

Committee Minutes

Consultative Committee with Parents

Edinburgh, 13 May 2008

Present:- Councillors MacLaren (Convener), Beckett and Johnstone; Gus Meechan (Castlebrae Community High), Judith Gillespie (Observer, Scottish Parent Teacher Council), John Walker (Juniper Green Primary), Tracy Rendall (Craigentenny Primary), Lynda Flex (Drummond Community High), Linda Stewart (Drummond Community High), Anne Heggie (Prospect Bank School), Gordon Chrumka (Broughton Primary), Jeanna Brady (Bruntsfield Primary), Bernard Macdonald (Leith Primary), Julia Macintosh (Abbeyhill Primary), Andrew Fraser (Portobello High), Karen Traill (Liberton High), Norma Devlin (St Thomas of Aquin's High), Julie-Ann Sime (Tollcross Primary), Tina Woolnough (Royal High/Blackhall Primary), Nigel Goddard (James Gillespie's High), Nick Crolla (Buckstone Primary), Iain McGillivray (Firrhill High), Lesley McGoohan (Wester Hailes Education Centre), Chris Emmerson (Tynecastle High), Donald Craigie (Dean Park Primary), Patricia Aitchison (Balerno High), Susan Edwards (Victoria Primary), Martin Southern (Bonaly Primary), Meg Donaldson (Special School Head Teacher's Representative), Majella Dunn (St Augustine's High) and Anne McGowan (St Peter's Primary).

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Ken Aitken, Councillor Burns, Gilly Dennis, John Fraser, Willie French, Carolyn Girvan, Henrietta Forman, Rory Mackenzie, Jane Watson and Lorna Whitefield.

1 Minute

The minute of meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 11 March 2008 was approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

1.1 Forum for Children and Families Estate Evaluation (item 4.1 refers)

The Committee noted that Tracy Rendall would be the additional primary school representative on the Forum for Children and Families Estate Evaluation.

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1.2 Organisational Review of Children and Families (item 5 refers)

Gillian Tee updated the Committee on progress of the review of the Children and Families Department's Management Structures. Following a consultation process, approval had been given by the Education, Children and Families Committee for changes in Senior Management and staffing levels. Further progress would be made on an ongoing basis.

1.3 Children and Families Revenue Budget 2008/09 (item 3 refers)

Judith Gillespie, Scottish Parent Teacher Council, noted the good practice currently being undertaken in Edinburgh to consult with parents on the budget process in comparison with another Scottish authority. Gillian Tee reiterated that schools had been protected as much as possible and cuts had been made from central services in view of the scale of the problem. A two percent efficiency saving would be expected year on year for the Council.

The matter was raised of a two tier system which appeared to be emerging in some schools where budget cuts were affecting some students more than others. An example given was that some parents could pay for tutors, exam papers, etc, where others were unable to afford to pay for these.

Gillian Tee agreed the Department's policies would be looked at in relation to this matter.

2 Capital Investment Programme

Dave Fenton, Head of Resources, gave details of how the capital programme was drawn up across the Council. Nearly half of the Capital Budget allocation to Children and Families was made up of the Corporate allocation of funds. A quarter was designated to Children and Families direct from Scottish Government and a quarter from other sources (eg 'prudential borrowing' and developer contributions).

The Department had to bid for monies in late summer and allocations were made shortly after Christmas. Roughly half was a fixed allocation and half was 'bid in' whereby the Department submission would show a plan which met Council targets and priorities. The total allocation to Children and Families for the three years to 2011 would be £73m.

The breakdown of the three year programme to 2011 had been circulated. The programme would be reviewed with City Development. Proposals for minor

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works in specific schools were drawn up between schools and City Development who set priorities.

During discussion, the following questions and issues were identified:

- The Department was investigating a single site for Dean Park Primary School.
- Miscellaneous projects were managed by City Development for the Children and Families Department. Schools had a budget under DSM for minor works.
- Recent flood damage at Portobello High School would be paid for from the maintenance budget.
- The PPP1/2 allocations and Glow Initiative were explained. Whiteboards and equipment were not included in contract figures for PPP projects. The Glow Initiative was Government funded for infrastructure, but local authorities had to pay training costs.
- City Development set priorities for Enhancement to Schools projects in liaison with schools business managers.
- The £16m allocation for Wave 3 schools could not be spent until a funding stream had been approved.

The Consultative Committee noted the details of the Three Year Capital Programme and thanked Dave Fenton for his presentation.

3 Parental Contact (Including Non Resident Parents) Policy

Barbara Boyd, Schools Services Manager, gave details of a draft Policy on Contact with Parents, including non resident Parents.

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 placed a duty on Education Authorities to develop a strategy for Parental Involvement in their child's education and to promote the involvement of the parents, of a pupil in attendance at public school in the authority's area, in the education provided by the school.

The draft policy set out the legislative requirements and outlined the key procedures to follow in communication and information sharing. It also intended to promote good practice in the involvement on non resident parents in their child's education. The purpose of the policy was to help parents to be:

- involved in their child's education

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- welcome as active participants in the life of the school
- encouraged to express views on school education

A successful focus group of non resident parents had been held which had been a productive meeting. The views of the Consultative Committee and Parent Councils were welcomed on the first draft of the policy.

Barbara Boyd confirmed that:

- Non resident parents had equal rights. The Department would need to work in co-operation with schools to support and deliver the policy.
- Non resident parents had a responsibility to contact schools.

The Consultative Committee noted that comments could be forwarded to graham.douglas@edinburgh.gov.uk and thanked Barbara Boyd for her presentation.

4 National Body

Audrey Palmer, Devolved Resources and Support Manager, gave details of the three bodies representing Parent Councils in Scotland – the Scottish Parent Councils' Association (SPCA - formerly the Scottish School Board Association), Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) and the Scottish Network for Parental Involvement in Children's Learning (SNPICL). None of the organisations received funding from the Scottish Government, and all three drew funding by subscription, in effect competing for membership.

In October 2006, the Scottish Executive had commissioned a report on a new or evolved national parent body for Scotland. The report, published in June 2007 recommended a new body. Subsequently, the Scottish Government determined that a new National Body would grow naturally. The Children and Families Department had been asked by the Scottish Government to seek the views of Parent Councils.

The April edition of the Parental Involvement Unit newsletter had asked Parent Councils to discuss the formation of a National Body, however to date, there had been no response.

Consultative Committee members were asked to forward views on a National Body including role, membership and funding to audrey.palmer@edinburgh.gov.uk

The Committee thanked Audrey Palmer for her presentation.

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5 Future Items of Business

The Clerk reminded members of the Committee that where possible, advance notification of items of business to be raised at the CCWP should be made to susan.weir@edinburgh.gov.uk or graham.douglas@edinburgh.gov.uk to allow the Department enough time to consider requests for items of business and respond appropriately.

6 Children and Families Estate Evaluation

Two papers were tabled for information of members as follows:

- An updated paper on evaluation criteria for change
- The statutory consultation process for estate changes.

7 Parental Conference 'Leading Learning'

Details were noted of the Parental Conference 'Leading Learning' to be held on Saturday 24 May 2008 from 9.15am to 12.30pm at St Thomas of Aquins High School.

8 Parent Group on Efficiency Savings

Norma Devlin advised that a group of parents from the Consultative Committee would meet to consider representations to the Scottish Government on budget cuts in Edinburgh's schools. It was noted that the group would operate independently from the Consultative Committee with Parents.

9 Dates of Future Meetings

The following dates for future meetings of the CCwP session 2008/09 were agreed, all at 6.30 pm:-

Tuesday, 23 September 2008
Tuesday, 4 November 2008
Tuesday, 13 January 2009
Tuesday, 10 March 2009
Tuesday, 12 May 2009