

Madras College Parent Council

Tuesday 21 June, 2011 at 6.30 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

1. **Chairman's opening remarks**

The Chairman thanked all for coming. This meeting was arranged as both a conventional Madras Parent Council (MPC) meeting and to discuss the outcomes of Fife Council's PFAM meeting. There had been a joint meeting last week with the Local Development Group (LDG) and senior members of Fife council. There was reference in the minutes of our last normal meeting to tonight's planned meeting. The Chairman is sorry for the late delivery of the agenda due to other commitments. When the call notice went out the Rector contacted the Chair to say that his understanding was that the previous joint meeting had superseded tonight's meeting. After some discussion, they agreed to disagree on the calling of tonight's meeting. Tonight was meant to take in the outcomes of the PFAM meeting, but also other things previously indicated to Rector.

By common consent, the Parent Council had focussed too much on the proposed new school building which has precluded proper discussion of other important matters. It needs to look at sensitive subjects such as those to be discussed in item 12. IN the absence of the Rector, Item 12 is not to be considered in detail tonight, but raised as a a constructive preamble to discussions next session of how parents might be more involved in the academic sphere.

2. **Apologies** – Ian Jones and School Staff, Cllr Dorothea Morrison, Cllr Margaret Taylor, Hugh Watson, Jane Pettegree, Callum MacLeod, Paul Brown, Charlotte Kirby; Alex Slawin sends her apologies, and also her resignation as Tim has now left the school.

Present:- John Barnett, Cllr Robin Waterston, Cllr Ron Caird, Cllr Tim Brett, Andy Herd, Debbie Cumming, Jackie Himpson, Karen Barnett, Dawn Waddell, Jayne Fraser, Rebecca Trengove, Rebecca Brown, Henry Paul, Andy Primmer, David Rickman, Bruce Sinclair

3. **Minutes of previous meetings**

There were regarded as a fair record of the meeting. Was "date of next meeting" on those minutes an accurate reflection of what was agreed? Yes.

4. **Matters arising**

4- Chair has again been in touch with Fife Council re. an official to explain school budgets, but no name or date has yet been offered.

Maintenance budget – Thanks to Robin on issue of relatively low maintenance

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budget. There had been a change of who reports acreages in Fife Council, and only half of the Madras site was put in, so now the School will receive a larger figure.

Thanks to Cllr Waterston for sorting this. Now to be more than previous year.

How are toilets doing? Work has been done or is being done in South St.

Surprisingly though Kilrymont toilets were regarded as satisfactory.

9 – What was the outcome of the comments from parents that teachers at a parents' evening said they did not yet know the curriculum for their pupils in S2? Apparently the teachers ought to know this, and should be saying this.

Print08 – discussions have happened at Fife Council on what impact this has on education, and schools should not be penalised.

10 – Course choices –some changes are being considered, but we do not yet know any detail.

Explanation of Int2 etc – We have not seen this on the School website yet, but a leaflet on the SQA website that a member of the Parent Council has found was suggested as a good start, and should be linked to from the PC Website. Some members thought that it would be good to have a seminar on this.

5. **Chairman's Report** – John Barnett

Attended senior awards ceremony. Great to see excellent results by senior pupils. Alyson Tobin gave out prizes and made good remarks. Some PC members at P7 induction. Good to have P7 parents able to see classrooms etc. 50/50 fliers given out.

6. **Treasurer's Report** – Dawn Waddell

Only movement is credits from 50/50 club. £1647.26 is new balance. Nice thank you card received from Hockey section following their receipt of MPC funds. If others want money they should write to the MPC to request. One sports club has had their own fund raising and seeking sponsorship. It was thought that the MPC should give some preference to groups seeking matched funding.

7. **Secretary/Webmaster's Report** – Bruce Sinclair

Nothing significant to report.

8. **Fundraising Group Report** –Debbie Cumming

- 50/50 club and 2011 Lawn Event

Could the fact that prize money is going out be put in School Newsletter or Parent-Mail etc?

Festival next summer – should be on Sat 16 June 2012. The steering committee has met a few times. Mr McKay to take charge of entertainment. Sandy looking at charity status. Some looking at catering, stalls, and raffle. Looked at what was available in the school in accommodation. Do we have written permission from the

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School – Sandy working on this. Andy Herd noted that he was the person to liaise with. Need more helpers now that things are moving forward. This type of event was done here in the 80s by Mr McKay. Former pupils to come in to play instruments? Thanks from Chair.

9. **Rector's Report** – Ian Jones

No report.

10. **New school building** – negotiations update; alternative options

At the Fife Council PFAM meeting no decision was made on the choice of sites, as negotiations with the University continue about the proposed exchange of property. The current issue is the different relative values of two sites as determined by the valuers of the respective property owners. A non binding arbitration is now in process. We hope it will work. Cllr Brett hopes that a PFAM meeting will be called before August to take the final decision. On Thursday told that arbiter should be appointed last Thursday afternoon, and this person should value both sites based on use for educational purposes.

What would happen if Langlands site was not available? Should all options then be re-evaluated? Station Park? Two schools? Kilrymont? Some form of option appraisal had been done 2.5 years ago – nine sites around town were ruled out on technical grounds. Only the two options left. Bussing is not green – should we go back to two schools, one here and one Tay Bidgehead? Curricular choice would be severely hampered by a smaller school. Suggestion that there should be a brief pause if the Langlands site does not become available, as the reservations about Kilrymont are significant. However, any such pause could not be long, due to the need to get pupils into school buildings fit for purpose as soon as possible, and the concern that funds may not be kept available. What about Kilrymont? Historic Scotland approves of new wings. 2016 would be the proposed new date for moving in. Might have huts on Station Park for S1 and S2 during the refurbishment. There was a discussion on listing of buildings.

Discussed later in the meeting, but relevant to this agenda item: A parent expressed concern that the Local Development Group (LDG) in his opinion has had no impact on any of the processes leading to the new School. Print08 and other things discussed in PC may be similar. Cllr Brett did not disagree, but noted that the design of the school has yet to be done, and the LDG may have more input there. It was noted that at Dunfermline and Carnegie the LDG was involved. The plan is that this is to happen here, but cannot be done until there is an agreement. Should recognise difficulties and frustrations of last few years.

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11. Academic collaboration with University

Alyson Tobin leading the team. Should continue whatever site comes through.

12. Comparative Performance and Attainment

- *latest comparative data and trends – Paul Brown*
- *Report to East Area Committee – Councillors in attendance*
- *constructive parental engagement; school accountability structures*

The discussion was informed by statistics published by Learning and Teaching Scotland available via

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/scottishschoolsonline/schools/madrascollegefife.asp>

and by the report considered at the North East Fife Area Committee on School performance, available via

<http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=4BC08B90-EDFA-74A5-EE11A07BF4CF6C38>

It was noted with pleasure that in some areas Madras did very well. However, some of the trends for Madras were downwards with time. A report was sent to the Council's area committee about Waid, Madras, and Bell Baxter. This was discussed at the area committee. It would be good to have a positive discussion at an MPC about this report next year; it is unfortunate that no teaching staff are here tonight.

It is good to see that Madras is often doing well compared to the national average, but why is it seeming to go down? Unauthorised absences in S4 are higher in Madras than the national average. To what extent are the school staff aware of the issues? Can anything be done? Suggests the MPC should do more with this data.

Is there a procedure within the School that a teacher looks at the progress of a group of pupils? Is a child's progress being monitored? Can we discuss in due course please? Chair has discussed with Rector. Rector pointed out that there has been an increase in free school meal provision at Madras in recent times, and there is a proven correlation between this and academic performance. The split site may be part of the issue. It would be good to find out why and what actions are being taken. Middle management charged with seeking improvements.

A MPC member who is a teacher at another school urged caution about interpreting raw statistics, as the cohort varies from year to year. Absence issue concerns her. Is there an issue in tracking attendance and reporting back to parents where there are problems? There is some tracking of pupils attainment from S3 on. One parent asked how this was reported to parents – can we get more info on how a child is

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performing relative to age group etc? Should the S1-2 cohort not also be tracked? Is this told to parents? From S3 there is something on reports. Split site really does make a difference to what teachers can do. Note 1996 unsatisfactory split site. HMIE report is waiting to be published.

Cllr Brett: We need the Rector and his team to discuss. At NE Area committee, it was noted that free school meal provision was at 11%, up from 6% in 2009. The Rector had made himself available for consultation with councillors. Councillors asked questions similar to ours. An action plan has been developed and the PC might ask for this. Absence rate – told the 10% rate was not to be unduly concerned about.

Should we devote a PC meeting to discussion of these statistics? In autumn term education officials sit down with schools and go through results of previous year. So these things are taken seriously. A councillor noted that he hoped that the NE Fife Area Committee will return to this report to discuss further. Comparator schools – this system tries to match schools with other similar demographics, but the demographics are not revisited each year, so changes in demographics may not be immediately recognised.

The Madras report seems a little odd having the same statistics being flagged as being both strong and in need of improvement. For example: *Strong* – by end of S4 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 was above national pattern. *Need of improvement* – by end of S4 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5, attainment is in the bottom 25% of comparator schools and in all previous years has been in line with middle 50% of comparator schools.

Trend data in the report would be useful. Primary school trends are given in the report, but not for Madras. Trends are given in the Learning and Teaching Scotland stats.

Many aspects of the school's attainment are very good. But we are keen that things do not drop. The split site is not a new factor for any decreasing trends.

Madras is the only school in Fife in the top 50 in Scotland. It is good that Madras is there, but if it is going down then let's try to arrest that. Condition of building may be an issue. Would be good to hear from the Rector what is the action plan. The meeting was pleased to hear that the Rector has agreed to a full informed constructive discussion on these issues early in the next session.

Constructive parental involvement is important. This can take various forms.

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Jordanhill is the only state school not under local authority control, and does exceptionally well. East Lothian has introduced trust schools and clusters, and has bodies similar to the boards of governors in England. Our PC is not like this, or the previous school board. Across the political divide, current school governance arrangements are being questioned. The chair has spoken with various people on this. There is interest, at least, to explore what improved arrangements there might be. How can community and parental involvement be made more real in terms of a school like this? The move to a new building might provide initiative for a major step. PC members are only here while their offspring are in the school therefore have a short term interest. The chair mentioned that, outside his role here, he is involved in a Scottish campaign for schools reform which would offer more parental and community involvement with a view to raising standards of attainment. He agreed to assemble a dossier of background information on this topic for future circulation.

13. Forthcoming events and key dates

Lawn event - Sat 16 June 2012.

Tuesday sports day, Wednesday concert. Junior awards this Friday.

14. Date of Parent Forum/AGM and possible additional meeting(s)

14 September for Forum/AGM.

We should take steps to encourage new members of forum to join PC.

In case of significant new developments on new school, a special meeting may be called over the summer holidays.

15. AOCB

None.