

# NOTE OF MEETING

**MEETING OF:** Portobello High School Parent Council  
**HELD AT:** Portobello High School – Library  
**DATE:** 19 November 2012  
**TIME:** 7:00 pm

## **1. Apologies**

Sue Davidson, Carole Tracey, David Seton, Kenny MacAskill, Maureen Child. Michael Bracewell had to leave early.

## **2. Matters arising**

No record of the last meeting yet owing to the clerk being indisposed.

## **3. School condition survey**

Ms Mac Arthur spoke to this. Owing to the delay to the new school building a twin track approach is required on repairs. It is clear that a number of repairs and upgrades to the building are needed. Consequently a number of people have been out to look at the school and meet to discuss the school's priorities in relation to available budget. Years ago it was agreed that money would be made available to the priority wave 3 schools but as PHS was expected to be the first school to be completed, certain repairs were put on hold and monies were diverted elsewhere in the school estate.

Costs have been estimated for a period of up to 3 and up to 5 years and it has been agreed that over this time £2.5 million will be spent on the school infrastructure. It is important to the current generation of pupils for the school building to be invested in: across a range of areas a number of items have been prioritised including roof and window repairs, plaster remedial work and repairs to floor and ceiling finishes, upgrade of doors, electrics, lifts, IT system, heating and ventilation in the gym, another survey of pipes and drainage, upgrade toilets, boiler, cctv system, walls in the playground etc .etc. This work will go out to tender and it is expected that the majority of work will take place over the summer and other holiday periods.

Questions were asked about the possibility of lockers but these are not seen as a vital item and, in addition, the shape of the building prevents lockers being usefully deployed without impinging on space.

## **4. Castlebrae proposed closure**

Paul Smart attended one of the meetings about this (4 are being organised in total). The council is currently proposing closure procedures (which is a relatively long process which could involve MSPs). If Castlebrae is closed the PHS catchment area will be extended to include 3 additional primary schools. As well under 200 pupils currently attend Castlebrae, it is expected that the impact on PHS numbers will be relatively small (more are expected to go to Holyrood HS). They will make up less than 10% of the total PHS school role and will be very welcome at PHS.

The PC would expect a transfer of teaching and pupil support resources commensurate with the number of additional pupils who would come to PHS. It is regarded as an

interim measure until the new school in the Craigmillar area is built in 2020. It is important that PHS stands by its value of inclusion and that PHS staff will be able to cope with the situation well.

Ms MacArthur talked about the damage that rumours and stories can cause and so it's very important that the process is managed well and that the receiving schools are well resourced to smooth the process – in particular additional support for learning and transition resources. Work has already started in building links between the schools and in particular, understanding the vocational subjects which Castlebrae offers. Community Development Learning workers are already working with pupils from both schools (in a mixed age range) including PHS pupils who live in Craigmillar so that the young people can themselves identify ways in which Castlebrae pupils can be made to feel welcome at PHS.

One parent raised concerns about existing PHS pupils being affected by the addition of pupils with additional support needs. Ms O'Hagan stressed the importance of recognising that not all pupils coming from Castlebrae have additional support needs but emphasised that, for those that do, detailed plans are already in place and her PHS team feels very confident that everyone can be accommodated.

#### **5. *New school – latest developments***

The Council has prepared a paper to be considered on by the full Council at its meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> November – it concludes that they will pursue a twin track approach for PHS with its preferred option being a school on Portobello Park but will also look at fall-back positions should the school on the park not be possible. Following a small scale consultation, a phased redevelopment on the existing PHS / St John's site (based on the assumption that St John's will relocate) remains an option. The preferred option is to pursue a Private Bill in the Scottish Parliament to allow the building of a school in the park. The Council will want to hold a comprehensive consultation before the Private Bill is pursued. It is proposed that this will start in December and will run to the end of January enabling the bill to be introduced in the spring. Fallback options depend on the successful purchase of the Baileyfield site. The council can only make a bid based on advice about the value. Until this is concluded the Council cannot begin to consult on the Baileyfield site. The PC will be involved in the consultation process for both sites. It's anticipated that the council will drop leaflets to the whole area which covers 15,000 households located in the catchment area and peripheral areas. It is thought that the consultation will involve questionnaires and 2 x pupil meetings and engagement with community councils.

As tasked by the last PC meeting, the PC new school subgroup has already met and surveyed the parent body about fall-back options.

Questions were asked about the appointment of the new school subgroup and Paul Smart confirmed that volunteers were asked for at the last meeting. The council members also confirmed that there had been a vote at the meeting to confirm the parent council mandate to support the building of a school park and that 18 voted that yes we did want to pursue that option and 2 voted against it.

Paul Smart stated that there has been a long consultation process over many years about the school in the park and that everyone on the PC is cognisant with the details.

The Council will conduct a full consultation on the school in the park and we need to support the council in doing that.

The PC has made a decision to support the school on the park. Questions about whether the PC new school sub group were also members of PFANS were answered. It was agreed that it would be useful to identify clear terms of reference for the subgroup and what type of decisions needed to be ratified by the full PC. Tom Ballantine and Michael McTernan retired to draw up terms of reference. These terms of reference were presented to the PC as follows:

### **Terms of remit from Portobello High School Parent Council to the Council 'New School' subgroup**

This meeting confirms its authority to the school parent council 'New School' subgroup constituted on 1st October 2012 to act as follows on behalf of the school council:

1. To support the City of Edinburgh Council in pursuing its preferred option of building a new Portobello High school on land at Portobello Park.
2. To support the City of Edinburgh Council in pursuing the actions outlined in the report on the new school to be submitted to the City of Edinburgh Council meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.
3. To communicate on behalf of the school parent council with parents/carers and any other relevant people or bodies the support of the school parent council on points 1 and 2 and the reasons for that support.
4. To speak on behalf of the parent council at any public forum in support of points 1 and 2.

The sub group will report to the parent council on its actions at each parent council meeting.

Two members aired concerns that not all parents / carers had been canvassed on their opinions. The chair reiterated the PC's role in representing parents.

A vote on the remit of the sub group resulted in 13 for and 2 against. This meeting accepts the remit of the PC new school sub group.

#### **6. *S3 Profiling Developments***

This will be produced for the first time this year. It will be issued to young people and parents at the end of the year, prior to them moving into the senior phase as specified in the Curriculum for Excellence – but the process has already started and will take place throughout the year. The process is as important in many ways as the end product itself. It is criteria produced by Education Scotland and will be completed by the young people themselves and validated by teachers. The emphasis is on skills development in particular areas. It will also include aspirations and capture achievements such as Duke of Edinburgh, sports etc. It encourages pupils to be reflective learners.

Parents requiring more information should access the Education Scotland website 'parentzone' area. Exemplars are available on this website and parent feedback on

these is welcome. It is expected that the PHS process will be launched at the Curriculum for Excellence event on January 23rd.

The approach to target setting was discussed and identified as being about incremental steps. Some parents felt that aspirational long-term aims would also be usefully identified – especially for boys. The one to one conversations between pupil and teacher were seen as very helpful – in particular for helping to identify a focus. There was a feeling that teachers may be too cautious in target setting and it was discussed whether this could dishearten pupils – teachers explained that it takes time to ascertain pupils' capabilities and it's important to develop confidence in incremental steps.

There is a tension between aspirational and realistic targets – and how best to ensure that pupils are inspired and not disheartened. Gillian Dunn referred to research showing that pupils performed better when their teachers set aspirational targets and agreed to present this to the PC.

### **7. *Role of a key adult***

Guidance / pupil support teachers have always been there for pupils to deal with situations when things not going well.

Group tutor will become the first line of pastoral support for pupils, someone who forms a close relationship and deals with issues and provides a listening ear as well as getting involved in academic mentoring. Academic mentoring is about supporting the learning journey. This will mean that tutor groups need to move to horizontal as opposed to a vertical system. Consequently, tutor groups would change from the current 30 to total groups of 20 from the same year group who will move through the school with the same tutor. The bulk of the time would be focussed on academic mentoring in the senior school. In the lower school academic mentoring would also be matched by values input – such as equalities, anti-bullying and pupil voice and skills development opportunities. The directive comes from Curriculum for Excellence and will result in all pupils having a single adult in the school who knows them really well.

### **8. *Feedback on senior school developments***

Time precluded inclusion of this topic. Slides prepared for this session will be circulated and a discussion of them will be held at the next parent council meeting.

### **9. *Skiff for PHS***

Will look into it and report back to the next meeting.

### **10. *Financial report and school lottery***

Lottery 130 shares. Statement balance of £1,067.24, cheques of £245 to be deducted leaving an available balance of £822.24

Treasurer's account opening balance of £2491.95. £141 paid on SPTC fees and funds received of £160 for secretary fees closing balance: £2,510.95.

### **11. *AOB***

- Best wishes to Sue Davidson
- Look at new equalities and anti-bullying policies on the website and feedback.
- Wish-list to be presented at the next meeting.

### **12. *Date of next meeting:* Monday 14 January 2013**