

Madras College Parent Council Meeting - DRAFT MINUTES
5 March 2009

1. Present:- Phill Williams, Rebecca Williams, Mary Scott, Muriel Gray, Andy Primmer, Bruce Sinclair, Cllr Ron Caird, Robin Dewar, Alistair Black, Cllr Robin Waterston, Sheena Watson, Cllr Dorothea Morrison, Geraldine Wooley, Linda Hardie

Apologies:- Henry Paul, Ian Jones, Andy Herd, Heather Marriage, Alex Slawin, Jackie Himpson, Jackie Morrissey, Alison Scott, Adam Alexander.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last full Parent Council Meeting (January 2009) 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

The Rector apologized for missing this meeting. The good news was that he and colleagues were at short notice invited to London looking at new-build schools as information gathering for the new Madras. The Rector's written report is copied below, followed by some of the discussion about the issues raised.

Care and Welfare Policy

Work in this is progressing

IT

The new MIS system will be installed during the 3rd week in May. Planning for this is now underway. We have completed the proof of concept for Print08 apart from high volume printing which is now under way.

Maintenance

The work to move Kilrymont computing rooms 107 and 109 is now progressing. The move will take place during the summer holidays with preparatory work being undertaken during the Easter break.

Staffing

We were unsuccessful in appointing to the vacant post of PT maths. The post will now be advertised after Easter. Until an appointment is made Mr Gourlay will continue to act in this capacity. The post of PT2 in physics will be advertised in the near future. This could not be done until the post of PT science was filled and the new post job sized.

New Madras

A consultation event is planned for Tuesday 17 March 2009 at which a group of 6 parents/carers is invited to discuss their views on the design of the new build. The meeting will take place in Kilrymont Road at 4 pm for 1 hour; names to Alan McNish. An open information evening is planned for Thursday 26 March. Invitations will be circulated to Parent Council members from our associated primary schools and to members of our own Parent Council. Information will also be circulated via ParentMail and the local press.

Matters raised by Board Members

Timely filling of posts

As soon as we are aware that a post will need to be filled the procedure for prompting an advert is set in motion. Thereafter we have to assess the number and quality of candidates who apply for each post.

Communications

Systems exist for teaching staff to raise concerns with parents/carers via PTs or guidance. These systems are used regularly.

Strathkinness Bus

Changes to the start of our day were notified to all bus companies well before the start of this session. This was done formally by the Council. We are aware of awkward timing of the bus from Strathkinness and have made

additional representation about this. I am also aware of the correspondence between one parent and the bus company and we continue to monitor the situation. Any pupil who is affected by the late arrival of this bus is not marked late for school.

The current shortage of teachers following retirements or moves was causing concern to parents and pupils. The reason for the delay for the maths teacher was that while a new teacher had been appointed, he had late in the day decided instead to accept a promoted post in his own school, and so the post needed to be re-advertised here. The PT physics absence since last August was due to the need to wait until a PT Science had been appointed, which has recently happened. Another parent had expressed concern about the continuity of teaching, and the Rector has instructed a colleague to communicate directly with this parent. Robin Dewar commented on the difficulty of obtaining supply teachers in the St Andrews area.

A member of the PC expressed his thanks to Mr Pearce, who retired as a physics teacher last summer and who had agreed to come back to the School to teach some classes in the current short-staffed position in the physics department.

Communication between the School and parents was raised. Parent Mail had made a big positive difference to communications from School to parents. The Rector expressed confidence that the current procedures for parents to ask questions via the Guidance team and School Office was working.

A member had expressed concern about the repeated late arrival of the designated school bus for Strathkinness pupils. This bus is also a public service bus. Cllr Waterston noted that it was difficult for the Council to change bus times to suit the changed school start times, but was working on the issue. A member noted a Deputy Rector with whom this issue had been raised at a Parents Evening had suggested that the late arrival of buses was outside the control of the School, and he should contact the Parent Council, hence this query. This member had also written to Fife Council Transportation directly, and received a prompt reply from Malvine French stating that she would attempt to change the timing of this bus. According to an email communication earlier in the day Ms French had been told that this should happen from 16 March. Another member was concerned about late arrivals to School being put on a pupil's record. The original member expressed his thanks to another deputy rector who had changed his son's record from a set of lates to a set of "late due to bus". There was discussion also about the fact that those who were brought late to School by the buses were then refused entry to assemblies, and that this seemed unfair.

Note added later:- This bus was indeed retimed, and started successfully running to the new timetable from 16 March.

The School is awaiting information about whether or not the funding request for cycle racks has been successful.

Items about the New School are noted in these minutes under item 9.

4. Treasurer's Report

The treasurer has still to hear from the auditor about the books. There remains £1800 in the bank, with £200 committed to the recent Burns supper.

5. Eco Club Report

Money was expected into the funds shortly. Bat and bird boxes are being built, and trees have been planted at South Street.

6. 50/50 Club

Letters had gone to parents. Jo is now the licence holder.

7. Schools Directorate Event – Stirling 14 March 2009

Sheena Watson agreed to represent the PC at a similar meeting in Aberdeen on 21 March, where the role of parent councils will be discussed. Sheena is asked to report back to the PC.

8. June 2009 PC Commitments

It would be appreciated if a member of the PC would be present at the School awards ceremony on the evening of 10 June.

Mary agreed to lead the PC team at the P7 parents' evening on 18 June, but needed other volunteers to man the PC stall.

9. The New Madras

Design Festival

A design festival had been held recently with pupils from Madras and Dunfermline, amongst others, meeting to discuss ideas on the design of new schools. The pupils had come up with an interesting range of ideas, including

- a) The importance of natural light in rooms
- b) The link between outside space and inside space, and outside learning
- c) Areas for whole class teaching and areas for breakout / group work.
- d) Rooms that can be tailored for multiple uses.

The PC commended the School/Council for canvassing the views of pupils in this way. Some 15-18 pupils from across year groups and guidance houses had been selected to attend the meeting, giving a range of opinions.

Consultation Evening

On Tuesday 17 March there is a Consultation Evening on the New Madras where there may be six parents there to discuss things. Andy agreed to lead for the PC. Other PC members wishing to join the parental group please contact Andy. Bruce expressed willingness to attend, but was happy to defer to others, particularly those parents with pupils in S1.

Open Meeting

Thursday 26 March there is an Open Meeting on the New Madras. This will be at 7 pm in the Kilrymont Main Hall. The two main purposes of this meeting are

- a) to convey information about where the plans are currently at
- b) to create pathways to the creation of a Stakeholder group.

Cllr Waterston confirmed that pupils were welcome at this Open Meeting. Andy again volunteered to represent the PC. Other members are welcome to join him on the night.

Stakeholder Group

During or after this Open Meeting the Stakeholder group would be formed, consisting of an Education Officer, the Rector, a teacher, a member of non-teaching staff, a member of community services, two pupils from the School's Pupil Council, one person from our PC, two representatives from the parent councils of feeder primaries, and two Community Council representatives.

Andy would be the nominated person for the PC, with Jackie or Jacki being the nominated deputy. It was not yet known if the Stakeholder Group meetings would be open or closed. Their primary purpose was to facilitate communication between Fife Council and the various interested parties.

The Stakeholder Group Membership, Remit, and Work Programme was provided by Cllr Waterston and is provided as an appendix to these minutes.

The PC discussed its advice to our representatives on this Group. The PC agreed that the main priorities were to ensure quality learning for pupils, and not to disrupt the learning of existing pupils. Therefore the possibility of a new building on the Kilrymont Site was not favoured. It was likely that a site on the North Haugh would be favoured, with a bridge to take pupils over the road safely to the Station Park playing fields.

Members welcomed the suggestion that all pupils in the School might contribute to the consultation process by structured discussion in, for example, social education lessons, with ideas being passed through the School to the Group via Senga Hogg. The agreed budget is £30 million, including the purchase of the necessary land. It was agreed that the views of teachers and pupils on the new School were particularly important to canvass.

The PC agreed that parents should be invited to email comments about the New Madras to Andy. The Stakeholders Group was not a decision making body, but would pass its views to the Estates Development Group, who would pass their decisions to the Education and Children's Services Committee of Fife Council. There was a desire for two-way

communication in this chain. Andy agreed to make summaries of relevant meetings available where allowed via the PC website.

The issue of walking and cycling routes from across the town to the new School was raised. There was an aspiration to include this in the Core Paths Network.

10. AOCB

Communication between parents and the School.

A member had tried to contact the School to discuss an issue about a particular lesson. This had been done via the School Office as requested. Messages were left and not replied to. Eventually he was offered an appointment with a guidance teacher in three weeks time. This was thought to be an unacceptably long time to have to wait to discuss a worry. The two Robins confirmed that the correct way to contact the School was via the Office, with pastoral issues being dealt with by the Guidance team and subject-specific issues with the Head of Department. If replies were not forthcoming from the Guidance team then the Rector should be contacted, and if replies were not forthcoming from the Head of Department then a depute Rector should be contacted. The difficulties for Guidance teachers with the split site were noted. The Rector in his absence was asked to suggest what was a target time for parental queries to be dealt with, and what was a reasonable time in which Guidance or other staff should make themselves available for a meeting if needed.

School Estates Working Group

Cllr Caird noted that the next meeting of the School Estates Working Group would be on 16 March.

School Uniform

A pupil representative on the PC noted that complaints had been received from people in the town about litter and the way in which some pupils wore their School uniform. There were concerns from the pupil body that the rules on uniform were not being consistently applied and enforced. In the ensuing discussion it was suggested that the School may wish to consider involving its pupils in designing a new School uniform to fit with the new building. A hope was expressed that pupils would feel even more pride in belonging to Madras when the buildings in which they were taught were in a better state.

Supervision of Classes

It was reported that cover of classes by existing teachers was not always happening as anticipated. One class had reportedly been told by a cover teacher that they “don’t need to do physics today, it’s Friday”. Other reports were of classes with no teacher at all. The Rector is following up these points.

Prince’s Trust Challenge

The Prince’s Trust Challenge in the School is working hard, but the Golf at Scotsraig has had to be cancelled due to the current economic circumstances.

Backchat

Copies of Backchat were available, which included useful comments on what parent council’s can achieve. It was noted that a group of parent councils in Edinburgh had successfully lobbied against a cut in the education budget there.

<http://www.sptc.info/>

Age of Communication Denials

It was noted that once pupils turn 16 they are able to demand that the School not communicate with their parents regarding absence from School and such. It was requested that the School consider sending a letter to all S4 parents at the beginning of the school year informing them of the legal position of pupils once they reach age 16.

PC Major Projects

The Chair noted that he wished the PC to consider in due course what its major projects were to take forward, now that the New Madras project seemed to be on course.

11. DONM

It was considered important to choose a date at which the Rector could be present. Subject to that proviso, 6 May was agreed upon.

Appendix A – Stakeholder Group Information, from Cllr Waterston

Stakeholder Group Membership, Remit and Work Programme

1.0 Membership and Remit

1.1 Key to the success of the School Estate Development Programme will be effective communication with stakeholders and the wider community. At its meeting of 21st August, 2008 the Education & Children’s Services Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Education) providing an update on work of the School Estate Development Programme; outlining the overall work programme being followed; proposing governance, communication and reporting arrangements, and suggesting the brand identity “Building Fife’s Future”. The Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report (minute paragraph 163 of 2008.E.Chs.84 refers), including the formation of a stakeholder group for each of the schools in the School Estate Development Programme and a remit for such stakeholder groups.

1.2 The remit for each stakeholder group approved by the Education and Children’s Services Committee is as follows:-

- Be a forum for discussing the benefit outcomes and design development of specific school estate projects
- Provide good communication links amongst Fife Council Services, the design team, construction contractor, school and community representatives, parents pupils and other users of the facilities
- Cascade information to stakeholders represented by members of the Group
- Participate in surveys and workshops and other feed back sessions on specific school estate related projects
- Receive reports on the progress of specific school estate related projects

1.3 The stakeholder groups are to be representative of the local school community and include the Education Officer, head teacher, school staff (teaching and non teaching), community services staff, school pupils, parent representatives (including from the feeder primary schools in the case of a secondary school), community council and other significant user representatives. Group members would be representing their constituency and would be expected to communicate the progress of the discussions to those they represent.

1.4 In order to keep the meetings of the stakeholder groups manageable it is proposed that there should be a maximum of 12 members (with flexibility of membership to reflect issues being considered).

1.5 The Stakeholder Group will be supported by the following Asset and Facilities Management staff:-

- Morag Wallace – organisation and minutes of meetings
- Senga Hogg – education advice
- Ian Nicol – programme
- Lead Consultant/project manager – co-ordination of technical input
- Architect- design advice
- Other design support (e.g. FF&E; M&E)
- QS – cost advice

2.0 Work Programme

Meeting Dates	Topic for Discussion
End March 2009 Open Public Meeting	(a) Business Case Process (b) Presentation on draft Strategic Brief (c) Formation of stakeholder groups for Madras and Dunfermline High School
April 2009	(a) draft Strategic Brief (b) draft evaluation criteria
April/May 2009	Development of specific school requirements
May/June (2 meetings)	Evaluation of business case options

Proposed membership:

EO 1
HT 1
Teaching staff 1
Non-teaching staff 1
Comm Serv staff 1
Pupils 2
Parent Council 1
Primary Parent Councils 2
Community Councils / Other Groups 2.

To ensure consistency in the event that a representative is unable to attend any of the meetings, I would suggest that representative should be entitled to send a predetermined nominated substitute.

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Appendix B – Matters arising from previous meetings

Matters arising from January 2009 Meeting

January 3. Rector’s Report

Staffing -

The appointment of PT teachers for maths and science that were ongoing at the last meeting are still [March 2009 - ongoing](#).

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. [March 2009 - Ongoing](#).

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. [March 2009 - The chair expressed the wish to set a date and title for this meeting soon](#).

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Matters Arising from the October 2008 Meeting

October: 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. Remains so in March 2009](#)

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. March 2009 - it sounded from reports at this meeting that only a small percentage of pupils were to be consulted?](#)

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. March 2009 - Continuing*

There is the possibility of a parent night on the "A Curriculum for Excellence" developments. *This may happen in due course. March 2009 - Continuing*

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. March 2009 - awaiting outcome*

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. March 2009 - matter continuing.*

October: 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. March 2009- funds expected.*

October: 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. March 2009 – continuing.*

There was also interest in a future meeting on learning techniques run by School staff. *Event may be organised in due course. March 2009 – continuing.*