

Education, Children & Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 9 December 2014

Liberton High School

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	

Executive summary

This report seeks to update Committee on the steps taken following the tragic event which led to the death of Keane Wallis Bennett on 1 April 2014 at Liberton High School. Specifically:-

- How immediate concerns regarding the facilities and support for pupils were met.
- How intermediate issues are being addressed.
- Longer term plans for considering the inclusion of the school in possible future new build programmes.

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Liberton High School Report: Post 1 April 2014

Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to note progress made.

Background

- 2.1 Keane Wallis Bennett tragically died on 1 April 2014 in the school gymnasium's changing area.
- 2.2 This tragic accident has resulted in significant impact on the children, staff and parents as well as the wider community including pupils in local primary schools.

Main report

- 3.1 The Head of Schools and Community Services and Senior Education Manager - Inclusion, responded immediately to the emergency call from the school, alerting Health and Safety, Property and Media teams before arriving at the school. The Senior Education Manager - Inclusion remained on site for the week, co-ordinating support for the school in conjunction with the Head Teacher and his Senior Management Team. This support consisted of Educational Psychologists and Quality Improvement staff who offered confidential advice and support to staff and pupils. A member of the media team was also on site throughout the first week assisting with interaction with the media who were continuously present at the school gate.
- 3.2 Following the tragic accident at Liberton High School it was agreed that a Project Group should be formed – membership included local elected members, three Parent Council representatives and the Director of Children and Families.
- 3.3 This Project Group, which included representatives of the Liberton High School community, agreed terms of reference (appendix 1).
- 3.4 The Project Group had three purposes:
 - (i) To address immediate concerns regarding the facilities and support for pupils at Liberton High School.
 - (ii) Consider options for the future including a new school.
 - (iii) Co-produce a report to be considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee in December 2014.

- 3.5 The Head Teacher and staff were determined to maintain as normal an approach as possible and should be commended for ensuring the school continued to provide Easter revision on site during the Easter holiday. This was a very popular decision and staff and pupils attended in large numbers.
- 3.6 The Council's provider of emotional wellbeing support, Right Management, was engaged with all staff associated in any way with the incident.
- 3.7 The gymnasium where the accident took place was sealed off for the purposes of the HSE investigation.
- 3.8 The loss of the gymnasium created an immediate reduction in teaching space and consideration was given to temporary arrangements until a longer term solution could be found.
- 3.9 Concern was expressed regarding the reputational harm that this incident could have on the school especially if parents would chose to go elsewhere for their children's secondary education.
- 3.10 In response to the potential for reputational harm felt by parents, the Council's media team, with school staff and parents, identified a strategy for promoting the positive aspects of Liberton High School. The Evening News covered a number of pieces including Liberton's involvement in the Commonwealth Games Baton Relay, Health 4 U Initiative and the Jamie Skinner funding raising campaign. Work is ongoing to improve the schools' online profile.
- 3.11 It was agreed that pupils would never be asked to enter the gymnasium again, following an engagement exercise with pupils and parents. There was unanimous support for this and on 26 June 2014 Council approved the demolition of the existing gym block and the provision of replacement Physical Education (PE) facilities through extending the separate building within which the other PE facilities at the school are currently already provided. The existing gym block has now been demolished.
- 3.12 During the summer school vacation, a new dance studio was created in the main school building. Corporate Property should be commended for ensuring that this was ready before the start of the new 2014/15 session.
- 3.13 On 21 August 2014 Council approved gross capital expenditure of up to £2.5m to provide the replacement PE facilities with two-thirds of this (up to a maximum contribution of £1,666,667) being provided by the Scottish Government, the remainder being provided by the Council.
- 3.14 Council also requested a report investigating funding and delivery options to include additional PE accommodation which might be required at the school in the future, including possible options for dual delivery. On 30 September 2014 the Finance and Resources Committee considered options to deliver this wider project scope and agreed that it should not be progressed as there is no

necessity to deliver any additional PE accommodation at this time and the costs of doing so would be significant.

- 3.15 The project to deliver the extension is now being progressed and is already well advanced; the planning application was submitted on 31 October 2014 with completion anticipated to be by June 2016.
- 3.16 A key aspect of the design of the new extended gym hall will be the provision of a memorial garden. This area is being designed with the support of Grounds for Learning in full consultation with pupils and with the support of Keane's parents.
- 3.17 Whilst the school has significant external sports facilities, none of these are all weather therefore the school is currently seeking funding for the creation of a 3G sports pitch. It will be important that, if such a project was to be progressed, the location of such a pitch is carefully considered to ensure that it would not compromise the design of any future school extension, or replacement project which may be required on the site.
- 3.18 The longer term ambition of the school community is to have a new school building.
- 3.19 Since 2000 the Council has undertaken a significant and sustained level of investment in its school estate. With funding having been identified to deliver all five schools in the Wave 3 programme, and most of the projects well underway, it is now appropriate to consider a fourth wave of investment – a 'Wave 4' school investment programme. At its meeting on 25 September 2014 Council received an update on the existing priorities which already exist within the Wave 4 programme and approved the proposed approach to determining the remaining scope of that programme noting that a report will be taken back to Council on the outcome of this process at a later date. Liberton High School is one of several secondary schools and primary schools which have been identified to be considered for inclusion in the scope of the Wave 4 school investment programme.
- 3.20 The incident received a high level of media interest and the Council's Communications Team provided professional media management support to the school throughout. While the situation was well managed, as part of the team's approach to continuous improvement, advice will be updated for schools in terms of major incident management and the media.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Completion of demolition of the old gym without disruption to the school day.
- 4.2 The creation of the enhanced PE facilities by the extension of the 'new' games hall with the inclusion of a memorial space.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial impacts arising directly from this report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There is a risk of neighbours objecting to the proposed extension during the planning process. Consultation was undertaken with them to inform them of the intention to submit a planning application and to seek their feedback to establish any concerns which they might have and identify any amendments to the design which might mitigate these concerns either fully or partially. As a result of the feedback from local residents, a number of mitigating changes were made in arriving at the final design (compared with that which was subject to consultation) in order to address some of the concerns expressed.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 All work within this area seeks to address inequalities both in terms of provision of resources and impact on outcomes for children and young people. There are no negative impacts arising from this work.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no adverse economic, social or environmental impacts resulting from these areas of activity.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Pupils, staff, parents, elected members and senior officers have been involved in the consultation process regarding the status of the old gym and proposals for its demolition and for the extension to the existing PE facility.
- 9.2 Neighbours to the school site were consulted on the proposed extension to the existing PE facility before the planning application was submitted. It is planned to have a further meeting with the neighbours and also with Liberton and District Community Council during the planning process.
- 9.3 The Parent Council were consulted and have submitted an appendix to the report.

Background reading/external references

[Report 8.1, City of Edinburgh Council Meeting – 21 August 2014](#)

Gillian Tee

Director of Children & Families

Contact: Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Community Services

E-mail: andy.gray@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 2217

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Appendices

1 Liberton High School Parent Council

2 Terms of Reference for Liberton High School Project Group

**LIBERTON HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL
DECEMBER 2014**

Introduction

The Parent Council believes that Liberton High School should benefit from a new building. In the context of newly built schools in the area, our building appears to be outdated and unattractive. Together with the tragic events that led to the death of Keane Wallis Bennett, there is a perception amongst some in our community that we might not have the facilities required to deliver the curricular entitlements as set out by Curriculum for Excellence.

The Importance of Wave 4

Along with six other schools across Edinburgh we are currently undergoing scoping for inclusion in the Wave 4 programme. This process ranks buildings purely on the basis of condition and suitability for delivering a modern curriculum. We believe that in Wave 3, the differentials between schools were very small. **Our biggest fear is narrowly missing out on Wave 4 through a standardised scoping process which does not take into account our tragic circumstances and their impact on our community.**

A young person died, in school on an ordinary day, because part of the building fell and struck her. We must emphasise the impact this event has had and we ask the Council to take account of this in our Wave 4 assessment. The psychological effect the school building now has on the pupils, staff, parents, cluster primaries and wider community cannot be ignored. As a school, parent council and community we remain deeply sad for Keane's family at their terrible loss of a daughter, sister and grand-daughter.

Many of Keane's friends and those young people present at the time of the accident experienced anxiety after Keane died. We believe they have been well supported and, amongst other things, continue to be helped by their families and the Seasons for Growth programme, are planning an outdoor learning space at the school with Keane's family as a memorial and have recorded a song. However, we remain extremely concerned that these young people have had to cope with a very challenging experience in addition to the normal demands of the teenage years.

As a parent council, we have reinstated regular meetings with cluster parent council chairs and the benefit has already been felt in our joint working on the consultation for LDP2. However, cluster parents also expressed that the building does not compare favourably with other Edinburgh secondary schools in this area which have been or will be rebuilt (Holy Rood, Gracemount, St Thomas', Portobello, Boroughmuir and James Gillespies). Indeed, because the school is one of the last in the City to be addressed, many had the impression that the school was a lower priority for investment and have expressed a reluctance, as a result of this, to make Liberton their first choice. These concerns were compounded by the tragic accident. We remain extremely concerned that cluster parents continue to struggle to see beyond the building to the excellent education and nurturing environment within.

There is a knock-on effect here too, to the whole sense of how valued Liberton feels as a community within the City. We have many third and fourth generation pupils at the

school. Indeed, we suspect that there can be few high schools in Edinburgh which are as strongly rooted in the surrounding community and have played such a large part in the lives of so many of those living in the catchment. Liberton is not a wealthy community. The High School has potential to be a huge force for good or ill in the lives of the families it serves. As a Parent Council we have nothing but admiration for what the staff does, but they do this despite the state of the building. With every wave of refurbishment elsewhere in the City, the failure to invest equally in Liberton High School becomes more of an issue.

In addition, as we feel the scoping exercise will reveal that there is very little to choose between the schools in most need of a rebuild and that Liberton is certainly in this category. As a parent council we understand that all of the parents from the six other schools will feel strongly about the needs of their own school, however, Liberton is in this instance a special case. The impact on our pupils and on the community cannot be quantified through a scoping exercise. **Our biggest fear is narrowly missing out on Wave 4 through a standardised scoping process which does not take into account our particular circumstances.**

Conclusion

We want to:

- Make our children feel valued and safe
- Provide the best environment to encourage learning and a positive school community
- Demonstrate that accidents at the school have been taken seriously
- Give those living in the surrounding community a sense that they matter to the City

We recognise that Liberton High School has had remedial works undertaken to ensure the building is safe, water tight and complies with Health and Safety regulations but these are considered short term measures and we expect a more long term, permanent solution. As a community we continue to work together to heal the psychological cracks. Will we once again be placed at the bottom of the pile of schools in need of physical investment, our community mental health disregarded because it didn't fit the criteria of how schools are assessed for investment?

Acknowledgements

Liberton High School Parent Council would like to thank our Head Teacher, Mr Stephen Kelly and all staff for their leadership, time commitment, support, patience and understanding throughout this difficult time. We would also like to thank the Council and the Scottish Government for their swift actions: the demolition of the Old Gym Hall, the architect's plans for replacement PE facilities and the replacement dance studio. The impressive speed with which these have been actioned is appreciated by the whole community. Particular thanks go to Mrs Gillian Tee and the members of the Project Group, for the collaborative nature of the meetings, their commitment, and for listening to, and understanding, our concerns.

Liberton High School Parent Council
4th November 2014

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR LIBERTON HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT GROUP

Purpose:

1. To address immediate concerns regarding the facilities and support for pupils at Liberton High.
2. Consider options for the future including a new school.
3. Co-produce a Report to be considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee in December 2014.

Membership:

Gillian Tee, Director of Children and Families (Chair)
Stephen Kelly, Head Teacher Liberton High School
Marion Hemmingway-Brunt, Parent Council Chair, Liberton HS
3 Members of Parent Council (to be identified by parent chair)
Cllr Norma Austin-Hart
Peter Watton, Head of Corporate Property
Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Community Services
Joyce Nisbet, Communications Manager
Karen Prophet, Senior Education Manager
Paul Ewing, Cluster Head Teacher Representation

Issues to be addressed:

Decision about future use of Old Gym
Property Improvements
Support for pupils and staff
Engagement strategy with Parents and wider community and local primary schools
Reassurance and promotion of the school to wider community through effective use of Media
Consideration of future options including a new school
A process will be established to seek the views of all parents and pupils feeding into the pupil and parent representatives

Timescale:

Immediate issues to be addressed as a matter of urgency and strategic proposals to be through Committee by December 2014