that the LA did in fact invest £900k over a 3 year period to set up Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP). THEP fulfilled some of the LA's statutory responsibility for School Improvement. As you may be aware a lot of school improvement now comes from school to school. As part of government policy, LA funding has decreased and this is why schools now make a contribution. This is why some schools will pay for additional services provided by THEP.

It was confirmed that Tracy is paid a salary and any consultancy money earned goes back into THEP.

Comment: The LA Ofsted rating was Requires Improvement and you turned this around. Why not give Raine's a chance to turn things around.

Question: There was a time when a child moved to the school because they were being bullied in another school. The Headteacher then had to fight the LA who then wanted to send the bullies to the same school.

Answer: As you are aware, parents make a choice as to where they want to send their children to school. The LA cannot stop a parent from exercising their right to choose a school and we cannot stop them if there are spaces available. What we can do is manage these situations.

The school is a Voluntary Aided school and so the GB would have made the decision on this and not the LA but legally you cannot stop this from happening but can only manage and safeguard.

Question: But you refused Year 7?

Response: The Chair stated that letters telling parents that places in Y7 could not be taken up was not correct and therefore they were withdrawn in July.

Question: What pastoral care has been put in place for children in regards to the religious aspect?

Answer: Kate Roskell stated that she did not know the details and this would be something the LDBS would look at if Raine's closed. She would look into how this was provided as it was an important aspect.

Comment: We need to ensure we prioritise safeguarding. We have some pupils who are afraid to be openly gay as they go to predominantly Muslim schools as it is considered haram.

Answer: To suggest that schools in the borough are not interested in Safeguarding is not a fair reflection. The schools mentioned are good or outstanding and have a good safeguarding record. The issues that have been brought to the LA's attention will be chased up and looked into personally.

The LA is not just interested in transition but about outcomes also. This is why we have taken this decision.

Members were asked if they would prefer to go through the questions that had been submitted via Slido and were in agreement that they would prefer the questions be answered and replied to in writing.

Debbie Jones committed to answering all questions submitted and posting the answers online for viewing.

5. DANNY HASSELL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Danny Hassell thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and in summing up stated that it was clear that there were some things that were beyond the control of the LA. The GB made the decisions on admissions, finance and academisation and all of these decisions had led to the current situation. Where parents choose to send their children was also beyond our control. It was also beyond our control who applied to be Headteacher.

There were approximately 80 thousand children in the borough and the LA takes their safeguarding very seriously.

Danny Hassell said that he has taken on board all of the comments about the lack of resources, a limited range of subjects, books and school trips. These are aspects that we should not be debating. However, due to low pupil numbers the school is not able to work to the standard it would like to.

Danny noted that attendees wanted clearer information on Raine's options for admissions and also noted the complaints around safeguarding and making information available.

Danny committed to seeking future clarification on how officers were tracking and monitoring Raine's pupils.

All questions would be answered and will feed into the decision making.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING – CHAIR

The Chair thanked everyone for their time today.

[Meeting ended at 7:35pm]