

Madras College Parent Council Meeting - DRAFT MINUTES
14 January 2009

1. Present:- Henry Paul, Ian Jones, Phill Williams, Gillian Bowman, Mary Scott, Jackie Himpson, Heather Marriage, Jo Wright, Andy Herd, Muriel Gray, Andy Primmer, Geraldine Wooley, Eric Bowman, Jackie Morrissey, Bruce Sinclair, Cllr Ron Caird, Robin Dewar, Alistair Black, Cllr Robin Waterston

Apologies:- Olav Darge, Alex Slawin, Adam Alexander, Cllr Dorethea Morrison , Alison Scott

Henry commented that this would be his last meeting as Chair, as his work took him away for other meetings this session. Phill would take the chair at these meetings.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last full Parent Council Meeting (October 2008) were approved and should now go on the web as approved minutes. Matters arising are dealt with in the main minutes below or in the appendix.

3. Rector's Report

Staffing

Dr Tomb has been appointed PT Science.

Mr Nisbet has retired but the School has not yet been able to appoint a suitable replacement. Interviews for a replacement are timetabled for 26 January. The temporary cover teacher who was in last week had now left the School. The School was currently trying to re-arrange duties to give revised cover of classes. Concern was expressed at the disruption this issue may cause to pupil's maths learning. The Rector agreed that pupils were being "messed about" but there was nothing better that could be done in the circumstances.

The appointment of PT Physics was still ongoing.

ParentMail

The parents of S1 pupils are now on. In future attempts will be made to get them registered when their children are in P7. An estimated 70% of families are now on ParentMail. Home communications are currently also going out in schoolbag-mail, with a start-of-year mailing by Royal Mail.

Cycle Racks

After a request at the last meeting the School had contact the "Big Shout" about funding, and a reply is awaited.

Care and Welfare Policy

As scheduled, and after the bedding in of the new Guidance structures, the School is now moving to review its care and welfare policies and practices. The Parent Council will be consulted once a draft document has been produced.

Curriculum Support Evening

It had been hoped to run a parents' evening on supporting their children's learning in English about now. However, English staff were currently busy supporting pupils who had been successful in debating, so this evening has to be postponed to September. The other core subject that could be used for this is maths, but without a PT maths this was less appropriate. The Rector stressed that there would be plenty of material in such sessions that would be transferable by parents from English to other subjects.

Greener Printing

The School is piloting for Fife Council a policy of providing more efficient and networked printers but in lower numbers.

IT

The School will move in May to the new Management Information System (MIS) chosen by Fife Council. This is a development of the current Phoenix system. There is no provision for parents to query the system. The Rector supports the roll out of Glow, which does have parental interaction, and this system now features in the forward planning of Fife Council.

Maintenance

As the School is now part of a ten year plan for replacement, Fife Council has stated that there will be no more maintenance of the Madras Estate, save for wind and water tightness and health and safety issues. Members expressed considerable concern as to what state the School would be in by the time a new building was ready, and what effect this

would have on pupil learning and behaviour, and staff morale. The Rector commented that if something was needed for teaching the School would try to get it done.

The New Madras

The Rector was pleased at the way things were moving. A business case is to be presented in June for the new Madras. The Rector and a Head Teacher from Dunfermline are both on a Strategic Brief Group looking at the design brief to support learning in schools over the next thirty plus years. They are looking at current schools, future needs, and notable buildings such as the new Glasgow Caledonian University library.

Councillor Waterston commented that he had not been informed of the Strategic Brief Group. He was keen to move the process forward as quickly as possible, with input from various stake holders. There will be a formal stakeholder group to look at the New Madras, but at this stage the composition is not known. In answer to a question he told the meeting that this group would include at least one member of the Parent Council. This stakeholder group will form the local consultation group.

Councillor Caird is now also involved in the decision making process. A cross-party Fife-wide group is looking at driving the process forward. Madras is in second-equal place in Fife Council's priority list, behind a Dunfermline primary and Dunfermline High School. The options being considered for Madras are

- The status quo
- A refurbishment of Kilrymont buildings
- A refurbishment of the South Street buildings
- A new build at Kilrymont
- A new build elsewhere in St Andrews

This needs to be decided soon. The Councillors reported that the Status Quo was no longer an option, but was there just as a bench mark for comparison.

The current set of options appears to be the same as was decided in January 2007. However, we were pleased to hear that Fife Council has now identified a funding route for the £30 million cost, including prudential borrowing and the selling off of some parts of the Council estate. The current schedule has the second quarter of 2009 for the site to have been identified and a business case completed. The third quarter of 2010 should see the pre-contract work finished and the building started. Construction is scheduled from September 2010 to September 2012, and occupation in October 2012. Discussion suggested that we should not be surprised if this schedule slipped a bit. Again, concern was raised about the need for maintenance of the existing buildings over this time-scale for the sake of the current pupils.

Cllr Waterston suggested that he anticipated the new School now being decoupled from the consideration of the local plan. His personal hope was that the North Haugh site would top the list of preferred options. Fife Council is reported to be seeking to have a single building contract for the Dunfermline High School and the New Madras.

The Parent Council was advised by Cllr Waterston to have representatives ready to attend the local stakeholders group. Andy Primmer, Jackie Morrissey and Jackie Himpson volunteered their input and this was gratefully accepted by the meeting. Once information about the first meeting of the Group is available, the Parent Council will endeavour to meet so that its views could be passed on to the Group by our representatives.

4. Treasurer's Report

There has been little movement in the accounts, where there is £1734 currently. The books are currently with the auditor.

5. EcoClub

The proposal discussed at the last meeting regarding £5k from Fife Environment Trust is looking hopeful for funding.

6. 50/50 Club

The meeting formally agreed that Mary could be a signatory on this account.

The meeting formally agreed that Jo Wright should be the licence holder for the 50/50 Club.

7. AOCB

- The meeting expressed its thanks to Mr Nisbet for his work with pupils in the School. Henry to write to him.
- The Burns supper is coming up on Thursday 22 January 2009 and tickets are available from both school offices.
- An email from the Courier invited input on hot issues in education, but the PC declined to contribute.

8. Date of Next Meeting

This had been set as 11 March, but this meeting agreed to move it to 5 March. The date may be changed depending on the schedule of the New Madras Stakeholders Group.

Appendix: Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

Last meeting: 5. Rector's Report

The Rector indicated that the PT of maths, Ken Nisbet, would be retiring at Christmas. The aim is to appoint a new Principal Teacher to take post as Mr Nisbet retires. – *Ongoing*.

The Rector hopes that in the near future the PC classrooms in Kilrymont will be moved to the third floor in order to allow learning support and guidance into the current rooms and thus bring pupil support and guidance into one geographic area. This is so important that it may be allowed to happen in term time. Today he learnt that these works had been permitted to go to the planning phase. *In progress*.

There are developments in the New Madras. The Council is about to survey all staff and pupils in relevant schools in Fife to gauge thoughts on what kind of specification is needed in a new school. A local group is expected to be set up early in the New Year. *Now expected in the next few months*.

The Rector spoke to the Standards and Quality report that he had just provided. A two-page summary will go home to parents. The full report can go on the PC Website after he emails it to Bruce. The new-style report looks back and plans forward. Three pages of School aims had been condensed to three broad principles in the report. An updated draft of the School aims will be brought to the next PC for comment. *Document on the PC Website. Work is progressing in the School on an updated draft of the School aims.*

The review of homework policy and practice is ongoing. The new diaries and traffic lights are considered important. It seems that a Parent Mail communication that the Rector had thought had gone to parents had not got through. He would investigate. *These Parent Mails were later sent.*

There is the possibility of a parent night on the "A Curriculum for Excellence" developments. *This may happen in due course.*

S1 parents had still not been added to the Parent Mail distribution list. The Rector reported that this should happen soon, and acknowledged that it would have been helpful for these lists to have been finished earlier in the session. *Done.*

Now, at the end of first term, it seems that S1 pupils have still not been allocated a locker. The Rector reported that there had been difficulties in ensuring that girls had lockers at one end of the hall and boys at the other, but that this should now move forward. *Lockers now allocated.*

It was suggested that the School or PC could apply to places like the Carbon Trust for funding for bicycle racks. It was requested that teachers cycling to School be encouraged to wear cycle helmets to set a good example to pupils. *Application now made the Big Shout.*

The School's anti-bullying policy is to be addressed under the "Care and Welfare" agenda. The January meeting of the PC will hear more. *This now on the School agenda for the coming weeks.*

Last meeting: 6. Scottish Parent Teacher Conference and AGM and Area Forum

The PC is a member of SPTC through a block purchase by Fife Council. Their 8 November conference in Holyrood may be worth someone going to, please let Henry know if interested. They are also seeking directors. Fife Council seems to be slow at getting a meeting together of PC reps and senior Council officials. There is, however, a meeting of local PC reps and a Fife Council person employed to support PCs in Elmwood College on 29 October at 7 pm. Members please let Henry know if you would be interested in accompanying him.

In the event no members of the PC went to either meeting.

Last meeting: 7. EcoClub

Good news just in is that Fife Environment Trust are considering giving £5000 in grant money to the EcoClub to develop an area of the South Street site into a herb and sensory garden. *Looking hopeful, see main minutes.*

Last Meeting: 8. AOCB

Events

There may be an interest from current primary school parents about what is coming with “A Curriculum for Excellence”. What ACE means is still being consulted upon. *Event may be organised in due course.*

There was support from the PC for an evening meeting run by the School on a topic such as “How can you support your young person’s learning in X, where X might be English, Maths, or another core subject. Bruce offered to act as a PC contact for this. The target audience is parents, but pupils would not be excluded. This may happen in early January. This will be taken forward by the Rector and his colleagues.

This now being considered for September, see main minutes.

There was also interest in a future meeting on learning techniques run by School staff.

Event may be organised in due course.

Miscellaneous

A member suggested that the PC should write to retiring staff to thank them for their input. The meeting agreed, and the Rector agreed to pass the relevant information to the PC Chair. We will start with the last summer’s retirees. *Done.*

The meeting agreed to register the PCs thanks to Katie Pitman for all her work on the PTA, and last year on the PC. Henry will write to her. *Done.*

It seems that the ParentMail about the 50/50 club had not gone out. It was agreed to change the closing date to the end of October and have another go at ParentMail. *Done.*

Cllr Waterston reported that the New School plans were progressing. *See main body of minutes.*

Given the timescales involved, the meeting noted the importance of ensuring that the current Madras is made fit for purpose. The meeting acknowledged that there had been some welcome improvements to the fabric of the School. The Rector commended the high quality of the new office accommodation. Fife Estates do now seem to responding faster than before on maintenance requests. Cllr Waterston noted that it was easier for elected representatives to respond to specific concerns rather than general ones. The meeting asked the Rector what were his most pressing concerns regarding the School estate. He said it was that South Street buildings were not all water and wind tight. The two Councillors agreed to press Fife Council on this particular matter.

The buildings are closer to water tight than they were, but there are still leaks in heavy wind and rain.

The meeting thanked the co-opted members for their input, both the Councillors and the School Staff. It was hoped that pupils representatives might be involved again.

The PC agreed to support the School Burns night celebrations by £200. *This event is going ahead on 22 January.*

BDS: Amended 19.1.09 to correct mis-spelt name in attendees and add surnames of those nominated for the New School consultation.