

**JGHS Parent Council hosted event on Capacity/Rising Rolls
June 6, 2018**

THESE ARE INFORMAL DRAFT NOTES, NOT AGREED FORMAL MINUTES

Panel

Donald Macdonald (DT), Head Teacher of James Gillespie's High School
Crawford McGhie (CM), Acting Head of Operational Support, Communities & Families, Edinburgh Council

Councillor Ian Perry (IP) of Southside/Newington Ward and Convener of Edinburgh Council's Education, Children and Families Committee

Councillor Alison Dickie (AD) of Southside/Newington Ward and Vice-Convener of Edinburgh Council's Education, Children and Families Committee

Welcome by Chair, Ailsa Macintosh (AM)

Presentations

DT: challenges of rebuild @ JGHS – attainment levels in danger but didn't have a negative impact. Attainment has risen year on year. Schools going through challenges often do better. History of the school. The school first outgrew capacity in 1929. Again in 1975 – led to the use of Darroch as annexe. Now the anticipated roll is going to outgrow capacity again. GME (Gaelic Medium Education) hasn't led to this rising rolls crisis, however, the numbers in GME primary are growing and that leads to the likelihood that GME will move to another school in the future. Capacity listed at 1300. This will go over the limit in 2019. Presents challenges and opportunities: staffing and resources; curriculum structures; increased scrutiny; managing change and inclusion & equity. HT's job is to ensure performance does not drop.

CM: projections updated every year on the best data available. Retention rate at JGHS was at 80% when the school was scheduled to be rebuilt. High retention rate now. Looking at P1 data to predict S1 intake, based on 2016 birth rates. Results of informal consultation of GME moving elsewhere - outcomes have been short-to-medium-term that secondary provision stays @ JGHS with a plan to grow what will be provided in early years, not just in structure but in education. Draft ready in August/September for Education Committee after that. Edinburgh Council is working on a plan for how to deal with the capacity issues. Ok for space in next session; year after they may use something temporary @ JGHS campus. Will set up Rising Rolls working group with stakeholders – efficient time-tabling, reconfiguration of space, pos temp accommodation on-or-off-site, statutory consultation and funding for additional accommodation.

Q&A

Parent: One option not mentioned is changing existing school boundaries, could they change?

IP: Complicated knock-on effect to all catchment areas if change one boundary that they would like to avoid. Prefer to keep catchment together.

CM: Catchment changes take a long time to make an impact at secondary level. They still have to deal with accommodation issues at present.

Parent: At the moment the schools run for 4 days a week with Fridays/Friday afternoon not used - what about making school a 5 days a week operation?

DM: The other 4 days are longer to make the Friday shorter. It may be an opportunity to explore flexible timetabling. In times of need we must explore all options.

Parent: Will GME will stay @ JGHS short-to-med-term and is that 5-10 years or is it until the Council create a GME secondary school?

CM: The plan is 4-5 years.

IP: In August/September they will have a clearer idea of plans; need to identify a site, will it be a shared/separate site, exploring Glasgow model.

CM: Council process takes time.

Parent: Do GME pupils have priority over catchment area?

CM: They all have the same right; GME is treated as catchment, no school supersedes another.

Parent: Do GME children supersede children on waiting list?

DM: There is a waiting list for children coming into school in catchment. Edinburgh Council sets a deadline that you must register by and there are families, who are in catchment, who register late. All have equal status.

Parent: Why can't you put more students in other years if there is a waiting list of people in catchment who aren't getting in at the upper years?

DM: 1/3 of intake was out of catchment 3 years ago. There are pupils who join later but there is a cap; most appeals are for pupils coming into S1.

CM: There is a policy for S1 intake.

Pupil Council Representatives: We've suffered a loss of study spaces/cybercafe due to space being used for classroom. Could some students be sent to other, lower capacity schools?

CM: The school could arrange for pupils to redirect to other schools if requested but Edinburgh Council couldn't force that.

DM: Would not want to move pupils unless they request it.

Parent: Are there pupils in catchment on the register roll who won't make it into the school for S1?

CM: The Council has a policy that all catchment pupils are allowed into the school and Rising Rolls Committee is there to make sure there's a place for students. There can be issues but there's always an innovative way to deal with them.

Parent: If a child is at PSPS but doesn't live in catchment area, can they register for S1 @ JGHS?

CM: Can apply but unlikely they would get in due to rising numbers. What we think will happen as the city grows is that the cycle goes up and down but they are expecting a potential plateau. There is usually a 20 year cycle where numbers go up and down but they anticipate a plateau in coming years.

Parent: 2019 JGHS will be over capacity; will the resources be sufficient for the next intake?

DM: Resource issue is for accommodation. The number of teachers will grow with the number of pupils.

CM: The 1300 capacity is a theoretical number of what the school ideal holds but at various points in the day there is an empty classroom; there's a bit of flexibility but it's a guide we don't want to go too much over.

Parent: When would timetable for a change be known?

CM: Aug/Sept we will know more.

Parent: Is Drummond off the table? The issue of GME positioning isn't new. GME kicked into the long grass and disagree that GME isn't putting the specific pressure on the rolls at JGHS.

IP: This time we are determined to address rising rolls. The numbers in GME are growing; the aspiration is that there is a primary and secondary for GME - there is determination to sort this by Edinburgh Council and GME parents. What's been said is that we will look for answers but it will take time to put that in place. With a change of Administration, etc. things get put to the side but all politicians need to get behind this and plan ahead; it will benefit this school and GME.

AD: Equal status over consultation of GME. What's coming out loud and clear is that there needs to be a strategic long-term plan. In September we are going to work with people to bring this together and planning for GME development and equal status to deliver what is needed at JGHS. It's up to us to make sure we come back to you with a real plan.

Parent: Thanks for presentation. Service level dips aren't unique to JGHS or across the city. My school year was almost 500 and they got on with it. GME parents, and I don't like separating the two groups, we are all parents and all want an assurance from the Councillors that no child within the catchment area will be denied a place – that would maybe bring people together.

Parent (PSPS rep on Edinburgh Council's GME and Capacity @ JGHS Working Group 2016): On the Working Group the primary thing we wanted to make sure was that Darroch could still be used, everyone could continue to go to JGHS. The other thing missing was a report back from the Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG). We still haven't had the report. Has anything moved forward with using Darroch?

CM: After the Working Group, Boroughmuir HS and JGHS looked at using Darroch as extra capacity but they got to the point that, for various reasons, it just wasn't going to work and that's when they started looking at other options. Perhaps that process and how we got there hasn't been communicated back as well as it could have been. Darroch could still be a possibility but it would take a while to get it ready.

Daniel Johnston MSP: I'd like to establish some bottom lines. Timelines show that by 2022 JGHS well over capacity; at what point do we go 'there is the red line and what are the implications?' And secondly for Cllrs – for additional buildings, work in a timeline of 3-4 years for new building and we will reach critical point for plans to be in place to meet the challenging figures.

CM: We need to look at temporary solutions to meet rising rolls or extension. An extension doesn't take as long to build; could easily do within a 2 year period. Something on or off site.

DM: In terms of the red line, we will be there in 2019 – we will need additional accommodation and/or reconfigure of existing building.

Parent: Better long term planning is needed. I have a child at Sciennes where there are large year groups and parents knew of rising rolls and Edinburgh Council has known of rising rolls for years. I'm frustrated by this; parents would welcome something in writing about confirmation of pupils being allowed into JGHS.

DM: We will manage; there are compromises, some spaces are being transformed to teaching spaces. It will be challenging but we have to work through that and look to long term solutions. It's not ideal but curriculum isn't changing due to accommodation. A little more planning around this is needed.

Parent: Our own pupils at JGHS are saying they are already out of space.

DM: If we have temp accommodation on site this takes planning and time.

Parent: Lived in Edinburgh for 20 years; aware that Gaelic is a benefit to the capital of Scotland and hosting the Gaelic language seems relevant to me living in the city. Hear that people feel they are being elbowed out. There was a consultation in 2009 which discussed roll predictions, pre-2009 these figures have been known and it's not new. The decision made to open a new feeder primary before this new building was conceived. GME is a unit that needs to move when it's strong enough. There should be criteria in place that it moves when it's strong enough. Sounds like the school should grow in a required, planned way.

AD: Whether you are GME or not – how do you maximise the working group; Edinburgh Council is looking at connections with what Crawford is delivering in September. We need to be confident GME will be in a strong place to have its own school and equality for all our learning.

Parent: I'm worried as a taxpayer that a lot of Edinburgh Council time is looking at this whole thing from just a GME perspective and it's a difficult amount of time spent on just GME education. What about children at primary school who aren't living in catchment anymore? Sciennes have early years in rented accommodation; then they move out of catchment. Does Edinburgh Council keep stats of what children are out of catchment at primary?

CM: You have to live in catchment in February to register in S1. Same thing happens here and at other schools re living in rented accommodation and then their addresses change.

Parent: Some parents seek GME education to get access to JGHS.

CM: Not clear on that. Council does what they can to ensure pupils are in catchment.

Parent: I have a child here and at PSPS – work in NHS and public resources. Solutions include flexible timetabling. What do the staff and pupils think about it – does it make a difference in timetabling? 6th form type of college – is that model on the table?

DM: Had informal discussions with some staff to get a feel re flexible timetable; haven't taken it further. New pupil council – that's a discussion to have with them, using additional capacity in a

local school, more efficient use of resources. In Edinburgh 6th form college was discussed, what was implemented was 6th year students travelling so collaborating for pupils to take Highers in other schools.

Parent: People are moving into catchment for a year but their children stay on in the school. GME is adding to the pinch point. Concern I have is when children are saying their education is getting affected. Are we looking at moving GME to Tynecastle?

CM: If pupils can prove they live in catchment in Feb before you start S1 and register you can get in to that school. Edinburgh Council would have to do citywide statutory consultation on the policy of looking at pupils in catchment.

DM: About 100 GME pupils here; also 300-350 non-catchment pupils. Edinburgh council policy is that if you live out-with the catchment after you've already started S1, children can stay in the school. Relocating the GME kids or out-of-catchment pupils isn't a possibility. Edinburgh schools getting full and Tynecastle will be full by 2022.

IP: No point in short term fixes or moving the problem to another school. What we need to do now is future proof schools. We need to leave room for them to expand. That's no consolation for right here, right now. But the thing is to make a long-term plan; predicting figures is not an exact science; every time we come up with figures they change. Trying to predict all this accurately is difficult to do.

Parent: We all have working group fatigue, GME has more than most. Recognise GME parents can be more vocal because we have bigger problems to be solved; we are very happy Edinburgh Council is taking the time to do this. 1390 will be overcapacity even without GME. Parents are all being asked to work together to deal with the problems that are here even without GME. Our children have the same right to education, just delivered in GME. Gaelic brings in £150m to the economy.

CM: The 1390 number includes GME s2-6

Parent: GME is a success story and something Edinburgh should be proud of. Want to dispel the myth that parents send their children to GME to get to JGHS. Parents are now being told that JGHS not likely for future, yet numbers still going up.

Parent: I hope that Edinburgh Council is, in terms of bilingual education, liaising with other authorities to establish the secondary schools (experience from Wales, Ireland, etc.) Re original planning for new school – been involved in a number of HUB projects and schools; a number of schools have extension plans in place for future use. Has one been created here?

CM: No, because of the urban site limitations. The latest schools being designed in Craigmillar will have – they are building that with extension hubs. This site (JGHS) had a controversial planning process.

IP: These are sensitive areas, but the local community campaigned against larger buildings and against a third floor being put in.

Parent: I believe as a non GME parent that GME has added a huge amount to this school and I will be sad when it moves out. Question I have is that Donald has mentioned that with planning and time we can address these issues. What other resources will Edinburgh Council make available to the school?

CM: Working group with senior management team will work with the school. Donald will liaise with colleagues to increase staff and ask for resources.

IP: We should watch that we have the right amount of staff.

CM: Looking to future – do we have enough staff? Probably not. The population across the city is growing.

Parent: Striking divide between GME and non-GME – this is an issue going forward. Children at PSPS are aware of divide. This makes me sad to think there's an environment of divide and creates anxiety and tension. The more anxiety about rolls, the more the divide will grow and this is disappointing and as much of a concern as capacity. We should learn from our children and work together.

DM: Thank you for the plea for unity. We are talking about capacity – there are issues with or without GME. There is no division here at school between the pupils.

Parent: Let's all work together to seek a solution – we need to be careful that we do not use problematic language. These are young people who have the right to an equal education.

Parent: At JG primary – our children have temporary units because of rising rolls there but I don't want my children to spend primary and then secondary in temporary units. Want them to be part of the building and part of school life and want permanent solutions not temporary units.

CM: It's not ideal; we take every opportunity to get rid of the temp units but they are sometimes necessary.

Parent: Darroch was explored and nothing came from it.

CM: This is still being looked at but won't be deliverable by 2019.

Parent: In September - there will be a temporary solution in the short term, but a permanent solution in the planning?

CM: Yes

Parent: The problem is the success of the city of Edinburgh. All schools will be over capacity, we need a program of strategic consultation across the board by people who know the real solution. The waste of money on temp buildings is needless. Edinburgh Council must implement a permanent long term solution.

CM: That's what we want to happen as well.

Parent: There should be better thinking for the schools across the city.

CM: We are looking across the city, at the problems, but to build on a site we need planning permission and we have no guarantee we could obtain it. It was difficult to get this building in this area and there is a process to go through.

Parent: Work at the University and we are experiencing a lot of growth as well. Do the resources you are playing with include the funds/teachers/timetabling – there was mention of a 5 day week and there could be a mixture of ratios of resources?

CM: These are all things we've looked at and will be looking at.

DM: I've had some exploratory conversations – it's an option we will explore. The staffing side of it – I was reassured by the positive responses but changes would raise issues with contracts, etc. but we can explore it.

Parent: Myth that parents choose GME to get JGHS. We were emphatically told that our children at GME (now early in primary) would not go to JGHS. Boroughmuir was over-capacity before it was opened. Is there intention within Edinburgh Council to build new schools? Some of the closed schools should be retained but are sold off.

IP: It's more difficult to work with existing school expansion than to build new schools.

CM: We are about to commission 3 new primary schools; one won't have expansion policy as there's no room. The other 2 will have expansion policy. Doing the same with high schools where we are able. It's not always possible.

IP: Other issues are social areas. Don't know if a social area is big enough to start with, to deal with expansion.

Parent: A bit more light has been shown. I have to say that as a non-GME parent I don't like the way GME is perceived as separate because we live in an integrated society in Scotland; at the previous GME/Capacity Working Group we met to have a chinwag and work together. This is a multifaceted issue.

AM: Thanks to all.