

Minutes from Parent Council meeting held on 21 January 2015

GROVE ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT GROVE ACADEMY

ON WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2015

Members in Attendance: Dougy Agnew, Fiona Anderson, Cllr Laurie Bidwell, Gillian Boland, Debbie Clark, Valerie Clark, Suzanne Duce, Lesley Elder, Ed Hall, Sally Hart, Graham Hutton, Clare Jefferson (Clerk), Susan Kidd, Elaine King, Laura Kobine, Penny Lewis (Chair), Fiona McIntosh, Andrew Nisbet, Karen O'Rourke, Richard Smith, Danny Webster

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by the chair, Penny Lewis. Everyone was welcomed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Kevin Cordell, Deepa Narayanan, Cllr Derek Scott, Cllr Ken Guild

3. Minutes of Previous Parent Council Meeting

There were a number of issues arising from the previous minutes as follows:

3.1 Correction and accepting of the previous minutes:

The previous minutes from 11 November 2014 were adopted with one clarification on item 4.2 on the provision of Modern Languages at Grove.

3.2 Matters Arising from Minutes of Last Meeting

3.2.1. Modern languages at Grove

The number of classes offered in modern languages varies according to the uptake by pupils and the viability of providing the class, which depends, amongst others, on what can be accommodated in the timetable, what is practical and what constitutes an economically viable class size. Parents sought assurances that the curriculum was meeting employer requirements and preparing pupils for their future.

Action: Arising from the discussion was the issue of language provision at school. There is a new initiative called the '1+2' which is aimed at promoting the attainment of broader language proficiency at school. The '1+2' refers to the first language being the pupils natural language plus the attainment of two other languages. It was decided to invite a representative from the '1 + 2' strategy to address the parent council.

3.2.2 Wifi at Grove

Ken Guild and Laurie Bidwell held a meeting with Dundee City Council about the lack of wifi at Grove. Laurie reported back that there were two aspects to this discussion namely: i) the privacy issue and allowing access to wifi; and ii) the budget to purchase the hardware for the router hubs. Mr Hutton explained the estimated costing to install wifi at Grove is £7,000. The school intends applying to the Moira Stewart Trust for IT support either for wifi or tablets. A discussion was held about whether Parent Council could hold a fund-raising drive in support of the provision of wifi. This discussion would be held over to the next meeting.

Action: Invite the Chair of Friends of Grove to the next Parent Council meeting to contribute to the discussion on fund-raising and collaboration with the Parent Council.

3.2.3 Career advice round-table discussion

Penny Lewis reported back that the PC had compiled a list of parent volunteers that were prepared to attend a career advice roundtable discussion at Grove.

3.2.4 Meeting between Deepa Narayanan and Mr Doherty

Deepa sent a report that she had held a meeting with Mr Doherty to obtain an update of how the school website operates, and the appropriate areas where the PC can update the school website with information pertaining to PC meeting dates and minutes.

3.2.5 Facebook for the Grove Parent Council.

Susan Kidd, the chair of the Ferryfield Resident Association (FRA), and Doug Agnew reported back on how their Ferryfield Resident Associations Facebook page operates. This was an informative discussion. Susan Kidd, Doug Agnew and Suzanne Duce were nominated to act as administrators of the Facebook page, with the additional capacity, if required, of the Chair and the Clerk of the PC.

The Parent Council decided that it would pilot a closed-group Grove Parent Council Facebook page with a set of 'rules of governance' to guide participants.

Action: Susan Kidd, Doug Agnew and Suzanne Duce would take this initiative forward.

3.2.6 Parents' evenings.

At Parents' Evenings the Parent Council operated a desk providing information on the Parent Council and asking if parents/careers were on the mailing list to receive notifications on meetings and the minutes.

4. Education Budget

Cllr Laurie Bidwell reported on the proposed budget cuts affecting secondary education under the provisional budget for April 2015-March 2016 (appendix 1). He identified three areas which show cuts: i) books and other equipment; ii) IT equipment for education; iii) limit to carry forward of devolved staffing budgets. Parents spoke about the various ways they were aware of the strain within the Department of Education's Budget.

Danny Webster provided clarification on some of these budget cuts as follows: i) the cut under the 'book and other equipment' relates to the absence in session 2015/16 of additional monies received in 2014/15 to support teachers' understanding of assessment standards in relation to the new qualifications. ii) Reduction in the budget for IT replacement which aims to replace equipment every five years was being done as the computers and equipment are lasting longer than anticipated and so some of these replacements will not be necessary this coming budget cycle. iii) It is anticipated that in session 2015/16 a slippage saving target pertaining to devolved secondary school staffing budgets will be introduced.

The discussion also made reference to the paper circulated earlier in the week, on behalf of Education Convener Stewart Hunter, on the proposed budget (appendix 2).

Parents raised concerns that the budget cuts are putting a strain on children's education. Danny Webster directed the meeting to the Improvements Service Website. The site is available at: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/>. From this information, Danny concluded that the DCC have a relatively generous per pupil education budget compared to other local authorities.

Action: A representative from the Parent Council will attend the meeting by Stuart Hunter on 17 February at 10am or 18:30pm to better understand the impact of the proposed budget cuts on education.

5. The provision of supply

The parents raised the issue of supply at Grove. The concerns raised reflected a national shortage of supply teachers. There was wide discussion about the issue of supply in Dundee and how it impacts on our children's education.

Action: Penny to do a letter to the Scottish Government asking about supply teaching.

6. Report back / allocation of meetings

6.1 Mr Hutton announced that an Acting Deputy Head, Marjorie Kerr, had been appointed.

6.2 Penny thanked Andrew Nesbit for his service as Parent Council representative on the Local Council Planning Partnership (LCPP). Karen O'Rourke volunteered to be the new Parent Council representative on the Local Council Planning Partnership.

7. AOCB

7.1 Some issues on the agenda were not discussed. These included discussions on: i) testing and assessments of pupils; ii) the Grove Responsibility for Learning Policy (annex 3). The learning policy will be discussed at the next meeting when parents have had a chance to read the policy document.

7.2 The role of the Parent Council was briefly discussed. The role of the Parent Council and how it functions is an on-going discussion. It was agreed that Mr Hutton would report to the next meeting on recent school achievements.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 10 March 2015 at 7.00 p.m. in the Staff Room. There after the following meeting would be on Wednesday 20 May 2015.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Laurie Bidwell's budget briefing

Appendix 2 Stewart Hunter's budget briefing

Appendix 3 Responsibility for Learning Policy