

Committee Minutes

Consultative Committee with Parents

Edinburgh, 13 January 2009

Elected Members Present:- Councillors MacLaren (Convener), Balfour and Henderson.

Parent Members Present:- As detailed on the Appendix to this minute.

Apologies:- Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Meg Donaldson, Anne Heggie, Councillor Alison Johnstone, Louise Kelly, Billy MacIntyre, Luke McCullough, Donna McNeill, Gus Meechan, Raymond Simpson, Alison Walker, Jane Watson and Lorna Whitefield.

1 Minute

The minute of meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 4 November 2008 was approved as a correct record, subject to the last paragraph of item 5 (Oracle e-Business Suite financial savings), being amended to read – The Committee noted the report and requested that further analysis of the Oracle e-Business Suite and the net benefit per school be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

2 Matters Arising

2.1 Committee Papers On-line (item 10)

It was noted that a Procedure Note for accessing Council Committee Papers had been circulated. Any questions or issues that anyone wished to raise on accessing Council Papers On-line, should be directed to Gavin King, telephone 0131 529 4239 or e-mail gavin.king@edinburgh.gov.uk.

2.2 Parental Involvement Act (item 11)

It was agreed that further details would be provided to Parent Councils on the information they were required to supply to the Council in terms of the Parental Involvement Act with a timescale for the provision of the information.

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2.3 Provision of Papers to Committee

It was agreed that, where possible, reports and other papers would be provided for Committee meetings in advance of the meetings taking place. It was noted that papers tabled at meetings were made available online as soon as possible after the meetings.

3 Children and Families Revenue Budget 2009/10

The Children and Families Department was currently preparing revenue budget estimates for 2009-10. As part of the process, an annual briefing was held with the Consultative Committee with Parents.

David Robertson, Resources Manager, Children and Families Department, presented details of the current proposals for the Department's Revenue Budget 2009-10.

The budget challenges were detailed as:-

- Tight local government settlement
- Assumed Council Tax freeze
- Inflationary costs – energy and fuel
- Excess capacity in the school estate
- Further 2% efficiency saving assumed
- Balancing the budget in 2008/09
- Identifying further savings to balance with resources.

In terms of revenue, the overall financial position highlighted:-

- An increase in AEF (support from the Scottish Government) next year of 1.5%
- Assume Council Tax frozen – no decision taken, but worth £6.9m to Edinburgh
- The Council had identified service pressures of £20m next year
- This gap in Council finances had to be met through cost reductions or raising additional income from fees and charges
- A 2% reduction was required in the budget just to stand still.

For revenue savings, 2% was required from all departments in each year from 2008/2011 to meet pay awards; for increased superannuation costs; increased fuel energy costs; other inflationary and service pressures; and to fund demographic pressures e.g. vulnerable children and new service developments.

For 2008/09, the 2% target equalled £4m from devolved secondary, primary and special school budgets. This had been off-set by £1.3m from falling school

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rolls. A £2.7m pro rata top slice had been required from school devolved budgets, however £595,000 was recycled to schools for energy.

For 2009/10, the Children and Families 2% target equalled £5.9m for Children and Families and service pressures of £3.5m in the current year to be funded. A 2% target had now been agreed at £3.7m for secondary, primary and special school devolved budgets. It was proposed this be off-set by £2.10m from falling school rolls and school rationalisation, leaving £1.6m to be found from school budgets. Other potential savings options being examined include ICT (£800,000), PPP contract (£300,000), increased lets charges (£300,000), and energy efficiency.

The budget and consultation process was outlined. The Council would set its budget on 12 February 2009, and any measures regarding school budgets would be included from April 2009.

The approved capital programme from 2008-2011 would roll forward to 2009-2012. The Children and Families Department had been asked to submit bids against approximately £5m of new money in 2011/12 and a further £5m in 2012/13. School priorities included Dean Park, Towerbank, Corstorphine and ICT. Bids would be evaluated in the context of a 10 year Investment Strategy and the Council's Asset Management Plan which identified £19m per annum from 2011/12 for investment in upgrading the Council's property estate. Decisions regarding the allocation of resources would be made by elected members in February. Approval for the first phase of the Wave 3 programme would be sought.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Any decisions which would impact on schools would be made on the day the Council budget was set, ie 12 February.
- £1.6m was the gap to be bridged associated with school budgets in 2009/10.
- The Council submitted annual efficiency returns to the Scottish Government. These were public documents.
- Essential maintenance for a range of schools was not reflected in the £5m new Capital bids presented at this meeting. This would be examined and prioritised against asset management monies.
- There were three categories of ICT machines in schools. The refreshment programme for ICT machines in schools would cover those known as Category A machines. The effect of any reduction of computers across the school estate would vary. In response to concerns by parents on a reduction, it was suggested by officials that Edinburgh compared favourably with other authorities. Parents also suggested that a cut in computing facilities contradicted the aims of the ICT Glow Project.

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- Officers advised that during the period 2000/01 to 2008/09, the cost per pupil had increased by 68% compared to an RPI increase of approximately 19%. This was largely attributable to McCrone.
- The per capita budget had not increased since around 1997, however school budgets had increased since 1999 as a result of a range of hypothecated funding being allocated to schools.
- Clarification was sought on how quickly savings could be achieved through school closures/falling school rolls. It was advised that at the start of each academic year, numbers on school rolls could be worked out and financial implications were factored into budgets from August each year.
- An additional budget consultation meeting had been arranged in December 2008 with CCWP representatives in response to parental request for earlier dialogue. It had been decided to proceed with the January CCWP meeting so that everyone could hear information presented.
- Generally, good progress had been made last year with re-deployment of teaching staff where school rolls had dropped and teachers declared surplus. It was the case however, that if a teacher could not be redeployed, the teacher would be kept at their current school paid for by the Department for a year and paid thereafter by the school.
- There was a sense of increasing pressure to create composite classes. It was advised that the number of composite classes were based on need. The Council was funded on the number of pupils in schools. Accordingly, classes were formed according to pupil numbers.
- Clarification was sought on whether any financial penalties would be incurred in implementing expensive issues such as free school meals and a reduction in class sizes. It was advised that it would be very difficult to deliver on the class size issue across Scotland. It was hoped to make gradual progress with P1-3 class sizes especially in deprived areas. There was a funding provision for free school meals included in the base budget 2009/10.
- Clarification was sought on Edinburgh's policy for reserving places in each year of primary school for new catchment pupils. It was confirmed that Edinburgh reserved places at P1 but did not reserve places throughout primary schools. There was no plan to change this policy.
- The Council had followed the new draft Scottish Government guidance for the consultation process for school closures. Meetings had been held to reflect on the processes and issues for future consultation on school closures.

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- Confirmation was sought on whether there were any plans to increase the maximum 2 ½ % carry forward for schools. It was confirmed that there were no plans to extend this and it was noted that Edinburgh had a relatively generous policy in this regard compared to other Scottish local authorities.
- Councillors were to see the results of the Council's online performance survey before the results were made more widely available.
- There were 9,000 spare places in City Council primary schools. The geographical pattern of these places was complex with some schools being full while other schools were under occupied. It was noted that in the independent school sector, there was no evidence to suggest that enrolments were reduced at this stage.
- Confirmation was sought of the 9,000 school places in terms of a percentage. Officers advised that there were around 26,000 primary pupils at present.

The Committee agreed:

- 1) **That the number of school places available in Edinburgh be discussed at its next meeting and that information be provided on:**
 - **How many children were attending Edinburgh's schools and where there was spare capacity.**
 - **The capacity figures for each school.**
 - **The national formula/approach used to define spare capacity.**
- 2) **That information be provided for the next meeting of the CCWP on the cost of cover for teacher absences.**
- 3) **That for future budget consultation, meetings be held for Parent Council representatives in both December and January leading up to the Council budget meeting.**

4 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 10 March 2009 at 6.30 pm in the City Chambers, Edinburgh.

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Appendix

NAME	BODY REPRESENTED
Patricia Aitchison	Balerno High School
Ken Aitken	Portobello High School
Jeanna Brady	Bruntsfield Primary School
Carl Broughton	Roseburn Primary School
Pamela Canning	St Cuthbert's Primary
Liz Carrie	Balerno High School
Gordon Chromka	Broughton Primary School
Gavin Corbett	Craiglockhart Primary School
Claire Cowell	Stockbridge Primary School
Donald Craigie	Dean Park Primary School
Nick Crolla	Buckstone Primary School
Armando Ditano	St Augustine's High School
Susan Edwards	Victoria Primary School
Lynda Flex	Drummond Community High School
Henrietta Forman	Braidburn School
Jill Franklin	Flora Stevenson Primary School
Jamie Gilchrist	Parsons Green Primary School
Judith Gillespie	Scottish Parent Teacher Council
Carolyn Girvan	Currie Community High School
Nigel Goddard	James Gillespie's High School
Michael Gray	Wardie Primary School
Katie Hardie	Craiglockhart Primary School
Miranda Harvey	Additional Support for Learning Forum
Andrew Haswell	Davidson's Mains Primary School
Paul Ianetta	Holyrood High School
Adam Kassyk	St Thomas of Aquins High School
David Kyles	Trinity Academy
Pauline Lindsay	Blackhall Primary School
Julia Macintosh	Abbeyhill Primary School
Rory MacKenzie	Secondary Head Teachers
Andrew MacMillan	Trinity Primary School
Audrey Macnab	Leith Walk Primary School
David Martin	Broughton High School
Iain McGillivray	Firrhill High School
Lesley McGoohan	Wester Hailes Education Centre
Claire Murdoch	Dean Park Primary School
Mohammed Nabeed	High School Yards Nursery
Polly Purvis	Boroughmuir High School
Martyn Quinn	Craigmount High School
Penny Radway	Leith Primary School
Murray Rankin	Echline Primary School

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Tracy Rendall	Craigentiny Primary School
Bruce Sherry	East Craigs Primary School
Linda Somerville	Leith Walk Primary School
Martin Southern	Bonaly Primary School
David Thomson	Royal Mile Primary School
Allan Todd	Fox Covert RC Primary School
Karen Traill	Liberton High School
John Walker	Juniper Green Primary School
Tina Woolnough	Royal High School