

## Committee Minutes

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### Consultative Committee with Parents

Edinburgh, 23 February 2010

**Elected Members Present:-** Councillor MacLaren (Convener)

**Parent/School Members Present:-** as detailed on the appendix to this minute

**Apologies:-** Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Susan Edwards, Karen Traill, Willie French, Ann Henderson and John Walker.

#### 1 Minute of Meeting

The minute of meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 3 November 2009 was approved as a correct record.

#### 2 Matters Arising

##### 2.1 Matters Arising (item 3.1 of minute of 3 November 2010)

It was noted that;

- (i) David Wright would give a presentation on GIRFEC at a future meeting;
- (ii) Moyra Wilson would report on reduced exclusions at a future meeting; and
- (iii) Karen Prophet would provide a presentation on GLOW at a future meeting

##### 2.2 Convener and Directors Update (item 5 of minute of 3 November 2010)

#### Decision

To note that a report on the Child Protection Service Inspection was being prepared for the next Education, Children and Families Committee and agreed to circulate the report to CCWP members.

### **2.3 Progress on Integrated Childrens Service Plan – Achievements (item 6 minute of 3 November 2010)**

Noted tabled list of all partner organisations.

### **2.4 Oracle e-Business Suite – Financial Savings (item 9 minute of 3 November 2010)**

Noted that each Council department had their budget top-sliced for savings expected in procurement activity. Oracle had now been funded in full and these savings had been embedded within the budget. The oracle top slice has now been removed from school budgets There was no expectation for schools to pay ongoing license and maintenance charges as these had been met by the Corporate Services budget.

## **3 Update by Convener and Director**

The Convener reported that the music and arts budget had not been cut. A new post, Head of Arts and Music, had also been established. An early years strategy and action plan for the next ten years had been produced and would be circulated to members. All those who contributed to the strategy were thanked for their input.

Agenda Items 7 and 8 would be taken together. These items related to potential changes to the CCWP which would help improve communication between parents and Council officials. It had become obvious during discussion on the budget that smaller group meetings may prove more beneficial in the future to help understanding of the Councils budgetary process.

The Convener asked members that in the meantime members continue to submit items for the CCWP agenda on which they required further information or discussion.

The Director then gave an update on the child protection inspection, details of which would be provided. There had been significant improvements in child protection care since 2007, and an improved working partnership between agencies involved with children's services.

Prompt action and leadership by social work services and schools staff would ensure children's safety. There was a need to strengthen the engagement of children in this process.

The Convener welcomed feedback received on the improvement plan, a copy of which would be available from 1 April 2010. It was agreed that G Douglas would issue members with a link to the report.

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The Director then went on to highlight educational attainment, a report on which had gone to the Education, Children & Families Committee in March. It was agreed that G Douglas, Children and Families, would provide members with a link to the report which also enables comparisons with other authorities.

Examples of good practice by City of Edinburgh schools had been requested by the Chief Executive of Learning Teaching in Scotland for placing in the Times Educational Supplement and the Director would contact head teachers on this.

It was noted that J Fraser had retired. M Rosendale reported that, as an interim measure, his duties were being shared amongst colleagues. Following review of the job description the post would be advertised in May.

### **Decision**

- (i) Noted that the Director would be contacting head teachers for examples of best practice in their schools
- (ii) Agreed to provide a link to the improvement plan
- (ii) Agreed to provide a link to the Attainment Report

## **4 Outcome of the budget process**

D Robertson gave a presentation on the Children and Families Budget 2010 – 11 which covered the following topics;

- The overall Departmental budget position;
- The Schools position;
- Additional funding for schools;
- School pressures;
- School savings; and
- Central savings

New capital projects for schools which included;

- £20m for a new James Gillespie's High School;
- Advancement of Corstorphine Primary School 4 class extension; and
- Third astro pitch for Forrester/St Augustine's High School

He explained that following a change to teachers terms and conditions the Council had provided additional funding to meet the costs of enhanced entitlement to annual leave for teaching staff on I maternity and sick leave. Schools would continue, as at present, to fund ten days cover associated with holiday leave with the centre covering the additional entitlement costs of up to a further 56 days.

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A working group comprised of head teacher representatives had also been established to explore longer term savings options.

The Convener thanked D Robertson for his presentation and invited questions from the Group. There was an awareness that there was a requirement to ensure the Council continued to improve communication concerning the Councils budgetary process and that the Council effectively engage with parents and other key stakeholders while recognising that the nature of the political process and the complex nature of budgetary procedures meant that senior officials and elected members were unable at times to provide the information in the timescales requested by the CCWP. The next two years would require difficult decisions by the public sector and maintaining lines of communication was of importance.

Following a query on whether the Council could use its reserves to fund services, D Robertson explained that reserves could by their nature only be used once. Owing to the complex nature of the Council it had to keep an appropriate reserve to manage unforeseen eventualities. This was seen recently for example when increased salt reserves had to be purchased due to the weather conditions. It was essential that the Council delivered a budget that was both affordable and sustainable

The Director explained that it would be of benefit to have parents work together with officials and help monitor the impact of reductions. The budget had been put on a more sustainable basis and budget projections had improved.

D Robertson explained that the finance department was in the process of working out the impact of the budget proposals on devolved school budgets including;

- Absence cover – in terms of visiting specialists;
- Foreign language assistants – non devolved costs to schools; and
- Re-tendering of energy costs

Adjustments made to the budget year on year were permanent and base budgets went forward to the following year unless specifically changed. A full analysis of the effect of central savings on front line staff eg QIQs would be made available once known.

School closures had been taken account of in the 2010/2011 budget.,

The Director explained that a 4% saving in each of the next two budget years would be required. Parental involvement in the budgetary process was important and it may be more beneficial to hold additional smaller group planning meetings to inform discussion at larger meetings.

R Mackenzie asked that it be recognised that officials and elected members had fought for the Children and Families budget. He urged those present to attend an EIS meeting being held in March to try and influence the decision making of national politicians.

It was suggested that if possible a timetable of meetings in the lead up to the setting of the Councils budget should be arranged. The budgetary impact on the moral of children, teachers and parents could be reflected at these meetings as the Councils attainment levels may be affected.

The Convener asked the Group to focus on positive aspects such as a rise in attainment levels despite the difficulties of the past year. Educational successes such as these should be promoted in a more rigorous manner.

### **Decision**

To note D Robertson's presentation and the queries raised.

## **5 Raising Children with Confidence**

L Porteous, Partnership Development Manager and N Stewart, Development Worker gave a presentation on the lottery funded Growing Confidence project and in particular the Raising Children With Confidence element of this.

They outlined how emotional health and wellbeing affects all aspects of children's lives and development. They gave details on the courses being offered to parents and carers which aim to provide the chance to explore different aspects of positive mental health and emotional well being and how best to promote this in themselves and their children. Drawing on the latest findings and research, this course helps to explain the ways in which parents' or carers' actions make a difference to a child's life.

Following the presentation the Group was invited to ask questions.

N Stewart explained that the parent and carer course does not go into detail about individual children but focuses on issues which affect all children's development and wellbeing.

In addition to "Raising Children with Confidence", The Confident Staff, Confident Children course had been run fifty eight times in the past three years with six hundred staff having participated.

The Convener praised the project adding that it was valuable in giving parents confidence and self esteem.

**Decision**

To thank L Porteous and N Stewart for their presentation

**6 Review of CCWP – other approaches to parental engagement and CCWP Focus Group update**

The Convener put forward that there be a review of the role and remit of the CCWP and consideration be given to alternative approaches for parental engagement. This could include a more democratic representation of parents on cluster groups and involve parents and groups which were not actively engaged with the CCWP. Smaller group meetings could encourage some parents to become more involved during discussions.

During discussion the following proposals were put forward;

- Consider alternative models to encourage parental engagement ;
- Build on the CCWP model whereby parents and carers have access to elected members and council officials;
- Identify improved methods to disseminate information on the budget process to parental organisations ie hold smaller group discussions;
- Maintain the CCWP as a discussion body for the following two years;
- Raise the importance of parents being aware both national and local events; and
- Provide induction packs for new members

The Convener thanked the Group for their comments. It was important that she was not distanced from parents and essential that she was available to listen to parental concerns.

The Council was in the process of improving information held on its webpage and was requesting parental input on the content. Parents were invited to attend meetings on this at Waverley Court, East Market Street, Edinburgh on Friday 5 March at 4 pm and Monday 8 March at 8.30am.

**Decisions**

M Rosendale to convene a meeting with parent representatives to consider options for change.

Agreed that members contact G Douglas, Children and Families, with suggestions for an alternative model to the CCWP and also on details about the website meetings.

## **7 Date of Next Meeting**

Noted that the next meeting of the CCWP would take place on 5 May 2010.

The next focus group meeting arranged to take place on Tuesday 9 March 2010 was cancelled.

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**Appendix**

**Parent/School Members Present**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>REPRESENTING</b>
Patricia Aitchison	Balerno High School
Gavin Corbett	Craiglockhart Primary School & Cluster
Lisa Mackenzie	Stockbridge Primary School & Cluster
Miranda Harvey	ASL Forum
Joanna Brady	Bruntsfield & SW Cluster
Mike Wallace	Trinity Academy
Martin Williams	Clermiston Primary School
Eric Jackson	Drumbrae Primary School
Bruce Sherry	East Craigs Primary School
Norma Lynn Devlin	St Thomas of Aquin's High School
Arlene Mooney	Braidburn School
Dougie Cameron	Braidburn School
Rory Mackenzie	Secondary Head Teacher
Stuart Boutell	James Gillespie's Primary School
Catriona Kirkpatrick	Oaklands Special School
Lynda Flex	Drummond Community High School
Alison Walker	Tynecastle High School
Sally Smith	Currie Community High School
Andrea Bracher	Kaimes School
Judith Gillespie	Observer
Tina Woolnough	Royal High School
Iain McGillivray	Firrhill High School
Giri Le Riche	Prospect Primary School
Julie Ann Sime	Tollcross Primary School
Paul Iannetta	Holy Rood High School
Martin Southern	Bonaly Primary School