

Madras College Parent Council
DRAFT MINUTES
Meeting at Kilrymont Road, Wednesday 2 November 2011

1 Welcome by the Vice-Chairman and appointment of Parent Council Chairman

There were no nominations for the chairman's position. The Vice Chairman was willing to chair the meeting, but commented that the Parent Council needs a chairman longer term.

2 Apologies and Attendance – Apologies - Cllr D Morrison, Cllr F Melville, Jackie Himpson, Karen Barnett, Florence Tanniou, Rory MacLeod .

Present –Dawn Waddell, Scott Wilson, Ron Mitcham, Debbie Cumming, Linda Hardie, Charlotte Kirby, Hugh Watson, Paul Brown, Sam Byers, Rachel Naismith, Cllr Robin Waterston, Ian Jones, Callum McLeod, Lynsey Seeley, Barry Millar, Cllr Tim Brett, Andy Herd, Rebecca Trengove, Cllr Ron Caird, Andy Primmer, Jane Pettegree, David Rickman, John Barnett, Bruce Sinclair, Jayne Fraser, Emma Henderson, Rhona Frod.

3 Minutes of the last ordinary meetings, and matters arising

21 June minutes –These were approved.

The minutes of the brief meeting following the Parent Forum were approved.

- outcomes of discussions regarding guidance to parents of pupils making course choices, as discussed to some extent in the last school year .
The minutes noted that the paper was to have been taken to a school group, and that the MPC anticipated a report back. The Rector noted that a working party was established at end of term, the paper was tabled there and influenced decision around timing of reports for the following year, and what will be done with S1 pupil choice timing. The nature of documentation will be looked at again when next year's papers are put together. It was noted that parents really do need this time to discuss things between the parents' evening and choices being required. Last year had more difficulties because of the old and new systems both running . A parent commented that the new timetable looks better. There was support available on request from the senior management team for parents last year that was appreciated.

- How we should interpret the School Performance report to the June meeting of the North East Fife Area Committee?
<http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=4BC08B90-EDFA-74A5-EE11A07BF4CF6C38>
A parent noted that he was pleased to see good things in the report, but asked to know more about some items (as noted in the previous minutes). The Rector declined to discuss this citing his wish to have five days specific notice of any such query.
It was noted that the Director of Education meets with the Rector, and will do so in again in the next couple of weeks. A councillor reported that councillors had had a private meeting with Rector on the details of the above report. The councillors have seen an action plan, and plan to have similar meetings next year. The councillors feel they see the whole story. A councillor commented that a trends document would be useful to see. A report to a Nov 11 meeting then to N area committee as last year.

4 Rector's Report

Staffing – national advert for PTC English now closed, 7 applicants, interviews 15 Nov. Hopefully in post for end of calendar year.

Vacant technician posts have now been filled – the existing technicians are commended for keeping things going while so short staffed.

Support for learning post being advertised.

Maintenance – South Street science labs have a leaking roof and mould is growing inside. A building specialist determined that a new roof was needed. Waterproof by the end of this week, and two more weeks needed to finish inside. Alternative provision being provided.

Roof in music house leaking again. Whole roof being redone. Half complete.

Work done on main S St building library roof.

Guidance base in S St moved from Celtic block to near library, and has been redecorated.

Compliance work for gas in science and home economics done in Kilrymont – complete.

Potholes in playground being sorted.

Wind and watertight work off FC budgets, not school.

Curriculum for Excellence now looking at senior phase. Seminar with senior teachers. Now have paper on main criteria for curriculum. Meeting for parents coming up on 22nd. Second engagement session later on. Aug 2013 for starting. Employers and local university to be involved. Agreement to get interim findings of those discussions on a website. FC gives broad guidelines and exemplars, schools consult locally and produce own plans. There is flexibility in timing of assessments allowed. In April school gets more details of senior course requirements.

Parent Night. Thanks to staff for P6-S1 parents and pupils last night, as one of two open evening for parents to talk about transition etc. This was well received. The Parent Council commended this activity and thanked staff and senior pupils for inputs. Pupils will be thanked.

5 Secretary/Webmaster's Report

My report is that I continue to put stuff up on the Madras PC website, notably recently a short report of the first-day-of-term meeting about the New Madras. I would welcome any suggestions as to additional stuff that should be there.

Fife Council provides some cash annually to the Parent Council for a clerk, but in the past we have decided to have a volunteer take minutes and use the cash for ParentMail and similar. The money does not go through the Treasurer's Books as the money comes to the School as part of an annual grant and pays part of the cost of Parentmail. Grant is £840 and parent mail costs over £900. About 1100 parents (excellent) on Parentmail. S3 is lowest uptake.

6 Treasurer's Report

At AGM £1725 in bank. 50/50 club has provided £38 since then. The treasurer noted the possible need to have additional insurance for large events. Applications for funding (preferably matched) from groups within the School are welcome. SPTC might need to give advice on what is insured by external groups and what by MPC. Only 20 places on DofE bronze available, but more children wishing to do (selected by draw after submitting letter). Would the MPC cash help? Limiting factor is staff availability. Rector will investigate. Have someone in to talk on this at the start of the next meeting.

7 Fund-Raising Group Report

Meeting on regular basis. Colin has put out ParentMail to notify parents of the big event.

8 Matters relating to Attainment

The Rector was asked to update the Parent Council on his forthcoming report to Councillors for Nov 11 meeting.

This report is currently private.

Paul Brown spoke to a paper he had produced on publicly-available attainment statistics and information. Data for the paper was taken from a previous Madras Prospectus and from Scottish Schools Online, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/scottishschoolsonline/index.asp>

The Madras, Waid, and Bell Baxter data were included where available, as well as the Fife and Scotland data, and North Berwick as an example from another local authority.

Do councillors get this sort of comparative data set with time changing data on it? PB suggests we need to continue to ensure there is a focus on what happens to pupils in the school, even with building work being discussed and in progress. Madras results appear to have declined in 8 of the listed categories and gone up in 1 category. Fife improved in 7 and declined in 1. National results improved in 7 and declined in 0.

Does the school know enough about the attainment of the intake in order to predict performance?

Yes, from PIPS tests which continue to be done in primary schools.

7 December is publication date for Schools online website for 2010-11 session. Figures are not generated by schools. Is there underlying data available?

The Rector had three comments

- The School is not complacent on attainment, and rejects any distraction argument
- Anomalously high results in the 2005-6 cohort skew the results
- Stating percentage change in percentages is not correct.

The Rector was asked how the data compared with the School's own expectation.

The Rector suggests that parents come in a one-to-one basis to talk about their children.

A parent noted that the Cabinet Secretary for Education is concerned about Scotland school attainment.

Newspapers publish league tables, and these are interesting to parents and others.

The School is not willing to share data that is given to councillors.

A councillor noted that the school is about to have its review by councillors, and that he welcomed the idea of an MPC working group on attainment involving parents. The PC agreed to create a working group on this topic. The members will be Andy Primmer, John Barnett, Karen Barnett, Jane Pettegree, John Mitcham, Rebecca Trengove, Charlotte Kirby, and Paul Brown.

The intention is that this sub-group should be supportive of and positive to the school.

9 The New Madras College

The Parent Council will be invited by the Vice-Chairman to take a position on the following: in the light of recent developments, should Fife Council be asked to postpone any decision on the site of the new school to allow further consideration by all parties of the current options; and/or to take a position on its own preferred site or sites; any positions taken will be transmitted to Fife Councillors and officials before their forthcoming meeting.

The meeting decided not to take a position on the above proposal.

Councillor Waterston made some statements about the selection process before withdrawing from the meeting due to his role on the Education and Children's Services Committee. He noted that elected members will make the final decision on site choice, and that the educational environment to be provided will be considered more important than the raw matrix. He cautioned against the Station Park site due to planning issues. He noted that if the Kilrymont refurbishment was the chosen option then all pupils would be accommodated on the South Street site during the decant through the use of cabins on the front and rear car parks. The estimated cost for 18 months of temporary classrooms during construction is £1.5 million. Need solutions for PE involving other places (Cosmos Centre, town sports centre, town hall, etc), toilets, car parking, etc. Community use would be provided at South St.

Last Monday's engagement meeting was a rowdy meeting. Scorings were questioned. Two in the audience stated they were in favour, many were not. Drawings for the proposed refurb had been asked for by previous meetings, and were needed also for Historic Scotland. The indicative drawings are very different to the hub and spoke of the Langlands proposal.

Three parent members urged the Parent Council not to lobby for a particular site. One member spoke for the possible benefits of a refurbishment. A parent suggested that the best option is to get the site choice sorted as soon as possible. Others agree. What do staff think? There was recognition in staff that should Langlands fail then the Council's preferred option was fall back to Kilrymont. Staff did not yet know about everyone being put into South St, but that makes the option look better. Our meeting's feeling was that things should move forward positively as soon as possible with support from PC. Comment that swimming pool in a Kilrymont refurb would be retained for the foreseeable future if this site is chosen. Predicted August 2015 entry date with a two year build.

If people have strong views then they should let councillors know. Once E&CS have made their decision then we should all get behind it.

Should Madras PC have a sub-group to contribute to discussions on the New Madras, with a PC member from each feeder primary school? No. Local Development Group had Andy Primmer on it, he offers the place to someone else, but the PC was happy for him to continue in this role.

Should there be a group to look at state of current buildings?

Both school libraries in future will be open more.

10 AOCB

When JB was chair of the MPC a senior official encouraged him to look at more engagement of parents with schools. As a result of the June meeting JB talked to all local political parties and looked at the East Lothian devolved admin. There was a mix of views from political parties. The new MSP and Cllr McDermit had engaged discussion. A letter from JB to Mr Roderick Campbell had been emailed to Peter Grant and others. JB received a copy of Peter Grant's letter to Rod Campbell. He has still has not got a reply from Rod Campbell. JB will respond to Peter Grant in a personal capacity. SPTC states that the PC is allowed to talk on any subject connected with the school. A commission for educational reform will be set up.

Conference on Sat 12 Nov SPTC annual conference in Edinburgh.

There is to be an optional tour of South Street before the next meeting. Those wishing to take the tour should arrive at 6.30, then the meeting will be in the library for a 7 pm start.

Peter Adamson has been taken photos, the book is complete and is at printers and will be available for Christmas.

11 DONM

18 January South St Library 7 pm, tour beforehand at 6.30.