

## Committee Minutes

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### Consultative Committee with Parents

Edinburgh, 4 November 2008

**Present:-** Councillor MacLaren (Convener), Lesley McGoohan (Wester Hailes Education Centre), David Kyles (Trinity Academy), Claire Murdoch (Dean Park Primary), Anne Heggie (Prospect Bank School), Donna McNeill (Gylemuir Primary), Gordon Chrumka (Broughton Primary), Miranda Harvey (Additional Support for Learning Forum/SPTC/Boroughmuir High), Jeanna Brady (Bruntsfield Primary), Julia Macintosh (Abbeyhill Primary), Anne McGowan (St Peter's Primary), Karen Traill (Liberton High School), Tina Woolnough (Blackhall Primary/Royal High), Susan Edwards (Victoria Primary), Lynda Flex (Drummond Community High), Tracy Rendall (Craigentenny Primary), Martin Southern (Bonaly Primary), Norma Devlin (St Thomas of Aquin's High), Bruce Sherry (East Craigs Primary), John Walker (Juniper Green Primary), Alison Walker (Tynecastle High), Jane Watson (Greengables Nursery), Nick Crolla (Buckstone Primary), Graeme Robertson (Broughton High), Patricia Aitchison (Balerno High) and Nigel Goddard (James Gillespie's High).

**Apologies for Absence:-** Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Meg Donaldson, Henrietta Forman, Willie French, Judith Gillespie, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Johnstone, David Martin, Gus Meechan, Julie Ann Sime and Raymond Simpson.

#### 1 Welcome

The Convener welcomed Miranda Harvey to the Committee as the new representative for the Additional Support for Learning Forum.

#### 2 Minute

The minute of meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 23 September 2008 was approved as a correct record.

### **3 Matters Arising**

#### **3.1 National Body (item 3.2)**

It was noted that comments received from Edinburgh Parent Councils on the formation of a National Body had now been forwarded to Learning and Teaching Scotland.

#### **3.2 Service Plan 2008/11 (item 5)**

An e-mail had been circulated to members of the Consultative Committee explaining that a draft of the service plan leaflet had been circulated in error. The final version had now been e-mailed to Consultative Committee members. Comments raised at the last meeting had been helpful for the development of future leaflets.

#### **3.3 Appointment of Head Teachers (item 8.3)**

John Fraser, Neighbourhood Manager/Head of Schools, advised that two meetings of the Head Teacher Appointments Committee were to be held next week. Following this, there would be only seven Acting Head Teachers in Edinburgh's schools.

### **4 FACe – Children and Families Electronic Newsletter**

Joyce Nisbet, Client Manager and Jen Robson, Communications Officer, gave a presentation on the new Children and Families electronic newsletter for parents. The first edition went live on 28 October and was the first of its type in Scotland. FACe would provide a more direct means of communication between the Children and Families Department and Edinburgh parents. There would be an online poll in every newsletter and a report back on the poll issues.

Parents would have the option of subscribing to FACe free, or could access it at [www.face-edinburgh.org.uk](http://www.face-edinburgh.org.uk). Any items which parents wanted included in future editions could be notified to [jen.robson@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:jen.robson@edinburgh.gov.uk)

The Consultative Committee welcomed the electronic newsletter, and suggested the following ideas be considered:-

- The structure of the Consultative Committee with Parents should be included in a future edition.
- The results of the polls should be published.

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- Links to papers for the Consultative Committee with Parents should be included where possible, for example the summary information sheets which were produced following meetings.

## 5 Oracle e-Business Suite – Financial Savings

Sam Austrin-Miner, Programme Director, Payment and Procurement Services, gave details of the financial savings achieved by the Council as a result of the introduction of the Oracle e-Business Suite in 2005. This new financial accounting system provided the Council with the opportunity to streamline and rationalise its chart of accounts while providing a more integrated solution for the future. The new system also allowed the Council to streamline its payment practice by centralising payments and introducing e-invoicing capabilities for suppliers. The implementation of the Oracle system was predicated upon a robust business case which argued that financial savings could be saved by streamlining procure-to-pay systems and introducing new ways of working with procurement. In particular, it stressed that “purchasing efficiencies” would be able to be made based upon retrieval of pertinent management information around supplies for contracts for goods and services.

Benefits to the organisation as a whole had been significant. The new system had introduced tighter controls on financial monitoring and reporting corporately. For the first time, management information relating to spend profiles had been visible. This had allowed the Council to target key areas within the organisation for savings.

Invoice certification had been removed from schools with the centralisation of payments. Previously, staff in schools manually processed invoices for approval, logged them in the dataease system and manually posted transactions into the centre. Now, there was no invoice processing in schools at all. Specifically, within Children and Families, work had been undertaken in a two fold nature. Firstly, there had been specific new contractual and e-catalogue savings realised by the Department. Secondly, the management information relating to Children and Families had provided the Council with a strategy on letting new contracts being established for the Department.

During discussion, the following issues were discussed:-

- EU procurement rules and British standards required to be adhered to when using suppliers.

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- How schools as individual units may be benefiting from the system. The business case for Oracle had given a period of time of six years to pay for the cost of the system.

**The Committee noted the report and that further analysis of the Oracle eBusiness Suite would be brought back to future meetings of the Committee.**

## **6 School Plans for Delivering 1.5% Efficiency Target on DSM Budgets in 2008/09**

David Robertson, Finance Department, gave details of the plans in place within schools to deliver the 1.5% savings approved by the Council.

The Council's revenue budget had required all Departments to identify 2% savings, year on year. As part of the 2008-09 budget setting process, the Council agreed a £4m savings target on school budgets. The Children and Families Department had agreed to deliver the savings target on school budgets through a combination of falling school rolls (£1m) and a top slice from school devolved budgets (£3m). Subsequently however, further reductions in schools rolls enabled the reduction to schools to be reduced to a target of 1.5%. £0.8m of the saving was recycled back to school budgets to meet increased energy costs. Budgeted expenditure on schools was also increased by £0.75m to meet funding commitments for the Council's PPP2 contract.

Schools had now submitted their returns indicating their intentions for managing the 1.5% savings target in 2008/09.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- It was suggested that savings such as those proposed for transport used to support outdoor education and physical education programmes, and other savings made through reductions in equipment costs, professional development, stationery and the educational supplies budget, were detrimental to children's educational experience.
- It was noted that consultation would be undertaken with the Consultative Committee on next year's budget process.
- School population figures were analysed each year and school budgets revised accordingly.
- Effects of the global financial market included postponement of the PPP1 project and current uncertainty in property markets affecting capital receipts and the capital programme.

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- The spending profile in special schools rested with the Head Teachers.
- It was requested that the criteria for efficiency savings be made available to parents.
- The Council had no reserves to pay staff wage increases beyond 3%.
- The consultation process for school closures, and effective management of the school estate. Currently, there were around 9,000 spare school places across Edinburgh.
- The duty on the Council for Looked After Children put pressure on the budget. Joint agency work was carried out with the NHS, however Out of Authority placements, which was a demand led service, currently cost around £100,000 per child, per year. The Children and Families Department had actively worked to reduce this cost and it was hoped that savings could be made next year of around £2m.
- It was hoped that an announcement would be made by the Scottish Government in December on negotiations on the capital city supplement.
- Concern was raised on the longer term impact of year on year savings. If resources were not replaced or maintained, then the short-term savings would build up long-term problems in the future.

**The Committee agreed:-**

- 1) To request further information on Out of Authority placements and what was being done to prevent the rise in the number of children needing this level of support. In particular, to request a presentation, if possible, on the work of early intervention to prevent the extreme stage of children being taken into care.**
- 2) To request further information from the Director of Finance on the criteria for efficiency savings and in real terms, the reduction of year-on-year spending per child, per school.**

## **7 Draft School Session Dates 2010/11**

Graham Douglas, Devolved Resources and Support, advised of the dates drafted for the school session 2010/11 after discussion with the Secretary of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers, and Officers from East, Mid and West Lothian Councils.

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To date, there had been 16 responses with the closing date for consultation being 12 December 2008. It was agreed that consultation would be included in the next edition of FACe, the Children and Families electronic newsletter.

**The Committee noted:-**

- 1) **The suggestion that harmonisation of session dates with East, Mid and West Lothian Councils would be useful.**
- 2) **A request from St Peter's Primary that Good Friday remain as a holiday.**
- 3) **That any comments from schools on the draft dates should be forwarded to [graham.douglas@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:graham.douglas@edinburgh.gov.uk)**

## **8 Interim Attainment Report 2007-2008**

John Fraser, Neighbourhood Manager/Head of Schools, gave details on 2008 attainment in schools prior to the full Attainment Report which would be produced early in 2009 following the completion of the appeals process. A summary of information for each primary and secondary school in the authority over the period 2002-2008 was provided.

During discussion, the following questions and issues were raised:-

- The information provided did not take account of variables in schools such as pupils with English as an additional language.
- Attainment figures were expressed as a percentage, however there would be instances where only a few pupils were assessed in any particular year.
- The report showed attainment rather than achievement.
- Analysis of the levels at which children started in school against the attainment levels they reached. It was recognised that tracking pupil progress was important.
- St Peter's Primary parents wished to commend staff and pupils for the attainment achieved in their school.

**The Committee noted the improvement in attainment in Edinburgh schools in 2007-08, and that a full attainment report would be produced for early 2009 following completion of the appeals process.**

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## **9 Edinburgh Parent Council Network**

Claire Murdoch and Tracy Rendall advised that the Edinburgh Parent Council Network had been established to allow all Parent Councils to talk informally through an exchange of information. There was no conflict of interest with the CCWP. The EPCN had been set up to allow parents to share best practice and knowledge.

## **10 Committee Papers Online**

The Committee requested that the provision of links for electronic access to papers for the Consultative Committee be investigated.

## **11 Parental Involvement Act**

Audrey Palmer, Devolved Resources and Support Manager, advised that Parent Councils were required to provide the authority and Head Teachers with certain information under the Parental Involvement Act. Parent Council Chairs had been requested to provide the information by the end of November.

## **12 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, 13 January 2009 at 6.30 pm in the City Chambers, Edinburgh  
(Revenue Budget Consultation).