

## **Note of meeting**

### **Consultative Committee with Parents**

**6.00pm, Thursday 10 December 2020**

**Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams**

**Present (As taken by Roll call at the start of the Teams Meeting)**

#### **Elected Members**

Councillors Ian Perry (Convener). Alison Dickie (Vice-Convener), Councillor Steve Burgess and Councillor Louise Young.

#### **Parent Representatives**

Alex Ramage (Education Children & Families Committee Parent Representative)

Kevin Kealey

Naomi Barton

Alison Nicolson

Kate Morris

Tina Woolverton

Gareth Oakley

Gail Guest

Karen Galloway

Sarah Scott

Seamus Spencer

Sandra Dargie

#### **External Officer Representatives**

Eileen Prior (Connect Representative)

#### **Council Officers in Attendance**

Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning

Arran Findlay, Senior Education Officer

Jack Simpson, Senior Education Officer  
Anna Gray, Senior Education Officer  
Lorna French, Senior Education Manager, Quality Improvement and Curriculum  
Louise Sibbald, Digital Learning Team  
Mel Coutts, Strategic Lead for Sport and Physical Activity  
David Maguire, Principal Officer for Engagement  
Natalie Le Couteur, Committee Services  
Gillian Kennedy, Service and Policy Adviser to the Convener and Vice-Convener of Education, Children and Families

## 1. Note of Meeting

### Decision

To approve the note of Meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP) of 8 October 2020.

## 2. Chief Education Officer's Update

The Chief Education Officer's provided a summary of the reports which would be considered by the Education Children and Families committee on 15 December 2020.

Updates to Committee would be presented on performance aspects of education such as teaching and learning assessment, taking account of attainment in a Covid context. There was an annual update on inclusion, but the report of interest was the school admissions and appeals policy report which updated a policy from 2016 and would deliver clarity for the admissions process for primary and secondary and would improve the experience for making appeals. The aim for the Council was for children to attend their catchment school.

Questions were invited from parents.

Question: What were the headline changes in the appeals report?

Answer: The change was around retaining a number of places in each year group to take account of children moving into the catchment area during the school year, particularly for primary one and for secondary one, and would be adjusting the timing for making a catchment appeal in a non-catchment school. This would mean that the catchment move in date would also be in line with the catchment and non-placement date deadline as end of December instead of the end of February. This would mean that there were fewer delays for families and they would know whether their children had been accommodated within their catchment school. There was one place allocated in each school per 60 children for pupils moving into secondary catchments and now this was proposed as one place for every 40 children in secondary school setting. This change was made for primary already and the revised policy would bring both secondary and primary schools in line with each other.

### Decision

To note the Chief Education Officer's Update.

### 3. Return to Schools Update

It had been a remarkable four months since schools had returned following the coronavirus related closure. A new normal was underway in schools and there were great efforts by staff in schools to maintain a safe environment. Tributes were paid to parents, children and staff in making schools amongst the safest in Scotland. Statistics showed that in December 2020 at one point the average attendance in Scotland's schools was at 90.5% where Edinburgh attendance sat at 92.3% which was quite significant. A third of Edinburgh schools have had no cases of Covid-19. The Council had worked closely with and would take advice from Health Protection Scotland and Health and Safety colleagues who had guided the arrangements which had been put in place to ensure schools were a safe place to be and a lot of excellent learning and teaching was taking place in schools.

Thanks were placed on record by Alex Ramage for work undertaken by teachers and parents during this time.

Councillor Ian Perry also wished to record thanks for teachers and parents and recognised how difficult a time it had been in making the transition back to schools and protecting children from the spread of coronavirus.

#### **Decision**

To note the update on return to schools.

### 4. Extra-Curricular Activities and Parent Volunteers

Lorna French explained that the core purpose to open the schools following the coronavirus closure was for their purpose of teaching and learning. While reintroducing different schools' activities, the Council had taken a staged approach and all activities had been graded in terms of their significance as either essential, beneficial or advantageous. If an activity was essential in a child's life, the delivery of this activity had been risk assessed and prioritised. The challenge in non Covid times was that many activities in schools were run by volunteers and coaches who were not Council employees. Volunteers were not contractually obligated to adhere to rules as set out by the Council and fell out with the Council's jurisdiction. The Council's risk appetite in respect of this meant that to safeguard the core teaching and learning activities in school and minimise the transmission of the virus, the risk of allowing volunteers and additional activity in school could not be tolerated at this stage. The scheduling of activities in school settings was also contingent upon Edinburgh being placed in tier two which was the Scottish Government's level of control for Coronavirus which would allow for some activities to resume in schools. Edinburgh was currently in Tier three.

Risks in respect of activities in school were being assessed weekly alongside the R-number, which was the Government's measure of the transmission rate of the virus in society.

#### **Questions were invited:**

Question: The disappointment on this matter was significant. The lack of certainty on when the Government would permit Edinburgh to move to Tier two would mean that

there could be the same infection rate in March 2021 and pupils would have had a year without activities in schools under Active Schools. Would there be a review of this policy on the basis that as movement was not within the Council's control, and would anything done under the current situation in Tier three to move this matter forward?

Answer: Sports in school was a very nuanced matter due to the wide variety and type of activities. The guiding factor was the certainty or control over staff and the restrictions which would need to be issued but were unenforceable for volunteers. Where there were positive cases of coronavirus there were scenarios where entire class groups had been asked to isolate. In a risk management context the Council's appetite for risk was low, to avoid unnecessary interruptions to pupils' teaching and learning. There was a recognition that the current risk appetite was the governing factor for how decisions with the Council were being made in respect of Active Schools.

Question: Does the risk management analysis the Council uses take account of the hockey club at Bruntsfield having left the school and now operating privately out with the school instead of under the auspices of Active Schools. In this scenario the Council had less control with pupils attending private sporting provision out with Active Schools which was run by the Council?

Answer: The Council recognised the counterintuitive nature of this. The guidance for schools was not the same as the guidance for private clubs. The Council was obligated to adhere to the National Guidelines, and at the current time, the Council did not have the risk appetite to proceed with in school sporting activities due to the risks to teaching and learning and the lack of mitigation measures in place. It would be inadvisable to review all risks across the city which sat out with the Council's parameters of control. The Council's risk management framework has been commended by partners, however there was recognition that it wouldn't appease everyone.

Question: What about equality or inequality of access to sporting activities. Some schools had the capacity through parent volunteers to access private sporting provision, but there were many families who could not access this private provision, what are the Council's thoughts on this matter?

Answer: Areas of deprivation have been the focus for Active Schools and the service has been reconfigured and refocussed. The Council was confident that equity issues were being addressed.

Question: What was the Council's thoughts on the inequality and participation gap that was growing, where Active Schools interventions had not been targeted?

Answer: Active Schools targeting would be reviewed across the school session.

How many children will receive Active School support?

Answer: From August to October 2020 11,500 children benefitted from Active Schools input out of a total of 56,000 total pupil population. A list of schools and participation by pupil number in Active Schools could be provided.

Question: Was there a mechanism to tie in volunteers to a memorandum of understanding or signed contract with volunteers to allow progress on this matter?

Answer: There was a risk associated with this. The risk professionals advised that the increased risk of transmission and this risk could not be tolerated. There would be no control over groups and volunteers. They could not specify how and with how many people volunteers had interacted with and had no control over the levels of infection control measures in place in these other settings where volunteers had been.

Question: Extracurricular sporting activity taking place in the school building with volunteers was prohibited but outdoor activity under the Active Schools banner has also been banned. Clarification on this matter was requested as to why Active Schools had banned Bruntsfield Primary hockey from taking place at Meggatland, however hockey was able to proceed at Meggetland when run privately but cost significantly more than when run under Active Schools?

Answer: For representative from Bruntsfield Primary Parent Council to email Councillor Ian Perry to highlight this issue as a barrier to participation.

### **Decision**

1. Mel Coutts was to supply a list of schools and participation by pupil number in each school for to demonstrate where Active Schools was being targeted.
2. Bruntsfield Primary Parent Council was to email Ian Perry highlighting the issue of additional cost to play hockey in Meggetland when not booked under the auspices of Active Schools issue to indicate this as a financial barrier to participation.
3. To note that controlling the risk of infection in schools was the Council's primary driver to minimise any interruptions to pupils' learning.
4. To otherwise note the update.

## **5. School Session Dates 2022 onward - David Maguire**

The Council wished to set future term dates for the academic sessions 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. The hope was to return to the next meeting of the CCWP on 25 February 2021 with more detailed proposals. In March 2021 a consultation would be underway for proposals for future term dates which would comprise a survey shared on the consultation hub via the Council's website, through schools and with staff. The criteria for setting dates would form the basis of the consultation survey and this information would be used to inform the dates that were proposed at Education, Children and Families committee in May 2021.

Questions were invited.

Question: Demographics of the people responding from the previous survey undertaken was not known, and a plea was made whether this could be incorporated into the survey vehicle to ensure that survey responses could be considered appropriately and weighted accordingly when results were received?

Answer:

Question: It was requested that consideration be given to whether equalities data needed to be gathered as part of the consultation exercise and to note that an offer was made from a parent previously to help design the questionnaire.

Answer: That the Council was required to exercise caution in collecting equalities data without a defined purpose and that the offer from the parent was welcome for the survey assistance and contact should be established.

### **Decision**

- 1) For Alex Ramage to identify the parent who had volunteered to assist with the term dates consultation design and introduce the parent to David Maguire.
- 2) To discuss the item at the next round of locality meetings.

## **6 Parent Council access to Teams - Louise Sibbald**

Prior to lockdown Microsoft 365 was being used in a restricted manner by Learning and Teaching staff to safeguard pupils. During lockdown it was recognised that communication needs were more sophisticated and as a result extending invitations to communicate with external groups such as Parent Councils was required. For Parent Councils without a Microsoft Office 365 account, the council was required to set up a Parent Council meeting and invite participants, to allow for the Headteacher to partake in the Teams meeting. Zoom meetings were not a platform that was supported by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Questions were invited:

Question: Governance and management of meetings which were Parent Council's responsibility. It created a burden for schools and also limited autonomy of the Parent Council. Remote management of meetings, while the norm during Covid was likely to continue beyond this period.

Answer: The remote possibilities were helpful, and it was something that the Council wished to sustain. At the point when lockdown began, zoom was not permitted, however an alternative platform could be considered and progressed which would allow for more control by the Parent Council. At this stage Teams was the platform that could be used by the Council. Zoom was not a permitted product to be used by Teachers on a Council Device. As such making use of the tools that were available had guided the decision to use Teams for Parent Council meetings. The Parent Council are not able to create a Teams event, unless they had their own tenancy on Microsoft Teams. The Council held the account for Teams.

Question: Alex Ramage had been offered a Council email address, on a temporary basis and this would mean he would have Microsoft Office 365 and use of Teams. Why can't we provide an email address for each parent council to call Teams meeting from within the Council's tenancy?

Answer: The Council would need to grant The Parent Council an account which was the property of the Council. The Council would need to identify administrators to manage the movement of Parent Councils and the number of accounts and assess this against the are conditions within the license arrangement. It would require a detailed assessment.

Question: Parent Council meetings had taken place on Teams. Microsoft allowed for free access to Teams. I do not understand why this could not take place?

Answer: There wasn't an issue with this arrangement where Parent Councils established their own tenancy.

At this stage of the meeting it was agreed that Kevin Kealy and Louise Sibbald would arrange for communications to parent Council's to advise that it was acceptable for Parent Councils to set up parent Council meetings using Microsoft Teams and to extend an invite to City of Edinburgh Council staff to attend.

How was access to Teams being provided to pupils, was this covered under the Delegated School Management budget?

Answer: Learning and Teaching made use of Microsoft teaching package. For this reason, an Education tenancy arrangement was in place which was free. There were requirements within the license terms for this software which the staff needed to match. The parent council wouldn't meet the criteria as set by Microsoft for them to use Teams for free.

The business version of Office 365 tenancy was required to use Teams, and this came with a cost.

The point was made by the Connect Representative that Teams access was a significant issue for Parent Council's across Scotland and representation had been made to Connect on this same matter.

### **Decision**

- 1) To agree that Kevin Kealy and Louise Sibbald would arrange for communications to parent Council's to advise that it was acceptable for Parent Councils to set up parent Council meetings using Microsoft Teams and to extend an invite to City of Edinburgh Council staff to attend.
- 2) To agree that Arran Findlay and Louise Sibbald would meet to progress the matter of Parent Council access to Microsoft Teams.

## **7. Citywide Special Schools Group**

There were conversations around transitions taking place, and how best to facilitate this. The impact of Covid on Special Schools had been raised and how the management of this would require to be different. Issues with transport had been resolved.

### **Decision**

To note the update.

## **8. South West and North West Locality Group**

An accident in the school car park of Juniper Green Primary School was highlighted alongside the potential for other accidents, and lack of parents' observation of the rules of the road. The lack of a deterrent, due to the lack of parking wardens on account of the school not being a city centre location was observed. Parents had been upset due to road safety matters and were attempting to self-police the situation and instances of verbal abuse had taken place

Representation had been made by Spaces for People, the team in the Council who were in place to enhance the experience for pedestrians and cyclists. They had offered to place double yellow lines at Nether Currie Primary. The deadline for response by Nether Currie Parent Council to Places for People had been met and the Parent council was awaiting Places for People's response. There was a lack of satisfaction however that measures such as double yellow lines would keep children safe.

It was agreed that councillor Perry would review the matter further by requesting enforcement action at Juniper Green Primary and for the Places for People team's involvement at Nether Currie Primary School.

### **Decision**

- 1) For Councillor Perry to progress the matter of parking concerns at Juniper Green Primary School.
- 2) For Councillor Perry to request the Spaces for People team spoke with the Parent Council of Nether Currie primary school.

## **9. North East and South East Locality Group**

Enforcement issues around poor driver behaviour was an ongoing issue for Bruntsfield Primary. Increased police presence to enforce had been helpful, however once enforcement bodies left the scene, it reappeared as a continual issue. Arriving at a solution to make it safe around schools was problematic, despite the Parent Councils' efforts to work with Parents and Traffic Wardens. There was a fear around the risk of an accident particularly during dark mornings and evenings when visibility was reduced.

A crossing patrol guide at a busy corner near Bruntsfield Primary School had not been replaced and this was a matter of concern for pupil safety. Vacancies for school crossing guides was a citywide issue alongside the difficulty in fulfilling cover arrangements when a crossing guide was sick or on leave. A request was made to consider an inspired solution that would allow for cover arrangements from community standby people who would be willing to help in the short term and short notice to fill gaps.

### **Decision**

- 1) Councillor Ian Perry to feedback to the CCWP on crossing patrols regarding absences and finding a creative solution to overcome the difficulty in fulfilling cover arrangements.
- 2) To note the dangerous situation around Bruntsfield Primary with vehicle movement and for Councillor Perry to review the matter urgently.

## **10. Update from Connect Representative**

All Connect's activity was being delivered online and parents were welcome to take part in this activity. There was a consultation on digital access and a plea for this to be shared by Parent Councils.

The manifesto for the next five years had been published, recognising the important role of parents and children. The Scottish Government had issued further guidance around parental engagement and communication with parents which had a focus on

COVID and how parents were being supported, this could be accessed via the Scottish Government's website, however it had not been widely publicised.

There was lots of information and conversations on the website and Facebook group. and these forums were highly recommend for parents.

### **Decision**

To note the update from the Connect representative.

## **11. Any other business**

It was highlighted that an update on financial matters was required to be issued to Kevin Kealy but was outstanding from a CCWP meeting in 2019. As a result, it was agreed that that the minutes of the 2019 meetings should be reviewed and for Arran Findlay to provide the update when available.

Discussions on any decisions the Council would make in respect of changes to school closure dates for Christmas 2020 took place. It was advised that an update from the Council would be presented to all parents on 11.12.20. It was requested that a briefing note on this would be issued to Parents and Parent Councils.

### **Decision**

- 1) To receive update from Arran Findlay on Finance issue previously raised at a CCWP meeting in 2019.
- 2) To note that the Council's opinion on end of term arrangements for 21 and 22 December 2020 would be issued to all parents on 11.12.20.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 25 February 2020 at 6:00pm via Microsoft Teams.