

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 20 JUNE 2011

Present:

Pauline Walker *Head Teacher*
Ken Gregor *Chair*
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham *Deputy Chair*
Ian Duncan *Parent Member (Treasurer)*
Alun Williams *Inspector, Howdenhall*
Lothian and Borders Police
Tom Buchanan *CEC Cllr SNP*
Bill Cook *CEC Cllr Labour*
Norma Hart *CEC Cllr Labour*
Ashleigh Kennedy *Clerk*

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Audrey Gillan, Staff Member.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

On page 4 Item 6(b) *'She managed to reduce the school's contribution to £380 with AMEY covering the rest was changed'* to *'She managed to reduce the school's contribution.'*

On page 4 Item 6(c) *FIFE* was changed to *FYYFE*.

In page 5 Item 7 *Jamie Toll* was changed to its correct spelling of *Jamie Toal*.

There were some minor grammatical changes to the Minutes.

The Minutes were then approved.

3. Report from Chair

a) Team of the Year Award

Ken reminded members that the Parent Council had decided to sponsor an award at the forthcoming prize giving to raise the Council's profile. Staff, pupils and parents were asked to nominate groups in the school that were worthy candidates for this award. Pauline then invited people to vote on Survey Monkey as to who should win the award. The Eco Team was chosen to be the recipient of the inaugural Parent Council Award at this year's Awards Ceremony.

b) Suggestions for Co-opted Member

Ken had asked members at the last meeting to think of suggestions for a Co-opted Member for the Council. Lesley informed members she had spoken to her neighbours who had previously donated a Community prize to the School. Ken felt that the couple fit the profile of Co-opted Members as they had no direct link or role in the school but are keen for the school to do well.

Pauline confirmed that she had written to the previous Co-opted Member, Dr Robert Perry to thank him for his contribution to the school.

c) Suggestions for Position of Clerk

This was the last meeting that Ashleigh would take part as Clerk. Suggestions were needed for who could replace her. Pauline informed members that some support staff were returning to the school for employment after the summer and may be interested in the position. She would re-advertise the position as no one had come forward yet.

d) Dates for Meetings next year

Last year the council had scheduled 3 meetings between August and December, 1 between Christmas and Easter and 2 between Easter and the summer break. Due to the weather conditions in December 1 of the meetings was rescheduled to February. Therefore there were 2 meetings each term. Ken thought it was beneficial to have 2 meetings each term for 2011 – 2012. Members agreed with Ken.

He also asked members if they were happy with keeping the meetings to Monday and Tuesday nights. Ian was happy with these days and could also do Thursdays. Pauline felt Mondays were good as there are no other events going on in the school such as Parents' Evenings. Members agreed to keep the meetings to Monday evenings.

Ian asked Ken if the first meeting of next term would be the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Ken said due to the work involved in arranging an AGM a suitable date would have to be considered. It was agreed that an AGM could be a good way of attracting new members and this would have more of an impact after the summer holidays.

Ken asked members to take away the calendar to read and suggest dates for next year.

4. Report from Head Teacher

a) School Management restructuring

Ken reported to members that the school's management restructuring had been shared with staff. He asked Pauline to inform members and the Councillors as to what had been decided. Ken reminded members that Pauline is an Officer of the Council and can only answer factual questions about the proposed restructuring.

Pauline explained that the restructuring plans had been with staff for a month. She had met with all staff concerned and recruitment and interviews for the posts would take place after the summer break. This was in line with the whole authority. The Administration posts would be the first to go August; the Depute Head Teacher (DHT) restructuring would take place in September followed by Principal Teachers (PT). The school would be reducing to its DHTs from 3 to 2 and PTs would reduce from 17 to 12. Pauline explained that she had been allocated 14 PTs by the authority, however, the school could not afford to 14 PTs due to actual staffing costs for each post. The PT restructuring would be as follows:

- PTs in Pupil Support would reduce from 5 to 4; there would be 4 PTs of Guidance, 1 with the added responsibility of Additional Support for Learning, which was a former PT post.
- Maths (Numeracy), English (Literacy), Languages and Science would all remain as they are with 1 PT for each.
- The Social Subjects Faculty already existed within the school and would remain with 1 PT in charge of Geography, History, Modern Studies and Religious and Moral Education.
- Physical Education and Home Economics which both have 1 PT would combine to make the Health and Wellbeing Faculty with 1 PT.

- Art and Design, Dance, Drama and Music which all have 1 PT would combine to make the Creative and Aesthetic Faculty with 1 PT.
- Business Education, Craft, Design and Technology and Computing which all have 1 PT would combine to make the Technologies Faculty with 1 PT.

At the moment these proposals are still in draft and Pauline had asked staff to come back with suggestions.

Bill Cook joined the meeting at 7.15pm

Lesley felt that the Creative and Aesthetic Faculty would be the most challenging to combine and select a candidate for PT who would be able to manage and have knowledge of all the subjects. Pauline explained that the employment rules for selecting a PT for a faculty are that the candidate must teach one of the subjects. Pauline would be looking for a candidate who shows leadership skills to manage this faculty effectively.

Tom asked if any of the PTs had taken voluntary redundancy. Pauline confirmed that of the 2 had taken voluntary redundancy and 3 had chosen to step down with their salary conserved for either 3 or 5 years. Ken explained that if teachers stepped down from a PT post their salary would be conserved for 3 years or 5 years if they were employed before 2001. Ken asked Pauline who would pay for the conserved salaries. Pauline confirmed that the school would cover these costs. Ian believed that this would mean the school would be over budget in the coming year by £10,000 – 25,000. Pauline stated that it would be approx. £100,000 with calculations on conserved salaries she had made that morning. Some of these may be reduced by staff being moved to posts in other schools.

Ken raised the concerns surrounding Learning Assistants for the next school year. Pauline explained to members that the school had been given an allocation of hours from the authority following the Learning Support audit. Last year the allocated hours were 138, for this year it is 80 hours. As a result the school would be losing just over 2 full time Learning Assistants. Tom asked if any pupils that required support had left the school. Pauline stated that some pupils had left but others had joined us in S1 with similar needs and that she had appealed the decision. Bill asked how many Learning Assistants there were now and how many would be in place after the summer. Pauline explained that there were

5.8 full time equivalent Learning Assistants at the moment and this would reduce to 3.8. Furthermore the teachers in Learning Support would reduce from 2 to 1.

Bill and Ken felt that the reduction in audit hours appeared to be an assessment of figures on a budgetary decision and the impact on pupils was not considered. Bill asked Pauline what would happen to behaviour if there was a reduction in support. Pauline explained that behavioural difficulties were taken into account when hours are allocated. Behaviour difficulties are recognised as one of the barriers to learning. With the reduction of the number of Learning Assistants there would be a reduction in behaviour support.

Tom felt that this reduction in behaviour support would have a knock on effect in the community. The spending that was being reduced on education would have to be spent in the future on such things as extra policing and rehabilitation. Ken reiterated these sentiments by stating that the reduction in a DHT would impact on behaviour support within the school. In addition Ken explained that parents had been continually told that the budget decisions would not affect what happens in the classroom. However, this was clear evidence to show that it was. Ian agreed with Ken stating that the loss of Learning Assistants and a DHT would cost Edinburgh and Scotland in the long run. He also reminded members one of the current DHTs at the school who had achieved 100% positive destinations for school leavers through Pathways to Success. He was worried that this would not be achieved with the reduction in staff. Pauline explained that the school would try its best with the resources it had.

Lesley raised the point that the Scottish Government advertises a parent's rights in seeking additional support for their children. She wondered if it would be worthwhile phoning this number.

Tom believed the decision to reduce the hours had gone beyond the budget reductions the authority had decided. Tom wanted to see the audit trail to explain why the hours had been reduced from 138 to 80. He wanted to know who had come to this decision, to what extent the school had an input and the rationale behind the allocation of these hours. Pauline stated she would give Tom a contact email address. Tom explained he would ask these questions in his letter and copy the Parent Council in.

Ian stated that he would write a personal letter to the authority expressing that he was desperately unhappy with the decisions made by them and how he believed they had been steamrolled through.

Ken concluded this section of the meeting to state that the Parent Council's worst fears had come to fruition. The proposals had been put in place for implementation and members had fought hard to stop this.

Tom Buchanan left the meeting at 7.50pm

b) Police Project

Norma Hart joined the meeting at 7.55pm

Pauline reported that the Police link, that had been established with the school and detailed in depth at the last meeting, was off to a fantastic start. A group of pupils with more challenging communication and behaviour issues meet on Thursday afternoons with a member of the behaviour team. They look at cause and effect and restorative justice and early feedback has been very positive. PC Carol Menzies was also due to begin family group work in August.

Pauline explained that she was to sit down with Alun before the term ends to review the initial stages of the project and look at rolling this project out further.

Ian stated that this project sounds positive; however, would this change if Carol had to take action against one of the group? Pauline believed that she would have to charge pupils at some point and Alun agreed with this by stating that this is an obligation that comes with the position.

Norma raised the issue of the Mansion being closed resulting in no local clubs in which young people could attend. She asked Pauline for feedback on the impact this had had with pupils. Pauline explained that pupils had begun to gather elsewhere after school with some consuming alcohol resulting in an increase in pupils being charged. Norma explained that she was meeting next week with the Board and asked if she could use Pauline's comments. Pauline confirmed she could.

c) Exam results

Pauline gave each member a handout entitled *Course Summary 2010* detailing results from exams for S4 – S6 and 5 – 14 attainment. She explained that these results were post appeal and gave a summary of where the school was.

The school roll was currently 640, 650 was the maximum capacity of the school and there was a waiting list for S1. 150 pupils were staying on next year and this continues to increase year on year. She stated that 48% of the new S1 were on Free Meal Entitlement which was an indicator of vulnerability.

Pauline briefly summarised the school's exam results. She explained that every pupil who came through the door did English and Maths to ensure they achieved this by the end of S4. However, due to non-attendees the figure was at 87%. This figure would be higher if these pupils attended and sat the exam. Overall Pauline was happy with the results of the middle school.

Pauline stated that she was still not happy with the efforts and results of the Senior School. Contributing factors to this were senior pupils working in the evening and going out at the weekends. In addition Christmas leavers had increased due to College cut backs. Some Christmas leavers wanted to leave school and had a negative impact on the remaining pupils who were studying. Different initiatives had been tried to tackle these issues and Pauline welcomed any ideas.

5. Report from Treasurer

Ian reported that the balance for the Parent Council account was £962.92 with £0.08 interest in May. The Parent Council's annual payment of £560.80 had been credited to the account on 13 May 2011.

Ian raised the issue as to whether or not the new Clerk should be paid the top of fee of £10 which is currently paid to Ashleigh. Ken felt he wanted to attract someone to the job and a payment of £50 would do this. Lesley was also happy to pay the extra £10.

Ian passed out the *Final Accounts for the year 1.4.2010 to 31.3.2011* to members. They had been audited and signed by both Ian and the auditor. Ken was yet to sign them. _

6. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

a. Staff

There were two issues from staff which Audrey communicated to Ashleigh via email.

'The staff would like it minuted that next year we will be unable to run Rapid Response for the S1 pupils due to the staff cost implications. This has been a good opportunity for S1 pupils to work in a cross curricular way as we should do with Curriculum for Excellence.

Due to money shortages and staff costs we will also be unable to offer the three day activities programme which has seen pupils work in an effective way with the community, work co-operatively in the technology challenge and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of the away days where many pupils were able to try a variety of new activities.'

Pauline stated that these two events had to be stopped because of cost and the lack of staffing to organise such events. Pauline explained that school trips would keep going but only those with an educational value. The yearly trips to Ogwini would be reduced to every 2 years.

Ken stated that this was an example of the direct impact of losing a DHT. In particular the Activities programme had worked successfully for years. Ken explained that he would write to Audrey to share the Parent Council's disappointment.

b. Pupils

There were no issues from pupils.

c. Parents

There were no issues from parents.

7. Any Other Business

There was no any other business.

8. Handover of Chair

This was Ken's last meeting as Chair of the Parent Council. Pauline thanked Ken for his work the last 6 years as Chair and presented him with a gift. Ken stated he would stay on as a member until his daughter leaves. Ian suggested that Ken could be Deputy Chair meantime.

Lesley was now the new Chair of the Parent Council.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is still to be confirmed. Ken would let members know in due course.