

Renfrewshire Council: Education and Leisure Services

Minute of parent council liaison meeting Tuesday 15 January 2013

Present: Robert Naylor, director of education and leisure services; Cllr Jacqueline Henry, convener of education policy board; Gordon McKinlay, head of service; Ian Thomson, Education Manager; Kathleen McDonagh, education officer; Rhona Healy, Rashielea Primary School; Gerard Deeley, Rashielea Primary School; Sandra Love Park Mains High School; Sandra Ross St Benedict's High School; Debbie Newlands National Parent Forum of Scotland; Brian Sweenie Gleniffer High School; Ian Cockburn Gleniffer High School; David Ross Gleniffer High School; Lesley Binning Gleniffer High School; Lachlan Cumine Linwood High School; Councillor Eileen McCartin Renfrewshire Council; Gillian McIveer West Primary School; Caroline Mullen Langbank Primary School; Tracy O'Malley Langbank Primary School; Rosemary Piggot St John Bosco Primary School

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1	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Councillor Henry welcomed all in attendance explaining that the items included on the agenda was in response to parental request.</p>	
2	<p>Budget 2013/14 – Gordon McKinlay, Head of Resources Services</p> <p>Gordon McKinlay delivered a presentation on the education and leisure service's budget. He began by providing an overview of the Council budget highlighting that ELS receives the biggest proportion. He explained that this is the current position and that no budget decision has been made for 2013/14.</p> <p>Gordon provided detail of the break down for the education budget, highlighting that the majority of this budget is for staffing costs. A breakdown of the budget for a sample secondary school was also provided.</p> <p>A copy of the presentation is attached with the minute.</p> <p>Gordon requested questions from the audience.</p> <p>Q. Is inflation built in to the cost for PPP schools? R. Yes there is an inflationary element, noting that in 30 years we will still have good schools.</p>	

Q. Do schools have to pick up costs for long term staff absences?

R. If it is a planned absence then the cost of the absence is paid for by central budget. There is also the opportunity for the Council to pick up costs for schools that are struggling financially.

Q. Do schools get support to cover cost for short term absences?

R. There is ongoing monitoring of budget spend at HQ and school level. If schools are struggling to cover ongoing intermittent absences then we can provide some financial support. It was noted that staff absence is monitored by head teachers and by head quarters.

Q. Do we expect increased costs on 2013/14 budget?

R. It is expected that there will be 1% pay award to staff and an increase in energy costs.

Q. Do we anticipate a cut in other aspects of the budget as a result of increased staff costs?

R. Robert advised that we are unable to answer this question at this stage, however it was highlighted that the Council is committed to ensuring there are sufficient funds for education.

Q. Do head teachers have flexibility in the use of their devolved budget, e.g. can they use the staff element of the budget for other things?

R. Gordon explained that there is some flexibility and advised that if planned and justified head teachers can carry forward budget under spend into the next financial year.

Robert commented on the level of savings that have been made over the last few years and stated that it is expected that the level of savings in 2013/14 will be less.

Councillor Henry noted that there is now very limited flexibility within the budget and commented on the likely impact of the welfare reform.

Q. Will funding from special schools be transferred into the mainstream budget?

R. Gordon advised that children are placed in accordance to their needs. There is no desire to transfer children out of specialist schools into mainstream provision, it was highlighted that there is an increase in the numbers of children attending Kersland school.

	<p>Q. Are children still placed in external specialist provision? R. Education and leisure services have developed a number of bases within schools to support learners within our own provision. As a result very few children now use external provision.</p> <p>Q. Why is there a difference in the cost for teachers in primary and secondary? R. This is due to the difference in class structure in secondary as there is 1.6 teachers to group of children, head teacher salaries are higher in secondary and there is a higher number of promoted staff in secondary schools.</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>School Estate Management Plan - Ian Thomson, Education Manager - Resources</p> <p>Ian Thomson advised that he was presenting background information on the management and improvement of the school estate and hoped to hear the parents' views on the plan. He explained that consideration is given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the condition of the building - the level of sufficiency, and - suitability <p>The school estate management plan includes all education properties. The aim is to have buildings that are efficient and fit for purpose and to have a plan for maintaining the condition.</p> <p>Ian explained that there are issues with the condition and occupancy in some pre-five, primary and ASN schools. There is currently a consultation on plans for ASN schools. A report on the outcome will be presented to the Education Policy board at the end of March.</p> <p>Ian invited a discussion about possible options on how we can improve our estate and opened the meeting up for questions.</p> <p>Q. Are the least occupied schools within small rural villages and would children be moved out with their community? R. No, the problem of occupancy is across the Council area. Councillor Henry advised that the Scottish Government is committed to protecting rural schools and also commented on prohibitive costs for transporting learners outwith their community.</p> <p>An efficient school is classed as a school with a roll of 80% to 90%.</p>	

	<p>Q. Is there a strong correlation between condition and efficiency?</p> <p>R. Not necessarily. Both factors are considered separately and a school might be in a poor condition but efficient in terms of occupancy.</p> <p>Q. Is there an issue with parents choosing a school that is not the catchment school?</p> <p>R. This is not a major difficulty as the majority of children attend their catchment school and the placement request system supports parental choice where possible.</p> <p>Q. What is the cost to local authority for having children who reside out with Renfrewshire attend Renfrewshire schools?</p> <p>R. There is a procedure for agreeing placing requests and the costs is borne by the child's home authority.</p> <p>Q. Is there a procedure for progressing possible proposals?</p> <p>R. Robert advised that when we co-located a nursery with a school in the past, we managed the consultation process in the same way we do for a school closure. The proposed plan would be to adopt the same practice with future proposals.</p> <p>The issue for us now is that there are too many schools operating below the required occupancy levels. A number of options would require to be considered. The prime aim would be to retain a school within its community where possible, perhaps by bringing two schools together.</p> <p>Q. Robert asked parents if they agreed that the local authority should be considering proposals including closing schools and developing joint campuses to address concerns about the condition and under occupancy of schools?</p> <p>R. Parents responded by saying that the authority needs to consider the range of suggestions and parents should be provided with a variety of options. The parents agreed with the economic and logical argument presented and felt that consideration should be given to the 'selling' of the options to the wider parent body.</p> <p>Q. Ian asked about the number of options we should present to parents.</p> <p>R. The local authority should provide a number of logical options with the costs of the options provided.</p>	
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Q. There is currently an issue about the cost to community groups for use PPP school facilities. It is therefore important that in the future the community's use of new schools is not prohibited in terms of cost.

R. Ian explained the letting arrangements and agreed to take note of the concerns raised. It was explained that the principle of new community schools is for the building to be used as a school during day and by the community in evening.

Q. What is the difference between condition and suitability?

R. Ian explained that suitability relates to the ability to provide and respond to current curriculum requirements. Head teachers complete a matrix providing details of the school which is moderated at HQ.

Q. Have the schools that are deemed to be unsuitable in terms of condition and sufficiency been made public?

R. HQ officials know where the schools are, however this has not yet been shared with schools.

Q. Why do we have 5 primary schools in the Erskine area?

R. The number of schools in the Erskine area is based on previous demand and population.

Q. How do you plan for an area like Johnstone where there are new schools which are not in the right location?

R. Ian explained that when planning consideration is given to possible housing developments. He acknowledged that there is a need to consider possible solutions for the area.

Robert commented that ELS will need to consider a number of options to address the concerns about the condition and occupancy of certain schools. He advised that we already have co-located schools, for example Mossvale/St James and advised that this may be one of the options presented.

Councillor McCartin asked if all parents will be given an opportunity to respond to future options. It was confirmed that all parents affected will be included in future consultations.

The parents present commented that the Council needs to accept responsibility for developing a policy with clear criteria for managing and 'selling' proposed options to the wider parent body. Parents need to know what the options/choices are for them and what the options for the Council are. It was suggested that meetings with parents take place in an

	<p>amalgamated school so that the benefits can be highlighted and seen. Parents from schools that have previously changed could also be involved to support with the selling of the proposals. It was also suggested that the budget presentation is shared with the wider parent body to enable them to see how limited the options are.</p> <p>Q. Is there a process which enables the Council to acquire new land?</p> <p>R. The Council will consider a number of options / what land is available within the right geographic area to meet requirements.</p> <p>Ian highlighted that a new build will not always be the best option.</p> <p>Councillor Henry concluded the discussion by advising that the administration is keen to consult with parents and from tonight's discussion now know that parents want the Council to do something about our school estate, give consideration to our catchment areas and for the Council to make decisions around these areas. She said she would like to see a plan from ELS that is logical and within budget. She explained that officers will need to look at possible options and these will be discussed and shared with all stakeholders.</p> <p>Councillor Henry thanked the parents for contributing to the discussion and committed to talking to ELS officials about providing a plan for the school estate.</p>	<p>ELS senior officials</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>NPFS update – Debbie Newlands</p> <p>Debbie outlined the following:</p> <p>School handbook guidance - this will be issued to all members in a PDF format.</p> <p>National parent forum – email addresses will be requested from parent council liaison members.</p> <p>National parent forum conference, 8 October 2013 - a request was made for schools to present at the conference. Debbie to be informed of any school that is interested in taking part at the conference.</p> <p>Minutes from the last NPFS meeting will be e-mailed out.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has committed an extra £1million</p>	<p>DN</p>

	<p>for musical instruments. They plan to set up an instrumental music group and are committed to every child being given the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. Debbie agreed to e-mail out the information.</p> <p>NPFS had a meeting with STPC with the aim of working together to share and gather parental views.</p> <p>Focus group event on CfE – report will be sent out to forum members.</p> <p>NPFS members met with Mike Russell to discuss a number of issues, such as attainment, ICT, Glow, teacher workforce, in-service days and impact of this. There is a plan to hold a discussion with parents of S2 pupils to establish progress.</p> <p>STPC/EIS – Debbie commented on the concerns about those groups joining forces. A further meeting will be held in spring.</p> <p>The Chair of the NPFS attended an event on languages. Whilst it was highlighted that there is a lack of consistency of practice across Scotland it was noted that a range of opportunities are available.</p> <p>Debbie agreed to send out information on the meeting of the group who is dealing with senior phase.</p> <p>Next NPFS training dates are the 16 and 17 March 2013.</p> <p>4 Councillor Henry thanked the parents for attending and for their contributions to the discussion, commenting that this was the start of a process of consultation.</p>	DN
<p>5</p>	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Tuesday 26 February 2013 in St Andrew's Academy from 19.00 - 21.00 hours.</p>	