

Madras College Parent Council
Draft Minutes of Meeting
3 November 2010

1. Present:- Rory McLeod, Alex Slawin, Debbie Cumming, Cllr Robin Waterstone, Hugh Watson, Linda Hardie, Jackie Himpson, Jean Duncan, David Rickman, Ian Jones, John Barnett, Jane Pettegree, Karen Barnett, Henry Paul, Andy Primmer, Charlotte Kirby, Graham Pitkin, Dawn Waddell, Andy Herd, Rebecca Brown, Bruce Sinclair

Apologies:- Jayne Fraser, Lynsey Seeley, Robin Dewar, Olav Darge

2. Elections of representatives

No nominations for chairperson were made; the Rector agreed to chair the meeting.

No nominations for deputy chair were made.

Dawn Waddell was appointed as treasurer, and has had discussions with the outgoing treasurer.

Andy Primmer was appointed as the Parent Council's representative on the local development group inputting to the New Madras.

3. Minutes. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising were taken in the following agenda items.

5. Rector's Report

Maintenance – The South Street library has been repainted after water damage. Peeling paint under the cloisters has been removed. The roof at the Kilrymont pool is now being worked on after a long delay over the summer, with the pool coming back into use in January at the latest.

Staff – Lisa Grubb has been appointed as new deputy head teacher. Adverts are out for two new teachers, one of which is in Home Economics.

Communications – Magnus Lattona and team have worked on a new Madras web site that is due to be launched this Friday. Few parents/guardians have objected to their children's photos being published there. A member of the PC expressed his thanks that this important communication mechanism was being updated. A Heritage group of staff and pupils has been set up to preserve aspects of the old school to take to the new one. As part of this Peter Adamson has been taken on to take pictures of a year in the life of the school for a photograph book.

Development Plan – As expressed in the Parent Forum the plan is to be finalised soon to go out by Parent Mail in the next two weeks.

6. Inclusion Policy

A member expressed his support for the contents of the document, and asked if a few items be considered for possible inclusion:-

Periodic look at attainment by different groups, eg male female, and consideration of results.

A statement that the school values diversity

A statement that the school aims to remove physical barriers for learning (eg for those with mobility difficulties)

Another member asked for consideration for a statement that the school welcomed those who were studying in the school for a short time.

The PC was happy for the Policy to be taken back to the senior management group for final editing along with these comments and those from other stake holders.

7. State of Existing Buildings

Some members of the Parent Council has been taken on a tour of the Kilrymont site before the meeting. Pupils were generally happy, but some run down parts of the school had been seen. One commented on the contrast between the enthusiasm of the teaching staff and the state of some teaching areas and the boys' toilets. Others commented that their sons or daughters avoided using the toilets and that this was a health hazard. The state of the toilets was discussed for some time. This was a top concern of pupils also. Cllr Waterston agreed to do what he could to lobby for improvements. Andy Primmer is to write to Fife Council on behalf of the Parent Council to ask for action.

It seemed that the windows of the school building never get cleaned. Concerns were expressed regarding maintenance and cleaning in the New Madras. The design team are keen to design in ease of maintenance.

The room in which the meeting was held was in good decorative order, but the same was not true for many other areas of the school. The Rector stated that his maintenance budget was all spent on essential maintenance, and he could not afford to address the decorative state of stairwells, corridors, etc. Was this something that the Parent Council should raise funds for? It was reported that the school is obliged to use Fife Council tradesmen for decoration, and that this was significantly more expensive than the private sector.

8. The New Madras

At the local development group the previous evening it was reported that Rider Levett Bucknall had been appointed as project managers, though this firm would subcontract various aspects of the design and build. They seemed keen and professional.

The land-exchange deal with the University was not yet finalised; each will have its own valuers working on this. The exact boundaries of the 5.2 hectare school site are still being discussed, but the firm decision is that the site will be between Andrew Melville Hall and David Russell Apartments. The old building on South St is part of the exchange, with the amount of the rest of that site included depending on the valuations. The statutory consultation on the school move is currently taking place, and it is hoped that the first stage of the planning consultation will start soon. The intention is that these two consultations should overlap so that meetings can be held where people can see and discuss both the planning issues and the school move issues. Parents will be alerted about the start of the planning consultation, and it is noted that Fife Council can now take into account notes of support as well as objection.

A screening opinion has noted that there is no need to get an Environmental Impact Assessment for the new school site, but the design may need to address specific environmental issues.

Some in the town see the new school site as a Trojan horse for opening up a Western development of 1000 new houses, but it is believed that there is no link between the two; the St Andrews West suggestions and the new school are separate issues. There are potential complications in the planning process with local plans and structure plans, but those who are keen to see a new fit-for-purpose school for North East Fife children of secondary school age are hopeful that the planning process will proceed successfully.

As part of the communication strategy notice boards about current issues re the New Madras will be on display in feeder primary schools, in Madras, and at community events in Madras. The suggestion was made that these should comment also on routes to school. Those using the community use facilities in the school are also being consulted.

The New Madras is expected to have an assembly hall seating 500, which will cope with house assemblies and year-group assemblies. It is hoped that internet access can be via the University's systems, and the intention is that there should be WiFi access throughout the buildings and extending into the outdoor areas. A delegation will be attending an RM event in Coatbridge next week to help develop the IT plans.

The local development group has its next meeting in January. Andy and the Rector have meetings with the design team this Friday and next week.

9. 50/50 Club

Debbie Cumming volunteered to be involved with this. Jane Pettegree agreed to speak with the previous lead person on this initiative. The Parent Council was keen to see this re-launched.

10. Eco Club

The School's Eco Clubs are run by Brendan Fox. A subcommittee involving Parent Council members is eligible to apply for funding from the landfill tax. This committee is currently Brendan Fox, Jackie Himpson, and Henry Paul. £20,000 of grants has been received in recent years, and has allowed the production of three containerised gardens in the school.

11. SPTC Membership

This provides the Parent Council with insurance, amongst other things. Fife Council pays the subscription for all its schools. There is an SPTC conference in Dundee on Saturday for anyone who is interested.

12. AOCB

Curriculum for Excellence – Is it known how the replacement for Standard Grades is to be assessed – No. When do current first years make choices of subjects – early in the new year, but with possible re-arrangement later in their school career. How are the first year electives going, and how will they be evaluated and assessed – evaluation is being done by surveying pupils, there is no formal assessment of pupil attainment on these cross-curricular topics. Cllr Waterstone noted that while there is some contention about Curriculum for Excellence across Scotland, things are working well in Fife due to practical support from Fife Council.

University Cuts – If universities in Scotland are pressured in to removing the current first year, does Madras have the ability to run enough Advanced Highers to make up? The Rector commented that the size of the school was good for this, with many pupils taking AH in order to get into universities in England. However, he was keen to keep the academic achievement in AH in sixth year alongside the important citizenship and service to the community that was being encouraged in sixth year. Sixth year also had to provide excellent provision for all learners, and not just those aiming to attend university. One member, who works at St Leonards School, commented that there the International Baccalaureate qualification specifically includes service to the community.

Treasurer's comments – There is a cheque ready to be paid to Bruce to refund him for monies paid to an internet service provider for hosting the Parent Council website. The Parent Council agreed to a request from the Madras Pipe Band for £480 towards pipe bags. The accounts had been audited by Shirley Hill, and the Parent Council agreed to Dawn giving this person a bottle of wine as thanks. The meeting agreed to delay getting new signatories for the bank account for a short while, hopefully to get included a new chairperson.

Lack of Chair – The press will need a spokesperson in the Parent Council to respond to queries. Andy Primmer volunteered to take on this role for the New Madras and the Parent Council was happy to take up this offer.

13. Date of Next Meeting

12 January at 7 pm in the South Street Library. Those who wish a tour of the South Street site may congregate at 6.30 pm for a pre-meeting tour.