

Madras College Parent Council Minutes
Wednesday 6th March 2013, Kilrymont, 7pm

1. Chairman's opening remarks and appointment of New Chair.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including a visiting parent Mr Tews.

Appointment of New Chair – no nominations as yet.

Agreed that Chairman would continue to Chair this meeting (complete the consultation form and submit before the deadline 8th March 2013) but stand down at the end of this meeting.

Due to the nature of the topics, it was agreed that they would not follow the order of the agenda.

2. Present – Rory MacLeod, Ian Jones, Andy Primmer, Cllr Brian Thompson, Rachel Naismith, Debbie Cumming, Emma Henderson, Dawn Waddell, Sally Walker, Paul Brown, Charlotte Kirby, Rebecca Trengove, Callum McLeod, Hugh Watson, Cllr Tim Brett, Robert Graham, Jane Pettegree, Sam Byers.

Apologies- Barry Millar, Dave Rickman, Susan Simpson, Cllr Keith McCartney, Scott Wilson, Bruce Sinclair, Cllr Dorothea Morrison.

Rector welcomed Mr Robert Graham – Head of Community Use who has replaced Andy Herd.

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

These were accepted.

4. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising which were not going to be covered in later discussions.

5. Chairman's Report.

As detailed in opening remarks.

6. Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer reported that since the last meeting the £5,000 cheque for the School and the £34.20 cheque for the Website upkeep have cleared from the PC Bank account. The balance in the Bank is now £1438.48 and there is also £1.92 cash in hand.

The Treasurer also reported that she has renewed the Small Society Lotteries License (£20) to allow a 'Quadfest' Raffle to go ahead. It was agreed to reimburse the Treasurer appropriately.

A commitment to Madras Pipe Band of up to £350 was agreed at the last meeting (the exact figure should be claimed soon) and it has now been agreed to commit £350 to the Ohio Exchange Programme. Anticipated income from 'Easy Fundraising' and the '50/50 Club' over the next month or so is in the region of £220.00 (see also item 9. below).

7. Secretary/Webmaster's report (Sam Byers).

In the main everything is transferred. Unable to upload to the website at present but Sam and Bruce are in communication about this and will be sorted as soon as possible.

Sam has requested that for any fund raising/sub committees providing reports could they email the bullet points of their discussion, following the meeting, for easy inclusion in the minutes.

8. Rector's Report.

Group Call. This will replace Parent Mail and will link attendance monitoring and alerts to parents. Staff have now been trained. Group Call will be phased in with S1-S3 in June when the timetable changes to iron out any quirks and S4-S6 in August. (Parent Mail is available until August). Re-authorisation by parents of email/addresses is required and imperative that the forms, when given to pupils, are returned to the school.

Member: Query over current logging system of absence in classrooms?

Rector: Each classroom has a p/c – every teacher logs off/on to this at the start of the lesson and attendance is completed accordingly. The transfer of information to the office is immediate. Only time there may be a delay is PE/Swimming where attendance is marked on paper and then transferred to p/c.

Accommodation

- Cllr Brett has been following this up on our behalf too.
- Louise Playford has agreed the list of requirements. These have been categorised and a plan is currently underway to sort requirements. Email from Louise however confirms that they are struggling to find the funding sources for minor improvements but is looking into the possibility of re-allocation from capital funding underspend.
- Cllr Thompson confirmed the value of work is approx. £500,000 and no budget for this. Sheila MacLean, Cllr Brett and Cllr Thompson are meeting to move this forward. On the whole each Council does not spend its entire annual capital funding allocation and they are looking into how the Education Service can re-deploy funds.
- Positive notes – whiteboards are being replaced. S6 library is being re-furnished with new soft seating, desks and chairs and WIFI is now available. Looking to buy netbooks to make this more user friendly for the sixth year students.
- Kilrymont – WIFI has been ordered and a new interactive whiteboard installed in room 111. 30 netbooks to be available aswell. WIFI has also been ordered for the Library together with an additional 20 netbooks thus substantially enhancing the IT provision on a bookable basis. Issue with Kilrymont is that WIFI cannot be placed in each room, therefore have to create hotspots.

New Madras

- HMIE visits by John Brown – Inspectorate has been at both public meetings and held meetings with pupils, staff, parent council together with primary staff and pupils too. His report forms an annexe to the main consultation report providing a flavour or the comments assimilated.
- Rector has held assemblies with each year group on 1st March and 4th March all pupils were asked to make a response – the responses were collected and delivered to Glenrothes on 5th March.
- Emails/parentmail have been sent reminding the end of the consultation period is Friday 8th March.

- At present the project team are meeting fortnightly (3 times to date): this includes architects and members of property services. They are analysing the planning process and ensuring that all is in order in accordance with requirements and due dates to be met.
- At present the Local Development Groups (which will now include representatives from primary schools) are not meeting as there is nothing tangible for them to discuss.
- Cllr Brett: Query over 'moveable equipment'. In light of the requirements of the current Madras College would it be possible to gain access to the new computer equipment which is budgeted for within the new school allocation. Put this into existing structure and 'port' this when we move?
- Rector: this is being discussed, problems being the 'shelf' life of p/c's etc, but certainly under query.
- Member: Query re Inspectorate who asked to meet members of parent council at 12pm. Most members are working therefore unable to make this. Clearly an unreasonable time for a meeting?
- Rector: Nature of the organisation. Inspectorate state their availability and we have to arrange accordingly.
- Cllr Thompson confirmed that the member could write to him and request an additional meeting should the member wish.
- Member: Any changes to staffing this quarter and what is the normal turn-around time?
- Rector: Only role not been filled is that of the Acting P/T for Learning Support (interviews start 7th March). Staff have a 4 week notice period, but unless you a supply teacher is available it usually takes a minimum of 8-12 weeks to fill a role.
- Member: WARPit Scheme being offered by University of St Andrews. Any merit in following this through as they confirmed that there is no liability on behalf of the school in terms of electrical goods.
- Rector: Checked this out with Fife Council and there is still an issue of liability therefore for items like laptops etc this is not possible.
- Cllr Brett confirmed the positive feedback he had received and a member of the council confirmed the feedback from the children in respect of the presentations in school were excellent.

Exclusions

Mid Session Exclusion statistics are positive in comparison to the same time last year with a fall in number of exclusions/1000 pupils together with a fall in the number of days lost/1000 pupils.

Finance

Endowment trust money totalling £6000 has been used, together with a carried forward underspend from 11/12 of £23,000. (monies kept in reserve for emergency staffing costs). The believed carry forward underspend for 12/13 will be in the region of £10,000 thus providing a similar cushion next session.

9. Fund Raising Sub Committee

Meeting next week so not much to report. 50/50 club response rate is still slow. Slight improvement on last year but not much.

Easy fundraising now has 73 members with a total of £965.56, £139.36 in the first quarter.

Quadfest – preparations underway. If anyone has any ideas for raffle prizes please say as many avenues were exhausted for the fete last year. Donations to either school office.

Ohio Exchange.

Request from member for donation from parent council of £350 to meet 50% of costs of entertaining the 15 Ohio Exchange students. An event day with Blown Away has been organised at £25/person.

Ohio Exchange has been running in Madras for years and there are no costs incurred by our pupils when they visit Ohio (apart from shopping trips and fast food outlets!).

Agreed that the Ohio pupils costs would be met by the Parent Council for the total of £350.

10. Reports from Working Parties and Sub Groups

Homestudy group

The parents involved in the Homestudy working party have not met since the last parent council meeting as the work has now been handed over to the school for implementation.

The policy overview for pupils, parents and teachers was at a state ready to circulate to interested parties for comment and the school management for approval, but the appendices containing subject specific information on homestudy resources have not been distributed to the relevant curriculum heads due to other operational pressures taking priority. The publication date advised as March at the last meeting has therefore slipped.

It was proposed at the meeting that the policy part of the document should be disaggregated from the appendices and circulated immediately to the parent council and to staff for comment, final approval resting with the school management.

ACTION: Mr Hugh Watson is to progress circulation, collection of comments, and management approval; the earliest publication date is now April. Subject specific resources can be supplied while this approval process is under way, and completed once the policy was approved and made public.

11. New Madras Consultation.

Introduction

- At the end of the last meeting it was agreed that members (where possible) would attend the public consultations in order to become versed in the discussions of the proposed new build at Pipelands.

- This meeting would therefore decide whether or not we, as a parent council, were wishing to a) reply to the consultation and b) whether or not we were in support of whatever was likely to deliver a new school (the only option available in this consultation being the proposed new build at Pipelands).
- We were reminded that this was the educational stage of the consultation and not planning issues.

The floor was opened to discussion

- Members: What's the impact of the demographic projections in light of the recent announcement by Ministry of Defence re Leuchars. Have these adjustments been taken into account, together with any new build proposals?
- Cllr Brett: Current service staff 1200, civilian 140. Unable to ascertain data stats on children. (Madras has approximately 8-10% pupils who are service based: equates to c100).
- Army – projected at 800 by 2015. In general army personnel tend to be younger without families. However as many of the children are secondary we could find the model of parent/child staying in Leuchars whilst the parent within the RAF relocates to Lossiemouth.
- Rector: Likely to be a short term blip but there will be a balancing effect in the long term. Believe a school housing 1450 pupils will cover all eventualities.
- Cllr Brett: Planning has been based upon known housing development (of which there isn't much at present) but an approximate calculation is applied when these issues are addressed.
- Member: For information – St Andrews Community Council voted No.
- Members: Concerns that issues raised at the public consultations such as greenbelt and the opposition that will (is) being readied at the moment, rights of way- time delays in moving these and the issues of security to the school, drainage, underground springs, sewerage, water pressure for school and Pipelands residents, have not been answered so how are we to respond to a consultation when we are not in possession of all the facts? Concerns as to health and safety with the old buildings/waterworks being a source of 'playing' for children. Further member concerns that by saying yes to this, we would be up against enormous amount of delays? Would we be better to say no and wait for an alternative proposal to be provided by the Council?
- Cllr Brett: No doubt there are risks associated with this sight (as with others). Green Belt which is in contravention to the Development Plan. However the Council has sought advice on this. The Planning request will be taken to Full Council (78 members) and they will either approve it or 'call it in' where it is taken to the Scottish Government. They have 28 days to ratify or indeed 'call it in' whereby they can bring in their own independent assessors etc.
- This is the process, but the advice is that there are 'no other viable sights available' – ongoing now for 6 years so this is a 'proven' argument. Therefore a convincing argument has to be put forward and the Council feels that this is convincing and one which can be agreed to, despite the contravention to Development Plans.
- The fractions who wish to dispute the site can only appeal against the process and therefore it is imperative (as always) that this is adhered to strictly.

- Rector: In respect of the buildings at Pipelands, he has been advised that these can be easily removed. The valving system requires work to move it but Scottish Water has been extremely accommodating in solutions to resolve this. Sorting the holding tanks is seemingly neither technically complicated nor costly. Water pressure for both the school and the residents is crucial and is being looked at, as is drainage. Rights of way – imperative that these are moved in terms of security for the school.

General Summation

- Robert Graham: The Council has no viable Plan B. This is Plan A. Clearly all the technical issues need to be resolved but this is an educational consultation. They are trying to ascertain the educational support and feasibility in the first instance. The question being does it deliver on a single site?
- Rector: We've been through this process 3 times. Clear that the 2010 act has flaws i.e. only one consultation at a time. But that is the policy therefore there are only 3 possible answers. Yes, No, And/Or make a comment. The decision was made this time to request an answer on education needs first so as not to commit more money needlessly.
- Cllr Brett: Absolutely right to flag up all these issues and once the planning process gets underway these will be dealt with. But this is a minimum 12 months away and there are 2 clear distinct processes.
- Cllr Thompson: Already incurred £600,000 fees. A detailed site plan costs c £100,000. Parents need to give their views before this is taken further.

Conclusion

- After much discussion and a general vote it was agreed to vote 'yes' to 'do we support the proposal to build a single site school for Madras College on the proposed site at Pipeland, St Andrews' and add comments in relation to the necessity to re-direct the rights of way for security and to ensure that the water supply and drainage be adequate for the school and residents.

Closing

Rory MacLeod departed the Chair with mixed feelings and thanked everyone for the fun, proactivity and constructiveness. He requested that nominations for Chair be sent in soon. Callum McLeod has confirmed his role of Vice Chair and that he (all being well) will Chair the next meeting on 22nd May 2013.

The Rector thanked Rory for seeing this consultation period through and for his guidance throughout his time as Chairman which was concurred throughout the council.