

Note of Meeting

Item 3.1

Consultative Committee with Parents

6:00pm Thursday 4 October 2018

City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Present:

Elected Members

Councillors Perry (in the Chair), Mary Campbell, Bird and Laidlaw.

Locality Groups - Parent Representatives

Paul Millan, North West Locality (Roseburn Primary Parent Council)

Melissa Wilson, North West Locality (Fox Covert Primary Parent Council)

Billy Samuel, North West Locality (Corstorphine Primary Parent Council)

Alex Ramage, South East Locality (Education, Children & Families Parent Rep)

Becky Entwistle, South East Locality (Royal Mile Primary Parent Council)

Derek McNeil, (South East Locality (Liberton High School Parent Council)

Naomi Barton, South West Locality (Currie Community High School)

Gareth Oakley, South West Locality (Craiglockhart Primary Parent Council)

Kevin Kealy, South West Locality (Currie Community High Parent Council)

Officers in Attendance

David Bruce, Senior Education Manager, Community Services

Andrew Easson, Manager, Place

Alistair Gaw, Executive Director for Communities and Families

Andy Gray, Head of Schools & Lifelong Learning

Maria Plant, Schools and Lifelong Learning Service Manager

Mark Stenhouse, Senior Manager, Facilities Management, Recourses

Blair Ritchie, Committee Services

Apologies

Councillors Dickie; Laura Miller (CEC) and Eileen Prior (Connect).

1. Note of Previous Meeting

Decision

The Note of Meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 17 May 2018 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

2. Rolling Action Log

Decision

- 1) To note the following actions:
 - (a) Action 1 – To be discussed at meeting.
 - (b) Action 2 – To be part of the proposed agenda for December.
- 2) To update the Rolling Action Log and note the remaining outstanding actions.

3. Update from the Executive Director for Communities and Families

The Executive Director for Communities and Families provided an update for the period since the previous meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents. He indicated that there had been considerable activity since the last meeting. Referring to the Business Bulletin for the Education, Children and Families Committee, he explained that this was a synopsis of events which had taken place. Additionally, there had been positive activity across the schools estate. He then highlighted the following issues:

Event in Holyrood Park

David Bruce explained that this was a new event for Edinburgh. The Authority had hosted the biggest “classroom” in the UK, which ran over two days. Although the first day was undermined by inclement weather and they had had to cancel, on the second day, there were approximately 900 participants. This was a huge success, which he hoped to repeat.

Consultation on Schools in the South/West.

There were two of the key committee reports for the Education, Children and Families Committee, which were concerned with the Consultation on Schools in the South/West. A working group was now active and had recently met for the first time.

The Convener indicated that he had chaired that working group, which was a “scoping out” exercise. Two issues had emerged, which were how to address the falling roll of Wester Hailes Education Centre and the curriculum. There had been lengthy discussions about improving communication, as 50% of parents did not send their children to WHEC. There were also discussions on the curriculum, which was quite wide and could be further expanded.

The City Deal for Edinburgh would mean that there would be £1b spent on projects and infrastructure and would potentially bring 100,000 new jobs to Edinburgh.

It was necessary to decide on the best way to proceed, how to embed this, and to consider the school curriculum.

School Attainment

It was reported that there were two committee reports relating to attainment. One of the reports related to the framework for learning, the other was on broad general education.

In respect of SQA attainment, 80% of children in Edinburgh performed better than average. However, there was the issue of the attainment gap, which the Authority wanted to close. There were different types of attainment. There were some indications of success in narrowing the gap. In the other report, which related to raising attainment framework for learning, it was asked what framework existed to support schools to ensure that they had the resources to narrow that gap. Within that there was the National Improvement Framework. There was element of how it was possible to improve exam results, as well as health and wellbeing and pathways to work. There were a range of different measures, and it was thought that one measure did not define a child. The Authority had a good record at getting people into a pathway that they adhered to - Sustained Destinations. However, some of the measures were not helpful and some of the measures such as Initial Destinations were not as high as the national average. But the Authority were more interested in Sustained Destinations and wanted quality destinations and meaningful pathways, rather than merely ticking boxes.

The Director indicated that there would be another report on young people's mental health and wellbeing. A future meeting could look at this specifically. Additionally, it would be advantageous to have something specific on the budget consultation at the meeting in December.

Decision

Members of the Consultative Committee to send in questions to the Executive Director for Communities and Families to be raised at the Committee meeting on 9 October 2018.

4. School Let Update

David Bruce provided an update on School Lets. The Council had a positive history of the use of schools to help community need, which would continue. Different processes and systems had been put in place. Secondary schools were different from primary schools, as bookings for secondary schools had to be done through Edinburgh Leisure, whereas, booking non-sporting events for secondary schools was done through the individual schools. Primary schools were different as they were administered through the Central Team. A document was being produced – the Primary Schools Let handbook – which would be sent to individual head teachers and other stakeholders, and would cover all aspects of school lets. The Authority could still be processing lets for primary schools and would continue to support community access to schools. Working within new model of Facilities Management (FM) cover, the new model did not undermine the continued community use of schools. However, it had to be recognised that some schools were not being used and this involved cost and this meant passing some of that on to users.

Each primary school head teacher was allocated 32 hours a year, which they had to use to make their statutory commitments. Each head teacher had the capacity to negotiate with parent councils about the allocation of these hours and that relationship remained in place. But there was a lack of consistency regarding the practices adopted by head teacher. Parent councils could continue to meet in school after 6.00 pm with no cost to them, when the school was already being used. But to make efficiency savings, if the school was opened one particular night, they wanted to maximise the number of activities. This might be an issue for parent councils who would have to negotiate with head teachers. Difficulties arose when school had no history of being open. If the school was not already open, then the parent council would be charged. They should look to the authority for an alternative venue, where there was no cost to the Council.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Nothing should be taking place in schools after 4.00 pm/holidays without the knowledge of Senior Education Manager, Community Services and Head Teacher.
- There should be better communication between primary school head teachers and parent councils in respect of the dates available for activities, and if there were going to be charges imposed.
- Sometimes fundraising activities could not run at the same time as martial arts clubs as they used the same rooms.
- The FM Review was designed to match the budget going forward and would allow secondary schools full FM support. If certain events clashed in a primary school, then the parent council should be prepared to hold the event in a secondary school or pay extra money.
- Income generation was not the driver for the new letting system, it was about maintaining activity level and establishing a consistency of approach as well as maintaining income levels.
- The secondary schools environment was different to that of primary schools because of decision to transfer responsibility for community access to sports facilities from the Council to Edinburgh Leisure. However, business managers in secondary schools still had to process non-sporting lets.
- PC's often held good fundraising social activities in primary schools, however, if they had to transfer these to secondary schools, this could involve travel for children. Additionally, if they had to pay for lets, they might have to stop certain activities.
- Different ways of working had to be considered. However, PC's should only transfer events if it was appropriate and did not interfere with activities.
- Some of head teachers were trying to look at the "bank" of hours and had said that they would need 99% to meet their statutory duties. Also, people sometimes turned up, but without a permit, the head teacher did not know they were there.
- Janitorial overtime was not compulsory and as all of these lets were based on non-core hours, there was uncertainty built into this system.

- The model was no different from last year. There was increase across the whole janitorial team, which meant there probably would be cover for schools.
- The Guidance should have been issued earlier. Everyone knew about budgetary uncertainties, but there was the issue of building work going on in some schools. The PC's needed a clear steer at start of the year on Guidance, which would have avoided confusion and allow them to plan their activities.
- Would the proposed increase in cost of lets take place in the New Year for secondary schools and what would be consequences?
- Officers were undertaking an impact assessment on clubs and activities and they would report to the Education, Children and Families Committee Cttee and Finance and Resources Committee in December. A decision had not yet been taken.
- The Authority had put extra money into the budget to ensure that cost would not rise. When the report came back they would make decision.
- The Authority had been asked to delay the implementation of increases. It was necessary to get the agreement of the elected members or seek another solution. The Authority were also in contact with representatives from sporting organisations.
- For Primary School Lets, people could not get into the schools as they were sometimes locked. Were there any plans to guarantee the rest of the year's lets?
- The School Lets Team who oversaw business transactions were currently working through all of the applications for the current and future terms.
- There might not have been access to schools for various reasons, such as lack of janitorial cover or a systems difficulty. It was necessary to update the systems, clear the backlog and improve understanding and transparency.
- There were numerous local arrangements that the Central Team did not know about.
- Some schools were now sharing janitorial cover with community centres, which caused concern regarding cover. However, the new guidance would clarify people's roles and responsibilities and ensure that PC's would know who to contact.
- How long would it take to confirm a let?
- PC's would need to think inventively on how to make the best use of space. There might be additional cost for shared space.
- A head teacher could not open a school after 6.00 pm, if janitorial cover could not be found. The new proposals might work for 85% of schools, but 15% of schools might have to reconsider.

Decision

- 1) To note the update.
- 2) To provide support to let parent councils know what activities were taking place in their schools during the term, to make it easier for them to pick their slot.
- 3) To ensure better communication took place with parent councils and invite application for school lets at the start of term to avoid being charged.

- 4) David Bruce to have discussions with parent councils who had left particular venues, and wanted to make representations.

5. Facilities Management Review - Update

Mark Stenhouse provided an update on the Facilities Management Review, indicating that the system went live on 6 August with the new janitorial role specified. The service had not been reviewed for 20 years and it was necessary to create a level of service that was consistent and to “upskill” Janitors. A large number of establishments had increased hours and there were an extra 33 FTE. They were working closely with LETS Team to review issues such as why a building was not open. If one building would not open due to janitorial cover, it should be possible to cover the let.

The following issues were raised in discussion:

- There should have been better communication at start of school year regarding the changes.
- There could be some unforeseen consequences, such as the reduction of janitor’s hours, which forced janitors to take on a second job, which meant they were unable to do overtime.
- There would be no job cuts and staff hours would be protected although staff may have had to change location. There was now much more in their job specification and the majority of staff were in a better position regarding pay.

Decision

To note the update.

6. 20mph Limits on School Streets and Vehicle Activated Signs

Andrew Easson indicated that he had nothing to add, but he was happy to take questions.

The following issues were raised in discussion:

- The Authority had taken away flashing lights at the Royal High Primary School, motorists were ignoring the 20 mph limit outside schools and there was zero enforcement. Data had been sent from the sensor review in January, but there was concern that the data was inaccurate. Speeding was much higher than average and the parents wanted the flashing lights back to make motorists slow down.
- The reason that the signs were removed was that there was that there had to be compliance with national legislation. Signs with flashing lights could only be used at part-time 20 mph zones. These had been replaced by “fixed plates” school warning sign which were less visible. However, there was a review of the 20 mph roll-out in general and a commitment to monitor its impact and report back to Committee.

- Northfield Broadway had been raised as a priority concern and some work had been carried out in relation to this. Where sensors were set, it should be ensured that they were pointing in the right direction. When the issue was raised, the Authority had said that they would install additional sensors and would carry out a short term survey.
- The police had been consulted and were committed to enforcing the 20 mph speed where possible, within their resources, with a focus on roads outside schools or places where there had been accidents. The Authority would pass information on to police if there was a problem. The police had published the number of people who had been stopped and charged. They had been adopting a “softly softly” approach.
- Roseburn Primary Schools was one of the first schools in phase 1. Because of its geographical location, parents were concerned about safety. The Team installed Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS), but this was only for 2 weeks. The most vulnerable groups were the young and the old and secondary schools should have been prioritised for monitoring. Who decided on monitoring and why was there not more of this outside primary schools?
- There was a process for deciding on the monitoring of sites, which was done in consultation with the locality roads manager, road engineers and police. These sites were not specially targeted at schools, more at roads. When it was thought that there would be a problem, they focussed on 64 sites initially. The purpose of the timing, was to monitor overall success, for which they needed comparative data.
- Regarding the issue of roads outside schools, if a short-term survey outside school was carried out, this was not particularly informative. Temporary VAS’s were being circulated round city and for two week periods, they recorded the speed. Where there was problem, there would be monitoring, then a review. It was possible to recommend a number of measures such as a lower speed limit. There might be priority action outside certain schools, such as Roseburn.
- A good number of PC’s would have been happy if there was a big flashing sign saying “School 20”, or just “school”.
- If signs were erected that did not comply with legislation, then they would be unenforceable.
- The 20 mph limit was introduced to reduce accidents, however, according to the data generated, it was found that 20 mph limit had made the situation worse. Could this be revised to 30 mph and a flashing sign erected?
- It was hoped to change motorists’ behaviour and make them drive slower.
- There should be indication that there was primary school round the corner. A big flashing sign was a real visual indication of this.
- Regarding the School Crossing Patrol review, it was hoped to have it finished at end of the year, but it might be necessary to extend the timescales. Work was still being carried out on the Review and a report would be submitted to the Transport and Environment Committee in December.

- Three schools had been identified for the School Streets 2nd Phase, for immediate implementation. It would be 18 months before the Authority would be looking for more expressions of interest. If everything was satisfactory, then it would be rolled forward.
- There was an Active Travel Liaison Officer, who helped prepare the requests for people's expressions of interest. The officer would know when next group of applications would be made.
- There was a group of residents who were getting a new early years centre and they were concerned about the impact that this would have on traffic. Could they be directed somewhere?
- If a development would have impact on traffic, the developer was required to provide a traffic impact assessment as a condition of the planning consent.
- Each team in planning had a transport officer who looked at these issues. If a development looked controversial, they would consult with the Active Travel Team.

Decision

To note the update.

7. Locality Representatives – Key Issues

Citywide Special Schools Group

It was explained that there was no representative for this Group as most of their questions had already been answered.

South West Locality Group

Delayed Building Works

The main issue was about delayed building works in the summer, at Craiglockhart Primary School. This might have been because of budgetary or other issues, but these should have been factored in. If the Authority made promises, they should ensure that they were delivered.

It was agreed that the Authority should deliver on promises made. However, some buildings needed repairs and the 5 week allocated was not enough time.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- This delay was not expected, there had been disruption and the process was clearly not fit for purpose.
- The Authority was not trying to defend the situation. The budget was not the problem, it was the supply of staff and the contracts which were delayed.

Consultation Process for Boundary Change

Juniper Green had been without their Head Teacher for a small period of time and this had been having a negative effect on the school. Now the school was in a consultation process for boundary change and there were concerns about school capacity.

- The report from Education, Children and Families provided information on the capacity for Nether Currie Primary School.

- A strategy in forward planning needed to be in place, which was picked up as part of the consultation.
- The catchment review for Neither Currie started a few years ago. But the boundary was now reduced and excluded these parents who initially started the process. However, this should be picked up as part of the consultation.

Decision

- 1) To note the issues.
- 2) To determine why the building works at Craiglockhart Primary School, in the summer were delayed.
- 3) To find out about the contractual problems, at Craiglockhart, and if the circumstances were exceptional.

North West Locality Group

Edinburgh Learning Parental Engagement

There had been a lot of positive discussion about Edinburgh Learning Parental Engagement. Schools lets was also a big issue.

IT Strategy

IT Strategy was an issue and some people in the locality were wanting an additional level of guidance.

How was the Authority building out from the Corporate IT Strategy to the Educational IT strategy? What was overall strategy for Education, Children and Families and then for individual schools?

Delayed Building Works

Regarding the summer building works for the school, Fox Covert PS was in the same situation as Craiglockhart PS – the work was not started. Parents had heard about plans and knew that they could go awry. When the commitment was made, some parents did not think that the plans existed. They knew that there were contractual issues around Fox Covert. The project manager was covering 16 projects, which was not sustainable and it was not surprising that expectations had not been met. The Authority should be realistic when it made commitments to parents. The parents were upset because their activities were cancelled.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- These issues were serious. The Authority heard the frustrations expressed and would look at them.
- There seemed to be a fundamental communication problem.
- On a more positive note, Corstorphine Primary School had a new nursery built, as well as other work in the holidays, which demonstrated that it could be done.

Decision

- 1) To invite an ITC specialist to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee.

- 2) The Authority to learn from the delayed summer building works at schools, get this coordination better in future and to liaise with the Locality Group.

South East Locality Group

The two main issues of concern for the group had been dealt with earlier.

North East Locality Group

Delayed Building Works

The group wanted to reiterate from all the localities the frustration that was felt at the delayed building work in the summer.

“Bring Your Own Device”

Reference was made to the pilot scheme of “Bring Your Own Device” at James Gillespie’s High School, which permitted pupils to bring their own mobile phones to school for educational purposes. It would be beneficial to get an update on this.

Decision

To find out if the pilot scheme – “Bring Your Own Device”- at James Gillespie’s High School had been started.

8. Update from Connect

A brief outline was provide of Connect which was the updated resources for PC and PTA members. Eileen Prior from Connect would have given a fuller presentation, but she had sent her apologies.

It was explained that normally there was a representative present from National Parent Council, but they had stepped down from that position. The new Edinburgh representative was Maggie Campbell.

Decision

To invite the new Edinburgh Representative for the National Parent Council to the next meeting of the Consultative Forum.

9. Dates of Next Meetings

Budgetary Meeting

It was suggested that there should be a meeting to discuss the budget. There was a consultation process being undertaken where the Authority was trying to involve as many people as possible. For a 4 year budget, this would be good opportunity to explain this to more parents and to have a more inclusive meeting.

Agenda for Next Meeting

Mental Health would be on the agenda for 6 December. Normally there was an agenda setting meeting, which would be held two weeks before the meeting on 6 December. Meeting. The date for agenda planning meeting was already in most peoples’ diaries.

Decision

- 1) To agree to have a special meeting to discuss the budget and to open it up to a wider group of parents.

2) To note the dates of the next meetings:

Thursday 6 December 2018 at 6pm in the City Chambers

Thursday 28 February 2019 at 6pm in the City Chambers

Thursday 16 May 2019 at 6pm in the City Chambers