

Note of meeting

Consultative Committee with Parents

6.00pm, Thursday 19 August 2021

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Present

Elected Members

Councillor Dickie (Convenor) and Councillor Louise Young.

Parent Representatives

Alex Ramage (Education Children & Families Committee Parent Representative)

Billy Samuel

Karen Galloway

Amanda Collins

Andrea

Kevin Kealey

Kate Morris

Naomi Barton

External Officer Representatives

Eileen Prior (Connect)

Council Officers in Attendance

Jack Simpson, Senior Education Officer

Anna Gray, Senior Education Officer

Lynn Patterson, Senior Education Manger for Early Years and Primary

Lorna French, Acting Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning

Natalie Le Couteur, Committee Services

Jude Salmon, Active Schools Manager

Mel Coutts, Strategic Lead for Sport & Physical Activity

Crawford McGhie, Senior Manager – Estates & Operational Support

Darren McKinnon, Quality Improvement Officer

Marie Lyon, Quality Improvement Education Officer

Michelle McMillan, Operations Manager

Apologies

Councillors Perry

Councillor Laidlaw

Julien Kramer – Interim Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

Arran Findlay, Senior Education Officer

1. Note of Meeting

Decision

To approve the note of Meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP) of 13 May 2021.

2. Review of Last Year

Lorna French, Acting Chief Education Officer shared a review of last year, which focussed on empowered learning and the positive experience of this for the City of Edinburgh Council alongside the decision to equip all pupils with a digital device, which represented a series of opportunities as a flagship authority taking this initiative forward. There would be focus groups and information sharing events with parents in response to this decision. Acknowledgement was paid to teachers and parents supporting each other during the past year. The Scottish Government guidance had to be adhered to and the Council did this to keep everyone safe.

Decision

To record thanks on behalf of the Convenor for the commitment made by all those involved in teaching and learning.

3. Education, Children and Families Committee Report Update

Schools had been reflecting on learning, attainment and teaching at this stage of the Year. Reports would review the previous year such as the standards and qualities report which would influence the education improvement plan. Fairer, greener and healthier were the focus themes, also reflected within the Council business plan. The focus was on narrowing the poverty related attainment gap and progress had been made in respect of this.

1140 hours had been delivered for the authority and there was real sense of pride and accomplishment associated with the Council delivering this and the Convenor echoed this pride. Clarification was sought on the timing for when school residential trips could resume.

Decision

- 1) To clarify the timescale for when residential trips would resume.
- 2) To otherwise note the Education, Children and Families Committee Report Update.

4. Reopening of Schools and Covid Guidance

The Council had a risk framework in place called SORT, which was the School Operations Risk Toolkit. All Headteachers and Business Managers met weekly to take part in SORT. Good practice was shared alongside actions required to meet evolving Scottish Government coronavirus guidance.

A SORT meeting was held to discuss the changes which had recently been made to Scottish Government guidance prior to the reopening of schools. The main changes were that there were no longer bubbles and no longer isolating of whole classes.

There would be some guidance maintained such as no large gatherings, face coverings and one-way systems to help limit the spread of coronavirus.

The changes to contact guidance were significant as, test and protect would only be reviewing situations where there was an overnight stay involved.

Questions and discussions from the group focussed on the following themes:

- How the Council was set up to backfill staffing gaps, where staff members awaited test results?
- Contingency arrangements within schools and that schools had been asked to update their closure risk assessments.
- That the positive case management group was actively responding to situations where there were pressure points within schools.
- That face coverings for secondary school children, which was national guidance being followed by the local authority, and that this was being maintained as part of a cautious approach to returning to school.
- That the guidance for patrons in a restaurant relaxed the need for face coverings, and that the ongoing use of masks was part of a cautious approach within schools.
- That the demographic of largely unvaccinated pupils closely together alongside the length of time spent together was likely to be the factor driving the ongoing use of face masks in schools.
- That timeous communications to parents had been lacking, and that a plea was made for Council Officials to respond to this request from parents.
- Whether there was an increase in the lateral flow test uptake, and that the Council was promoting lateral flow tests as an important factor as part of the overall Covid mitigations in place, and there was an ongoing effort to maintain promotions on this.
- That there was an acceptance that the Council could review the information being shared from the SORT meetings and the onward sharing of this to parents while balancing the quantity and breadth of information shared to ensure the messaging worked for the diverse parent population.

- That a short life working group should convene to reflect upon school communications to improve how parents were communicated with.
- That parent councils could assist with messaging and cascade of information, many of whom had professional experience of communications and would lend the parental perspective to these discussions.
- That the agility of the response was important.

Decision

- 1) To agree to form a short life working group to consider the matter of parent communications which could meet via email, to ensure communications to parents met with parents' expectations around to also include information on lateral flow tests, any changes to coronavirus guidance.
- 2) To otherwise note the Council update.

5. Associate Heads Discussion

The concept of associate heads was to recognise, reward, and build capacity across the schools' network and Leaders had developed their own learning and took it into the Headteacher community, which could then be brought into schools. The Associate Heads would come out of school and dedicate time to personal learning which allowed existing teachers in schools to take on the Headteacher role which supported those teachers' development. The parental input would be sought as the Council developed the Associate Heads programme and would be linked into the Edinburgh Learns Board.

Decision

To note the update.

6. Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) results

Reflections were made on inferred grades in August 2020, and the algorithm due to historical attainment patterns for each school. There had been much criticism of this, and the final grading was latterly based on teacher assessment.

In 2021 the approach for awarding grades was undertaken on the basis of demonstrated attainment.

In 2021 the percentage of A grades were up, from 2020. Secondary five and secondary six higher attainment was improved on previous years.

There had been plans to reform the Scottish Qualifications authority, and more information would be forthcoming from national government on this in due course.

For examinations in 2022, the plan was for a return to in-person exams. This was the same guidance issued by the SQA in 2021 so there would be scope for this to change if coronavirus circumstances dictated this. There was an acknowledgement that additional end of year assessments which took place in 2021 for many students felt akin

to examinations and there would be work undertaken in 2021 and 2022 to ensure that should examinations not be in person, pupils did not feel they were being subjected to examinations and that there was enough evidence available to determine pupils' grades.

Discussion followed on the matter of there being an advisor to the Scottish Government (Ken Muir) who would be liaising with expert groups to inform the onward strategy for the SQA and it was questioned whether Edinburgh Council would be making plans to input into this group. It was confirmed that Edinburgh was aware of this and would be making arrangements to input into this consultation on views.

Decision

To note the update.

6. Parental Engagement and Formation of a New Locality Group

A survey was run in May 2021. The summary was that this had generated a 49% response rate from schools. The key messages were that there was a good awareness of meetings and their purpose. There were suggestions for future enhancement and areas for ongoing support. There had been a number of topics shared with the Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Education, Children and Families Committee which was summarised as follows:

- Communication, the city's parental involvement framework;
- Review locality meetings format.
- The induction process for new parent council chairs;
- Cluster school links;
- Parental engagement for early years settings;
- Ongoing support links between Quality Improvement Education Officers, Head Teachers and Parent Councils;
- Parental representation for parents with children with additional support needs in special schools and in mainstream schools.

At the last meeting of the CCWP it was agreed to form a new locality group for parents of the cohort of children with special needs, who went to mainstream schools and to bring back a report on the remit and representation on the group when formed.

It was recommended that a new locality group was formed for parents whose children were in mainstream schools and had special needs. It was noted that the decision taken to create this group would then require an addendum to the Appointments to Working Group report which had already been published and would be considered by the Education, Children and Families committee on 24 August 2021, This would ensure that the composition of the Consultative Committee with Parents would reflect the supplemental locality group created.

Decision

- 1) To agree to form a new locality group for parents whose children were in mainstream schools and had special needs.

2) To capture the revised membership of the CCWP which would now feature the new locality group for parents whose children were in mainstream schools and had special needs within an addendum to the Appointment to Working Groups report which would be presented to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 24 August 2021.

7. Future Plans for Consultation and Engagement

As part of the improvements, the parent council survey findings would be taken forward and other priorities included poverty proofing the school day and Pupil Equity Funding.

There would also be support for schools for using their own engagement data to allow this to guide schools' parental engagement.

There were some actions agreed to take forward in terms of future plans for consultation and engagement such as:

- Working with Connect.
- Buddying system to develop and build new and existing parent councils
- an induction system to ensure parent councils were aware of all the networks such as for CCWP and locality meetings to ensure their parent voice was being heard.
- Building upon the increase in Parent Council attendance due to the online way of working as a result of Covid.
- Regular communication use of social media.
- Cluster school working

It was discussed that a mechanism, for parents to engage with other parents via the Council's website should be considered for parents to source the information they needed.

Decision.

To note that plans would progress with parental development on an ongoing basis.

8. Active Schools

The Council was working on a campaign to trial and test new activities across the city to reignite everyone's energy. Programmes were due to recommence after the September break.

There would be communications to schools to confirm the changes that active schools would no longer charge for activities. There were plans to ensure all children were active, although the focus would be to direct children into pathways to be active. The Council would ensure to pledge there was always funding for children,

The outstanding matter of school lets was highlighted alongside the matter of being unable to restart clubs in school settings.

The drop off rate in activities within schools was highlighted by parents and concerns for logistical matters associated with Active Schools such as collection of monies, PVG checks for coaches and volunteers.

It was requested by parents that communications were improved around active schools to allow for schools to make plans and preparations for resumption of activities in schools.

It was highlighted that the business of council lets of school buildings out with school times was run and managed by staff who sat alongside Learning and Teaching, however during the pandemic, there has been changes to the usual functioning and capacity of school lets and it was further complicated due to the cleaning regimes required and the authority's focus to ensure that the learning and teaching was prioritised.

It was agreed that as soon as the school lets could resume, parents would be communicated to and that the team who were considering the resumption of school lets was considering the needs assessment and predicted demand associated with Active Schools in order to reopen buildings.

It was noted that Active Schools should be prioritised and the ask of parents and parent councils in respect of Active Schools was clarified.

Decision

- 1) To note that Elected Members and CCWP received written communications for the resumption of active schools.
- 2) To note that communications on Active Schools would be issued to parents.
- 3) To otherwise note the update.

9. Connect

Eileen Prior of connect provided an update. Parent Councils would be receiving membership renewal documents via email and it was important that Parent Councils looked out for this.

The focus was online information sessions which had been well received and introducing some face to face meetings depending on Covid.

Insurance provider for Connect needed to change. The package had changed and Parent Councils could contact the insurance provider directly rather than via Connect.

The parental engagement academy was running for professionals online. There was other training available to senior management and any member of senior management could avail themselves of training opportunities.

Connect had been asked to be part of the review which Ken Muir would be undertaking of the SQA.

United Nations rights of the child which would come into law in Scotland, and lobbying government on how information on this was shared with parents beyond what was shared in schools.

The closed Facebook group was discussed as a helpful peer to peer learning network for Parent Council members.

Decision

To note the update.

9. Update on School Builds and School Crossing Guides

All school builds were showing delays associated with shortages in supplies. Each school community would be updated as the Council became aware of the ever-changing picture.

Recruitment of crossing patrol guides at Bruntsfield was ongoing, but remained vacant.

Decision

1) To update the CCWP on the recruitment process for school crossing guides.

2) To note the update.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 7 October 2021 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams.