

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL  
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2011



Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Head Teacher</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Chair</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Gwen McLeod	<i>Parent Member</i>
Gillian Fitzpatrick	<i>Parent Member</i>
Audrey Gillan	<i>Staff Member</i>
Karen Traill	<i>Liberton High School PC</i>
Tom Buchanan	<i>CEC Cllr SNP</i>
David Beckett	<i>CEC Cllr SNP</i>
Connor Snowden	<i>CEC Cllr Lib/Dem</i>
Bill Cook	<i>CEC Cllr Labour</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the four City of Edinburgh Councillors, Tom Buchanan, Connor Snowden and Bill Cook who represent Liberton / Gilmerton Ward and David Beckett who is a City Centre Councillor but was attending in his roll as Vice Convenor of the Children and Families Department. Ken had invited the Councillors to discuss the budget proposals being put forward by the CEC and how they would affect the School.

Ken also introduced Karen Traill, the Chair of the Parent Council at Liberton High School. Ken had invited Karen to attend to allow her to contribute to the discussion on the budget proposals.

Bill Cook offered apologies from Norma Hart CEC Cllr

It was agreed that the Agenda of the meeting would be changed to allow the budget issues to be discussed first while the Cllrs were there and normal Parent Council Business would follow:

Ken began the discussion by stating that Gracemount High School would be adversely affected by the two main budget proposals that had been put forward by the Children and Families Departments. He explained that the first proposed change was to the management structure of the school which could reduce the number of Depute Head Teachers and the number of Principal Teachers. The second proposal was the removal of the Bursar post from High schools.

Ken indicated that he felt the changes in Management structure that was being proposed would have a direct affect on the Pupils and their learning. It was the Management of the Pupils, their education and well being that would be affected.

Ken had been advised that other Local Authorities do not operate with a bursar in Schools but he believed the work load was still there and the job was being done by someone with a different job title.

David and Tom set the proposals in context by describing the economic situation that the CEC are facing and stating that no decisions on the final budget had been made yet.

David intimated the number of Principal Teachers (PT) in some Schools outnumbered teachers. He confirmed that the reduction in promoted Teachers could save £2.4 million. He explained that where additional PTs were not necessary they would be replaced by non promoted teachers and savings would be made through natural wastage and the use of voluntary release schemes.

David reported that he believed that this move would lead to more teachers in classrooms as PTs did not currently teach a full teaching week. Ken suggested that this was contrary to his experience at Gracemount High and asked David if he could provide the information that showed to him the number of periods that PT's are out of the classroom.

David confirmed he would send this information to Ken the following day.

Parents including Lesley and Ian were concerned with the reduction of experienced staff. They felt it would result in younger teachers not having the same level of support and ultimately a drop in education standards.

Parents commented that workloads would not be reduced and would need to be redistributed amongst fewer people. The reduction of the number of PTs would lead to unnatural faculties of subjects within school led by PTs unfamiliar with these subjects.

The overriding concern for the members of the Parent Council was the impact on attainment this would have for the pupils and the school. Gwen stated that this proposal was a false economy which would have longer term effects on education.

Tom advised that he would make the views of the Parent Council known to the SNP group prior to the budget vote.

Ken concluded by stating that he hoped the Parent Council had made its points clear and that the Cllrs were fully aware of what they would be voting for and that if the proposals were accepted it could cause problems for pupils and could be disastrous for schools.

He thanked the Councillors for attending. Connor, Tom and David left while Bill stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were some amendments from the Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 12 October 2011.

Firstly, under Item number 5; Report from Emma Taylor, Drama Teacher the paragraph beginning 'Ian intimated' was changed from '*Ian intimated that the Royal Bank of Scotland is involved in sponsoring schools*' to '*Ian intimated that via interested Royal Bank of Scotland employees there was sponsoring of certain organisations*'.

Secondly, in Item number 8.a. 'Jenni Scott the Bursar would be leaving the school at the end of the week to *immigrate* to Australia' was changed to 'Jenni Scott the Bursar would be leaving the school at the end of the week to *emigrate* to Australia'.

Finally, Item number 9.b was changed from 'There were no issues from *staff*' to 'There were no issues from *pupils*'.

The Minutes were then approved.

## 3. Report from Chair

- a. Update on Budget Review – see item 1

b. Change in Parent Council Chair from June

Ken confirmed that Lesley had agreed to take over as the Chair of the Parent Council in June. There would be an official vote by PC members at a future Meeting.

c. Catchment Changes Agreement

Ken explained that the changes to the school's catchment area had been confirmed by the City of Edinburgh Council since the last meeting. The area of the 'Murrays' would be shared between Liberton High School and the Gracemount High School with the choice being given to parents where their child would attend.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian reported that he had visited the bank that day. The balance for the Parent Council account was £917.70 with £0.08 interested accrued the previous month.

5. Report from Pupil Member

Ken reported that there was still no pupil member. However, his daughter Beth Gregor who was a member of the school's Pupil Council would attend a future Parent Council meeting to give an update on the work of the Pupil Council.

6. Report from Head Teacher

Pauline intimated that she would report at the next meeting.

7. Police Visit

Ken explained that the planned visit from Alun Williams and Mike Brooks, Lothian and Borders Police had been postponed until the next meeting due to circumstances of the visit from the Councillors.

8. Encouraging Parental Involvement

Gwen indicated that she had set up a Facebook page for the Parent Council to communicate to parents and encourage parental involvement. She intimated that things would need to be included on the page of interest to parents. Gwen reported that she would put

links on the page to important and relevant information for parents such as the Learning and Teaching Scotland website.

Pauline suggested that she could publicise the Facebook page in the school newsletter for Easter. It is not a newsletter that is usually posted, however, Pauline was willing to post it with some financial support from the Parent Council. In return the newsletter would have an advert or a flyer could be included in the envelope promoting the Facebook page.

Ken suggested using the school's email mechanism to advertise to parents. Pauline intimated that the school had 350 parent email addresses. She suggested that Ken or Gwen could e-mail her the wording to publicise the Facebook page and she could send out an e-mail to parents.

Ken concluded this section of the meeting by thanking Gwen for creating the Facebook page.

Pauline to advise with postage costs for a newsletter.  
Gwen/Ken to consider the wording of an e-mail/leaflet to publicise the Facebook page.

#### 9. Consideration of Donation to School Show

A suggestion had been made at the October meeting to make a donation towards production costs on behalf of the Parent Council to the forthcoming show that the school was to present in return for the Parent Council to use the event for publicity.

Ian brought to the attention of the Parent Council the rules surrounding such donations. Donations could be made as long as they contributed to the curricular activities of the school and/or the fabric of the building.

Pauline confirmed that the show is definitely curricular.

Ken asked if there were any issues from members in donating to the show. There was not and it was agreed that the Parent Council would donate £250 towards the staging of the school show.

Ken to liaise with Pauline regarding how to publicise the PC through the Show.

#### 10. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

##### a. Staff

There were no issues from staff. However, Audrey thanked the Parent Council on behalf of the staff for meeting with the Councillors and supporting the school on the issue of budget cuts.

b. Pupils

There were no issues from pupils.

c. Parents

There were no issues from parents.

11. Any Other Business

a. Extra meeting

Ken asked members for dates they would want for meeting in March because the December meeting had been cancelled due to adverse weather. It was agreed that the date of the replacement meeting would be Monday 21 March 2011 at 7.00pm.

b. Parent Council Budget

Ken advised that any unclaimed Clerk Payments for the current financial year had to be applied for by 28/02. He would submit the forms prior to the deadline.

c. Parent Council Award

The idea of a Parent Council Award had been suggested at previous meetings. Pauline suggested that the Parent Council Award could be given in recognition of the success of the various teams of Pupils that operate through the School.

Gwen asked how nominations would be made. Ken suggested that Pauline could ask staff for suggestions and there could be the option of voting to take place on Facebook.

Pauline asked whether the Parent Council would like a shield or trophy for the award. Ken asked if she could provide the Parent Council with a catalogue to choose from.

Pauline also confirmed that she had passed on the Parent Council's congratulations to the school's Eco Team for achieving Green Flag status for the school.

Pauline to advise the PC which Pupil Teams could be nominated.  
Pauline to supply a catalogue of trophies.

d. School Instruments

Pauline explained that the previous newsletter had included an advertisement for parents to donate old and unwanted musical instruments to the school.

Gwen explained that she had a keyboard that she could donate to the school. Pauline asked Gwen to e-mail her.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 21 March 2011. This is to make up for the cancelled meeting on Tuesday 7 December 2010 due to the adverse weather.