

James Gillespie's High School

Parent Council AGM

Tues 27th October 2015

Minutes

Present : Donald Macdonald (HT), Ian Porter (DHT), Cath Downie (Chair), Hazel Gough (Treasurer), Connie Smith, Fiona Borthwick, Robbie McVeigh, Sue Milligan, Candice Peden, Penny Stuart, Gillian Clarkson, Robert Cochran, Ben Paechter, Sam Paechter, Maggie Young, June Underwood, Andrew Shields, Fiona Giles, Tanya Potter, Louise Baker, Amelia Beattie, Lucy Norris, Anna Christal, Bruce Crawford, Graeme Davis, Alastair Philip, Catherine Lyons, Jacqueline McCluskey, Ailsa MacIntosh, Sandy Howat, Alison Macleod (Secretary)

Apologies : Julie-Ann Sime, Shelagh Shields, Karen Finlayson, Alison Platts, Ian Murray, Neil Findlay, Cameron Rose, Mark McInnes

1. Welcome and Apologies

Cath Downie welcomed everyone and passed on apologies.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (15th Sept) and previous AGM (Oct 2014)

Minutes of 15th Sept

Proposals re rising primary school rolls : Cath Downie has submitted a PC response to CEC consultation following discussion at the meeting. There will be a second paper in December from the council re rising rolls for secondary.

Suggestions for agenda items : resources and textbooks was suggested and will be discussed at tonight's meeting.

AOCB : UCAS meeting – this meeting went ahead but there was not good notification. All emails going out to parents now being copied to DM so he is aware of what has been e mailed. This meeting to run in the future for S5 and S6.

Future agenda : different heads of department to visit PC meetings

Working groups : an e mail went out to parents inviting them to join working groups across the school.

Action : to find out about future Wifi provision. Cath Downie has made inquiries with the IT security officer for CEC. There is a city wide issue that there is not enough capacity anywhere. It was felt that parents should be contacting their local councillors to emphasis the point that Wifi capacity should be prioritised for schools. DM will be asking about Wifi provision in his role as HT. Parent inquired about how to add leverage to enable roll out of Wifi across the school. The need to keep on asking local councillors about availability of Wifi for school use was again emphasised. Discussion ranged re how this will be achieved and the connection with the outside world. A suggestion was made that it would be helpful to have a document outlining what the school requires. How does the school filter was discussed ? The council will not want to put themselves in a vulnerable situation. DM to ask as HT. Filtering will also increase upload time.

Pupil voice added that there are only four computers for use in the library and S6 cannot access internet on their own phone yet a lot of resources are electronic. DM was hopeful that pupils may be able to use their own devices but this is under review.

Minutes of AGM 2014

These were approved.

3. Chair's report

Two main issues - Rebuild and decant, and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

Rebuild & decant : a lot of progress has taken place over the last year. The PC has been very involved in this and has been actively involved in discussions re planning and detail, timing of closures re packing and moving. Within the new building, the PC has given feedback on Wifi, recycling, toilets, signing. The PC expects to go through a similar exercise with the other new buildings coming into use after the summer.

CfE : the PC has been involved in discussions re transition from Higher to AH & mix of old and new systems, a range of topics around religious observance, and school – parent communications.

The current climate is one of financial restraint. CEC is losing thousands of staff. Council tax is frozen, yet school rolls are rising and alongside a rising aging population. Cuts have inevitably affected JGHS. There have been staff cuts and cuts in cover for trips. The PC has been involved in discussions involving these cuts at JGHS. CEC meetings are coming up re plans for cuts next year. The PC will continue to comment on CEC proposals on behalf of the parent body.

Cath thanked DM and all staff at the school for their hard work throughout the year on behalf of our pupils. She also thanked the committee members of the PC, especially Hazel Gough as outgoing treasurer for her work over the years, and all those parents who attend PC meetings and provide input and suggestions.

4. Treasurer's report and accounts

Hazel Gough gave this report. The PC received £1100 from CEC based on pupil roll. Events group raised £1200 from events and Easy fundraising has raised just under £400. Expenditure is minimal as there is no cost for mailing now. Surplus funds are contributed back to school. Bids from different departments are collected and money from PC funds are distributed back to the school to support these bids. An amount is retained for additional mailing but it has proved over the year that this has not been needed. The account is therefore not expected to maintain a significant balance going forward. The accounts were audited by an external auditor and were approved.

5. Election of committee

Nominations were asked for. Ailsa MacIntosh was elected as a non-positioned committee member. Julie-Ann Sime was proposed and elected as treasurer. No new nominations were forthcoming for Chair, Secretary or Communications, and Cath Downie, Alison Macleod and Lucy Norris agreed to continue in these roles respectively

for the coming session, and were duly elected. Karen Finlayson and Shelagh Shields were elected as Events Group co-ordinators.

6. Events Group update

Fiona Giles delivered this update. A Doodle poll has been set up on the PC website for each event and parents can sign up to help at specific time in advance. An extra event this year will be the Parent Teacher pub quiz. The wine tasting event will take place on **Thurs 12th November**. Tickets available from the school office or on the door. Please support these events. In addition it is hoped to run a raffle to raise additional funds and the Events group would welcome any offers of raffle prizes from parents. **Please contact Karen Finlayson via the website if you can offer a prize.** All offers will be gratefully received.

7. Dress code update

In addition to numerical data there were seventy to eighty pages of comments. Senior team sat for four hours and went through all comments and data. This included data and comments from pupils, parents and staff. A consensus has emerged. DM was keen that all groups involved should hear their decision at the same time i.e. pupils, parents and staff should all hear at the same time. A 9am announcement will be made in school during next week and an e mail will be sent to parents at the same time. Many comments with great variety. A lot of hard work and time has gone into the decision. The leadership team have tried to be as systematic and rigorous as possible. There were compelling reasons for all three options. Pupils also have a voice too. There has been some media interest in the decision. A suggestion was made to bring a team together for a press conference. The school must live with the consequences of the decision. A parent asked if this decision will be a final one ? DM suggested the issue is likely to be 'put to bed' for ten years given the year groups consulted i.e. P5 – S6.

8. Textbooks and resources update

This agenda item arose from a previous discussion which highlighted that in some subjects pupils were not provided with textbooks and were having to buy their own. DM has researched this further. What is the position – is it a city wide issue ? Politically neutral view being taken by DM. Surveyed departments in school & contacted other secondary schools in CEC. In CEC secondary schools there is a mixed picture. It was generally agreed by all schools consulted that there is not enough money to buy all the books. Mixed economy – using Edmodo and other electronic resources thus reducing the need to print; prioritising certain groups i.e. those on free school meals being given free textbooks; S6 buying their own textbooks; Boroughmuir – parents buying books. JGHS departments: information re textbook for each year group will go on the school website. DM asked departmental heads to see him if they felt there was a particular issue re books. As a result of a meeting with the head of Maths £6000 of reserves have been earmarked for buying new textbooks. One of the issues occurring is that books are not returned. A new scheme will be brought in where a £10 deposit must be exchanged for a school book. The books will be classed as grade 1, 2, 3, etc. It would be expected that books will only move down one grade in a session without a penalty but that more than one grade difference would result in loss of the deposit. Question asked re the

number of books and the deposit required i.e. will each book require a deposit ? The process needs to be fine-tuned according to the cost of the books. An overall stocktake has been done and books that are tatty and falling apart will go out or used as extras in the classroom. It was debated re whether poor treatment of books should be mentioned in future pupil references. All subjects are now doing the new Higher and the new Advanced Higher. Some textbooks are not yet available for some courses and some departments are aiming to buy these in the next academic session. Parent e-mails were included in discussion. A parent said that the school should be transparent about what it is doing if it is asking parents to purchase textbooks. A clear point to parents at the start of the year re textbooks was asked for rather than a drip feed of issues re textbooks. There may be some departments where when new books become available that a parent contributes to the school by buying a copy of the book for the school library. These books could then be managed by the school librarian along with Heads of Department with regard to what books are required and what is available for pupils. All electronic materials will be accessed through the departmental page. It was pointed out that some departments do not have particular textbooks. The school is trying to be as constructive as it possibly can be. A parent contributed the point that feedback on the issue of lack of textbook provision by CEC to local councillors from PC is very important and that the PC should be active in this role. A parent requested that the PC send out an e mail informing all parents about the chance to comment to the budget proposals. A parent mentioned that the learning achieved through written word rather than electronic type was crucially important and should be emphasised. A comment was made about the payment of textbook deposits. The need to pay lots of book deposits at the beginning of the year will be difficult for some and this should be taken into consideration. Perhaps payment of deposits could be spread over the year. Parents were invited to make their own comments about council cut proposals on the council website. The address for this will be posted on the PC website. The date of the next CEC budget meeting is January 21st 2016. **Parents should aim to comment before this date – details on News page of PC website.**

9. Headteacher's report

Parent expertise : Ian Porter (new DHT) spoke. One of his remit responsibilities is to increase the number of young people going to a positive destination after school. One initiative he would like to set up to carry this forward is a short life working group to set up a careers fair involving parents. This would draw on parental expertise gained through personal journeys to their current employment. IP has seen this work in different schools and asked for volunteers to speak to him at the end of the meeting. He can also be contacted by e mailing the school.

Buildings update : the building work is currently on schedule to be completed and handed over on 16th July 2016. Completed campus should be ready to receive pupils in new session August 2016. All staff have worked hard behind the scenes to enable the smooth running of the school during the building work. In particular DM highlighted the PE dept who have spent much time travelling on buses to and from external sports provision. Other staff have also been travelling to and from Darroch, and pupils have known the benefit of a short walk in the fresh air during the day. To achieve the

wonderful new building in these constrained times is fantastic, and thanks must go to previous parents and PCs for their involvement in this.

Bells : fewer bells are currently being used in school and the school has been calmer as a result. The plan is therefore to continue with the reduced number of bells. Suggestions have been put forward about using music in the place of the bell and this will be investigated further.

Use of music : following training for all teachers, this has been trialled by some teachers in classes in order to make learning and teaching more effective.

Mobile phones : the school actively promotes the responsible use of mobile phones and this is working well. In some classes, depending on the context, pupils may use their own digital devices to listen to music.

Staffing : the school has been unsuccessful in securing a teacher in PE, and in Geography and History. These posts will be re-advertised this week. Mrs Westerman is currently off school and is likely to be off for a few more weeks. There was discussion re class cover and DM pointed out that it can be difficult to get subject-specific supply teachers.

DM thanked the Parent Council for their work over the year and also all parents who engaged with the school.

10. Date of next PC meeting

The CEC budget proposal meeting takes place on Tuesday 24th November. A representative from the PC will attend this meeting. In order to allow feedback from this budget meeting it was decided to move the next PC meeting to **Tuesday 1st December** (7pm in the library of the Malala Building)

11. A.O.C.B.

There was a request from a parent to look into provision of Gaelic to pupils who have a taster course at Primary School in P5 or P6 (currently a gap for S1 and S2 pupils as Gaelic for Learners not available until S3. Two plus one idea with languages in CEC primary schools i.e. one mother tongue and knowledge of two other languages by the time they finish P7 is the expectation for pupils in all CEC Primary Schools. This will be supported and coordinated by JGHS as pupils move into the secondary phase of their schooling. **DM to look into possibility of including Gaelic as one of the options in S1.**

Communication : S1 pupil Fancy Dress party advertised for Thursday but there has been no communication from the school that this has been cancelled. **DM to communicate school's plans for Halllowe'en.**

Mr Crosbie (Head of English) will attend next PC meeting to discuss English in the school.

Post meeting Note – Following the previous PC meeting, recycling facilities have now been placed at the school facilitating recycling of waste across the school.