

Minutes

Consultative Committee with Parents

Edinburgh, 5 December 2013

Present

Councillors Godzik (Convener), Corbett, Dixon and Fullerton
Diane Anderson, Parent Representative, Leith Academy
Alison Bowyer, Parent Representative, Craigmount High School
Sally Cavers, Parent Representative, Deanpark Primary School
Crerar Christie, Parent Representative, Oxfords Primary School
Allan Crosbie, Teacher Representative
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham, South Neighbourhood Group
Lindsay Law, North Neighbourhood Group
Ellen Muir, Pilrig Park School
Liz Power, Citywide Special Schools Group
Alex Ramage, Parent Representative, Prestonfield Primary School
Lorraine Spalding, Parent Representative, Blackhall Primary School
Tina Woolnough, National Parent Forum

Officers in Attendance

Gillian Tee, Director, Children and Families
Alistair Gaw, Head of Support to Children and Young People, Children and Families
Moyra Wilson, Senior Education Manager (Inclusion & Pupil/Parent Support)
Karen Prophet, Senior Education Manager (Quality and Curriculum), Children and Families
Rosie Wilson, Service Manager, Special Schools and Specialist Provision
Laura Nisbet, Development Officer, 'Hungry for Success', Children and Families
Grace Vickers, Quality Improvement Manager (Secondary), Children and Families
Jim Davidson, Corporate Facilities Manager, Services for Communities
Veronica Macmillan, Committee Services, Corporate Governance

1. Welcome

Councillor Godzik welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 3 October 2013 was approved as a correct record.

3. Director's Update

Gillian Tee highlighted a series of items of relevance to parents that would be considered on 10 December 2013 by the Education, Children and Families Committee. These included:-

Castlebrae Community High School – Progress Update

An update on progress towards improving outcomes for learners, parental and community engagement, and increasing the school roll would be considered by the Committee. Longer term improvements which would be required until a new school was built (currently anticipated to be in 2020) would also be outlined together with options for the new school.

Neighbourhood Issues

An issues log had been created to note the issues raised at neighbourhood meetings. The issues raised at neighbourhood meetings were being responded to and any suggestions in terms of improving the format of neighbourhood meetings should be forwarded to Gillian Tee.

Additionally, and also to be considered by the CCwP later in the business, information on the New Highers and national 4 and 5, and work undertaken to improve and boost uptake of school meals would also be considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee.

Decision

To note the information that would be provided to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 21 May 2013.

4. Educational Attainment

Karen Prophet, Senior Education Manager, Children and Families, provided information on issues relating to educational attainment. A report summarising analysis of attainment in the City of Edinburgh's schools for the year 2012-13 would be submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 10 December 2013, and indicated general improvement across all National Priority Targets.

4.1 New Highers

The new Higher qualifications were scheduled to be implemented in 2014/15. The City of Edinburgh were in discussion with Head Teachers and Teacher Unions had agreed there could be additional flexibility in implementation over session 2014/15 and 2015/16. Schools would make final decisions by March 2014 after the SQA Professional Development activities had taken place. Teachers were keen to ensure that the correct materials and adequate resources were in place to achieve the best outcome for pupils.

During discussion it was agreed that providing additional flexibility in implementation was the right approach for the City of Edinburgh. The importance of ensuring that the first students to undertake the new qualifications were not disadvantaged was also stressed.

4.2 National 4 and 5

These courses had been introduced from session 2013/14 and replaced the current Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications.

Decision

To note that a report on the implementation of the new Highers would be submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2014.

5. School Meals

Jim Davidson, Services for Communities, spoke on the subject of school meals, currently delivered by three different catering providers. In the PPP (Public Private Partnership) contract schools these were provided by either Amey or by Chartwell. Catering to non-PPP schools was provided by the Council through the Integrated Property and Facilities Management (IPFM) service.

Discussions had been ongoing since April to canvass parents' opinions of school meals with a view to improving the end product. While representations thus far had yielded some positive feedback, it was acknowledged that work remained to be done. The comments would be used to feed into the proposals to be brought to the March 2014 meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee.

The Food for Life Project had prompted a pilot scheme involving two or three schools, the outcome of which would be also be reported to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2014. A report detailing work to increase uptake of school meals was going to the meeting on Tuesday 10 December 2013.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Disparity in the quality of food offered
- portion size/control
- electronic payment for school meals
- sourcing local/organic produce.

Mr Davidson asked that if anyone had comments or ideas they wished to raise with him they could contact him by email :- jim.davidson@edinburgh.gov.uk

Decision

To note the information and that a further report on the subject of school meals would go to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2014.

6. Budget Update

Gillian Tee updated the Committee on the draft budget and the meetings that were taking place with the chairs of parent councils, head teachers and the wider public to gather feedback on the proposals ahead of them being finalised in February. Areas of particular debate were Additional Support Needs, Libraries, Primary management; and class size, particularly for core literacy and numeracy classes. During discussion, the following points/issues were highlighted:

- Some members expressed concern at the costs of employing Ernst and Young, but were informed that their work was across the whole Council, so not being funded by the Children and Families Department.
- Some members felt that they needed more information on aspects of the proposals and were directed to the Council's website which had much more information on the plans for Children and Young People, and the City generally - www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget/
- The need for Council recognition of how pinched school budgets were already.
- The need to maximise income generation as well as make savings.
- Gillian Tee stated that work on energy efficiency in schools including efficiency audits was underway.

Decision

- 1) That a link to the budget page be circulated to members.
- 2) That successful ideas/suggestions for savings or income generation be reported back for inclusion in the Director's Update.

7. Issues Arising from Committee Reports

Gillian Tee described how, following an extensive survey of the school estate, the Council now had an accurate picture of what works were required to improve Edinburgh's schools. The coalition had approved a targeted capital investment programme of £30 m over the next five years for this purpose.

Decision

To note that a further report on the issue of Capital works in school would be presented in early 2014.

8. Communications

8.1 New website

The Committee had previously received a presentation on work undertaken to develop web communications for parents. At that time, it had not been decided whether the information would be presented through a free-standing parents' website, or form part of the main Council site.

Moyra Wilson, Children and Families, presented sample pages developed for the new 'parental engagement' section, to form part of the Council website. She explained that the pages would include a video to inform parents of the role of the CCwP. It was intended that the pages would be circulated round parent councils and community groups to get feedback on content and layout.

Decision

To ask that the sample web pages be circulated to parent councils and community groups as soon as possible.

(Reference – sample web pages, submitted.)

8.2 Issues Action Log

Moyra Wilson provided an update on the development of the Action Log. Issues that were raised from the Neighbourhood meetings would be entered into the action log to ensure that they were picked up by the appropriate officers and investigated.

Decision

To note the update.

9. Neighbourhood Updates

Diane Anderson reported on the discussion at the North Neighbourhood Group as follows:

- Science and Engineering Week 2014 (NSEW) - a ten-day national programme of science, technology, engineering and maths events and activities across the UK aimed at people of all ages. Anyone could organise an event or activity and the British Science Association would help organisers plan by providing free activity and support resources. Would it be possible to stage an event in Edinburgh?

Alex Ramage reported on the discussion at the South Neighbourhood Group, highlighting the following:

- Was the slowness of the rollout of Wisepay due to the size of the company? The Group had asked how the company was chosen and whether it would be able to cope with demand

Gillian Tee reported that she was meeting with the Head of IT and would report back.

Liz Power from the Citywide Special Schools Group provided an update on the financial successes experienced by special schools across the City.

Decision

To note the updates and agree to include the minutes of neighbourhood updates in papers for future meetings.

10. Preventing and Responding to Bullying and Prejudice in City of Edinburgh Council Schools

The Education, Children and Families Committee of 8 October 2013 considered a report which updated on work undertaken to reduce bullying and prejudice in Edinburgh schools, and sought approval for some changes to the Council's policy and procedures.

The Committee agreed, amongst other things, to refer the report to the Consultative Committee with Parents and Neighbourhood Parent Groups for their interest.

Decision

1) To note the report.

2) To agree to consider the issue in greater depth at the next meeting.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 8 October 2013 (minute item 11), report by the Head of Legal Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

11. Adjustment to the Regulations for the Appointment of the Parent Representatives to the Education, Children and Families Committee

The Council, on 24 October 2013, approved revised political management arrangements including the adjustment of the regulations for the appointment of religious, teacher and parent representatives to the Education, Children and Families Committee.

Decision

- 1) To note the adjustment to the term of appointment of the parent representative from the CCWP to the Education, Children and Families Committee.
- 2) To note that the parent representative on the Education, Children and Families Committee may appoint a substitute representative to the Committee with immediate effect.
- 3) To note that in terms of the adjusted regulations for appointment of Religious, Teacher and Parent Representatives, the new parent representative to the Education, Children and Families Committee will take up post after 31 July 2015.

(Reference - briefing note from the Education, Children and Families Committee, submitted.)

12. Report from the National Parent Forum Representative

Tina Woonough appraised Committee members of issues discussed at the National Parent Forum Annual Conference on 5 October 2013, the theme of which was 'healthy, happy children'.

She updated on the current focus group work she was personally orchestrating such as the group set up to review guidance on education of children absent from school through ill health.

Other areas of interest presently included the Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice, specifically about those issues that were of particular significance to parents with children who had Additional Support Needs. Further involvement would follow when a draft of the document became available.

Comments and views were also being sought on assessment and general education. The group looking at this topic had met two weeks earlier with a representative from the SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority).

The Forum was putting together more resources; a revision guide compiled of books recommended by teachers, to be given to the parents of all S3 and S4 pupils.

Decision

To note the verbal report.

13. Report from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council Representative

Unfortunately, Eileen Prior was unable to attend the meeting.

Decision

To receive an update at the next meeting.