

Gordon Primary Parent Council Meeting & AGM 14 October 2021

Minutes from Meeting

Please see Action Points in bold

1. Apologies and Present

Present: Alan Macpherson (Chair); Neil Stirling (Treasurer); Morven Gordon Duff (Social Media); Joanne Hunter; Stuart Masson; Debbie Ewen (Head Teacher); Donna Crawford (Deputy Head Teacher)

Apologies: Donald Boyd; Laura McNeil (Minutes); Di Mitchell

2. Minutes from the June Meeting

Proposed by MGD; Seconded by JH

3. Matters Arising - N/A

4. HT Report - DE

COVID:

Less than 10 Covid cases in pupils during Term 1

The policy is to 'Warn and Inform', children to self-isolate only if close contact

Some staff absences through COVID testing inc DE

Staffing:

Mrs Alexander will cover Ms McCulloch who leaves GPS in November, until Miss Gelati returns from maternity leave in January

Finances tight in Aberdeenshire so pressure to ensure staff being used as expected/intended by senior management

Swimming Lessons:

School will have to pay for swimming lessons this year. There was a discussion around how the school should handle this.

DE - for years 4, 5, 6 + 7 cost would be £7,200 - should they do 2 yrs rather than 4 yrs?

NS suggested school could target pupils with no swimming experience

DE felt it would be difficult to judge this and so it was a tricky option

MGD suggested parents might be willing to pay for their child; spoke about the value of school swimming lessons from her own experience

JH offered to look at lottery funding for swimming

DE suggested P4 & P6 and booking for these year groups, increasing this if funding comes through

MGD suggested asking parents to pay what they can afford - suggested asking for a £1 donation

JH suggested local businesses including Duncan Taylor may be willing to support

NS asked about cost per child - DE explained the cost is £20 per child

AM suggested broaching parents for this would require careful consideration - how do you time asking parents/funding applications?

AM asked when would lessons start - Term 3

MGD suggested windfarms as another funding source

ACTION POINTS: JH to look into potential sources of funding to support swimming lessons

School Times

DE explained that when surveyed, the majority of responses from the Parent Forum were in favour of 50 minute lunch and 9am start

NS asked if children miss out on physical exercise at lunchtime with only 50 mins?

DE responded to say that we get less behavioural issues with 10 mins less at lunch and argued that children are getting plenty of outside time

Road Safety

There has been lots of activity going on around road safety. P4 and P5 will have opportunities to bring bikes in for bike safety; there has been very strong and positive response; donations to be handed out on last day of term; children have made parking tickets which may be put on cars parking unsafely on the avenue and around the school; police

presence makes a difference to road-user behaviour; archway on the avenue is a constant source of concern

AM suggested pedestrians should be given right of way on avenue

JH noted that historically, parents and pupils have been discouraged from using the arch

MGD remarked that road safety prefects are empowered; suggested double yellow lines could be reinstated on the avenue?

DE pointed out that there had been a meeting including local councillors, so there is a consultation going on

NS doesn't feel the avenue should be discouraged and also have police there a bit later to catch people arriving late and driving too fast; raised an issue around exposing primary children to bad language in the high school if using that route to get to school

DE noted that she cannot influence the language but has spoken with Phil Gaiter regarding smoking around the school routes into school

SM pointed out the importance of putting these ideas down on the Mini Holland consultation noting that agreeing with comments already added to the website adds clout, as does adding further comment

JH remarked that signage around the school should be more obvious to encourage people to observe school

Learning

DE noted that Literacy, Numeracy, Wellbeing continue to be the focus of learning in the school but one area they are looking to improve is local Contexts for Learning

Huntly Community Fund

DE started a discussion around how to spend the money raised by the PC, thanking JH for her work on the application

NS will contact HCF to find out about how to maximise the funding - the school don't pay VAT, so it would make sense to have the school make purchases of materials but this needs to be okayed by funder

JH suggested approaching Tesco to see if they could help with plants

ACTION POINTS

- 1. All present to add comments around road safety to Mini Holland consultation site and encourage others to do the same**
- 2. NS to look into flexibility of using the fund/purchasing materials**

Good News Stories

DE shared some news on the School

1. Education Scotland - David Gregory, Head of Education Scotland spoke with the Head of Service and GPS no longer on a watch list after following the support offered.

2. Portakabin will be removed during October holidays

3. Central heating moving from oil to gas so some disruption over holidays and into Term 3; will take 7 weeks

4. Mid-Feb - Summer: toilet upgrade throughout school + breakout areas brought up to better spec + disabled toilet + nurture rooms

P1 portakabin to be moved in summer holidays

All present agreed that these developments were much needed and welcomed the news.

5. Contexts for Learning – Local Solutions - DE

DE informed the PC that the school are looking for contexts for learning - spaces that can be utilised for school activities and/or local sites, businesses etc that can provide learning contexts. Some ideas mentioned included: windfarms, Honesty Bakehouse, Greenmyres, Deans, farmer's market, distillery, farms, forestry, White Wood

JH - suggested 'farm to fork' at Tesco

ACTION POINT - PC to supply ideas

6. Environment - DE

This was built-into the Good News information shared in point 4 - see above.

7. IT requirements – Donna Crawford, DHT

DC explained that the School had recently invested in new tech - chromebooks in P5-7; iPads in P1-4 - and that the ratio of device to pupils was now around 1 to 2 or 1 to 3. However, cables and sockets are needed to charge iPads as keeping devices charged is problematic. DC noted that the total cost for purchasing the necessary equipment would be £319.70. This is half what it would cost if the school had to go through their procurement procedures.

All present agreed this would be a good use of PC money, in line with the objectives of the PC to improve learning in the school.

ACTION POINT - NS to liaise with DC via email to work out the best way to purchase/reimburse

8. Mini Holland - SM

SM shared his screen and showed all present the activity on the consultation website. There are currently 93 comments. Many comments are centred around the school area. SM impressed the point that they had the ear of decision makers in the council and that this represented the best opportunity we have had to make changes to road safety and traffic systems in Huntly that have been discussed for over 30 years. To do this, participation in the consultation is vital. SM had hoped for over 1,000 comments, but feels that it would be imperative to get above 500. The Commonplace site will be live until the end of November. The project comes to an end in March 2022.

See action point above relating to road safety.

9. Aberdeenshire Council Fund - JH, DE, All

This was discussed under point 4 - see above for action points.

10. AOCB

N/A

11. Next Meeting

AM proposed reinstating the standing meeting date of the fourth Thursday of each term. Dates of meetings for AY 21/22 are as follows:

Term 2: Thursday 25 November 2021

Term 3: Thursday 27 Jan 2022

Term 4: Thursday 12 May 2022

AY 22/23 Term 1: 15 September 2022

Next AGM: 13 October 2022

AM brought the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for their work over the year and attendance at the meeting.

DE & DC left the meeting prior to the opening of the AGM.

AGM - Minutes

AGM Opening

AM opened the meeting with an apology for the lateness of the announcement about when and where the AGM would take place. Constitutionally, we are bound to advertise the AGM 2 weeks in advance. In this case, it was posted on Facebook 8 days in advance. AM noted that the advance timetabling of meetings would prevent this from happening in the future. AM proposed putting a message on FB on 15 October inviting any parents/carers of GPS pupils who would have liked to join the PC or put themselves forward for office bearing roles, but were unable to come to the meeting due to this short notice, to do so by 1 November. If no one else had come forward at that point, the elections would stand and we would move forward with the new PC.

All other members present felt this was unnecessary. JH noted that there had been no apologies and no correspondence along these lines.

It was agreed that no further action would be taken and the AGM proceeded.

1. Annual Reports

- Treasurer's Report - NS

NS noted that there was little to report. The account balance stands at £2, 493. The only expense in the last year was for the cake presented

to GPS staff in June. NS explained that he has completed the questionnaire on how PCs spend the money they receive from the council.

AM said the decision taken in the meeting to donate cables to the school to aid in the education of pupils was a significant use of this money.

Chairperson's Report - AM

AM noted the late running of the meeting and provided only a bullet-point list of PC activities:

In brief then, these are the things the PC were involved with:

- The HT interviews and appointment of Debbie Ewen - MGD & AM
- The DHT interviews and appointment of Donna Cooper to DHT and John Smith to Acting DHT in December - SM
- SM has been working with DE on the Mini Holland project and has achieved funding for new bike stores for the school as well as planning bike doctor days and starter cycling packs (that I think are forthcoming)
- We have been successful in applying to the Huntly Community Fund, being awarded £1,000 to support the purchase of materials, tools and plants to improve the playground garden - thanks in particular to JH for her work on that
- AM was invited to attend the P7 Parade in June which was a touching event, if a bit wet
- And in addition to the fundraising for the garden equipment, we were able to work in support of the School to arrange for mural artists who will be resident with Deveron Projects in the spring to work with Gordon Primary on murals to brighten up the School buildings
- We have also attended meetings with Laurence Findlay and one of the Creative Conversation in June, looking at ways for PCs to support parental engagement and work with Schools as they move beyond COVID.

In addition to this, we have addressed the following issues:

- Cycling in the playground - the presence of Senior staff in the playground before and after school was well received by parents and seemed to make the playground feel safer and less rowdy

- Crossing Patrol provision - this was raised at the meeting in June and was taken up with the MSP for the area, Alexander Burnett, who contacted the Council on our behalf. While provision has improved slightly, this is still an issue that parents feel strongly about. It builds into the discussions around road safety and Mini Holland.

AM ended the Chairperson's report by saying that for the coming year the PC should not be too ambitious in what we can achieve. Our plan should be the same as it was last year: to work with Debbie and the Gordon primary team on areas of greatest need and concern, as we can. AM suggested the PC's strengths may be best placed in helping to build partnerships, to apply for funding, to offer small grants ourselves, and, what should always be a priority - to work on improving parental engagement. It was noted that each of these items had already been discussed in the meeting and there were Action Points to take things forward.

2. Parent Council Roles & Responsibilities - All

Merged with point 3

3. Formation of New Parent Council - AM

All office bearing members offered to carry on in their roles.

Chair - AM; proposed by JH, seconded by MGD

Treasurer - NS; proposed by AM, seconded by SM

Social Media Secretary - MGD; proposed by AM, seconded by JH

Minutes Secretary - LM; proposed in LM's absence by AM, seconded by

NS - TBC.

4. Members Stepping Down

N/A

5. New Members

6. N/A

7. Close

AM brought the meeting to a close. Everyone thanked one another for their work through the year.