

Dingwall Academy Parent Council
Minutes of Meeting on
19 November 2012 at 7.00pm

Present: L Ross (Treasurer), H Thornton (Chairman), N Greenwood, K Cormack (Rector), G Mackenzie (Councillor), M Evans, A MacLeod, A MacLean (Councillor), S Rae, A Munro, L Watson (Secretary)

Apologies: S Blyth, D Morgan, A Mackinnon (Councillor), J Downe

Minutes of last AGM held on 19 November 2012 were accepted with an amendment in the 3rd paragraph of 'Matters Arising'.

Matters arising:

KC updated the Parent Council on the query made last meeting about S1 Homework. This week selected teachers will be following an S1 pupil to get an experience of their school day as well as their homework. KC also said that in the Academy the type of homework a pupil gets is different from primary school; the pupil is more responsible for doing their own homework more like revision and it is less strict. KC also mentioned that there had just been a talk with S4 parents about homework and asked whether it would be a good idea to have one for the S1 parents.

LW and AMac agreed that it would be useful.

KC said she will organise something for after Christmas.

LW asked about an update on the bus situation.

KC responded saying she had met with the new business advisor – Douglas Fairley and that they shared the same concerns. They set up a meeting and met with all the bus drivers and KC spoke to them about how to handle 70+ kids on a bus and how to avoid getting into unwanted confrontations. The issue of availability of seats was also raised and new bus passes will be re-issued after Christmas and they will be colour-coded to each bus.

HT asked about the possible issue of children wanting to go to friend's houses.

KC said the child will have to go see her in the morning but there will be no problem.

HT asked that no children would be left behind.

KC said definitely not. All children will be taken to the right place.

KC mentioned that they had found some more space for another dozen lockers but that was all.

AMac said there were still concerns about swimming timings.

KC said that she had spoken to P.E about getting an early release and she will speak to them again.

HT said that sometimes Exams stop the shortest route.

KC responded saying that it shouldn't happen often.

KC said that the school website is now fully working.

School News:

KC said that the main thing happening in school is the S4 prelims which started last Thursday. They had a target setting talk with them on purpose last week for this very reason.

KC also said that the UCAS application deadline for the seniors is coming up which involves always a lot of nagging to get them to hand in personal statements for reviewing.

KC mentioned that the school show had been a great success and was very entertaining.

KC thanked the PC for their help at the Sponsored Walk which was very fun. LW commented that it was nice to see the kids really happy and it was a nice day to have the walk. KC said that the total amount of money hadn't been collected yet but would hopefully be soon.

KC also mentioned that there are a lot of community projects on the go at the moment. The Social and Vocational class have to do something in the community as part of their course and are going to Pefferside Park on Thursday afternoons. There are also kids going up to the Neil Gunn Monument and maintaining it. Last week there was some vandalism at Ben Wyvis Primary School but there was a tour of the school last Thursday for the parents and pupils and the response has been positive.

KC said that this year for the Rotary Club mock interviews 66 seniors are involved which is really good. The Rotary Club however, think they are becoming distant from interviews now and are wondering if the PC could assist next year.

KC also said that the S5 & 6 Halloween disco happened which was a success, the S6 also organised a S1 & 2 disco which was also successful. The S3 & 4 however, are annoyed and KC asked if maybe the PC wanted to organise a disco for them, maybe a Valentine disco and maybe some adults at the disco for supervision.

KC went on to say that the Christmas concert will be held on December 11th and the socials will be the week after: Monday – S1/2, Tuesday – S3/4, Wednesday – S5/6.

ME asked if all the interviews were set for this year and that lots of schools participated in a 'livewire night' which is really useful.

KC said she would look into it because they are trying for some new partnerships. They have lots of positive ones but are always looking for more. KC also said that she is going to get the business parents to discuss what they could give to the leavers and what they would be looking for qualification wise in leavers.

ME asked whether it would be an evening talk to which KC replied yes. There is a lot that the parent body can do to help.

ME asked when this would likely be.

KC said probably March.

ME said he would be happy to help the young enterprise group.

KC replied that there is a fair for all the groups in the area in Inverness.

NG said that if they have units ready they were welcome to have a stall at the turning on of the lights event.

LR said that they were also able to set up a stall at the Christmas concert.

KC said she would pass the information on to the students involved.

Fijitsu:

KC updated the PC on the situation saying that little progress has been made. The school can't use Apple products but Apple have now start approaching school directly.

LW suggested that the PC put together a letter of complaint to Fijitsu.

KC agreed that it was an excellent idea as there is a lot of potential with iPhones and iPads as the majority of students have them.

ME suggested that getting a lot of schools' PC to collectively write a letter to Fijitsu for more emphasis.

GM mentioned that they are starting negotiations over the new contract.

NG said that now would be a good time then.

HT said that the highland Council are also at fault.

GM said that there are huge annoyances over the Fijitsu contract within the Highland council and that the PC should use the political stance and talk to all the local councillors about it.

LW said that they should all put a letter together for KC.

HT said she will contact all the PC's to tell them what we are doing.

NG asked whether to involve the Primary schools as well.

AMLN replied yes, most definitely.

LW requested a list of complaints for HT and LW to start work on the letter.

CfE:

LW expressed concerns that the new system could mean that a child could work for a whole year just to fail.

KC replied that National 5 is still graded but National 3 and 4 are a pass or fail.

LW was concerned that children will be placed at the wrong level.

KC said that this is a complete mind shift for the parents but there will still be movement throughout the year and that CfE is about raising the bar, not letting children fail.

KC also mentioned that a moderation model has been put together by the Highland Council and the SQA have put together their own model. There will be internal marking but teams that will be made in the new year will do external checking.

HT asked if to fail it would have to be a really bad exam.

KC replied that it shouldn't ever happen and that all children will be working at the right level.

Tarvie Concerns:

HT said that she received a large email from a parent regarding dangerous paths to and from school and they want a footpath put in. HT has forwarded the email to R. Mackenzie who is going to talk to tech services and has told the parent to contact Robbie MacLean.

KC suggested that they get Hugh Logan on the case.

GM said they should talk to a councillor that lives in the same area.

AMLN said she would talk to some people as well.

HT mentioned that there could be other pupils with the same problem with it being a busy road which is dangerous and especially as winter approaches.

Parent Council Projects:

HT mentioned the S3/4 Valentine disco involvement and what was wanted of the Pc.

KC said just people present at the disco and to serve refreshments.

AMac asked who buys the refreshments.

KC said the school.

NG asked if there was anything else they could help organise.

KC said no, everything else was sorted.

LW said the letter of complaint to Fijitsu.

KC said also the business enterprise night.

AMLN said that she could provide a directory of businesses in the area.

HT asked how they would be involved at the event.

KC said refreshments and anyone that could speak at the event.

HT suggested sending a letter out to the parents to let them know.

HT said the mock interviews for S6 pupils in the new year.

KC said they were the first week of December and she will ask Douglas Mackintosh if he is still in need of interviewers and if there was she will put out a request to the PC.

HT asked if there were guidelines they could follow.

KC said that each pupil fills out a form and they would just ask questions related to the form.

Financial Update:

LR updated the PC on the finance.

The snacks and drinks for the Sponsored Walk cost - £271.57

A gift for Mark's Wife was bought costing - £19.73

This means that the Account balance is - £1527.05

And the Savings account balance is - £1876.76

LR also had a query about the money for the minibuses.

KC responded saying that they were meant to buy them but acquired them instead so the money is going to be used for maintenance instead.

LR also mentioned that she has almost sorted out all the bank signatures that are necessary for the account.

LR said that there is a giving machine which has got £12.29 so far and that when it reaches £15 the PC will receive some money back.

LR also said that there is a website that you can go to that if you buy things from companies through this website then some money is donated to your charity; Dingwall Parent council is one of the listed charities.

KC said that this information is in the Newsletter which comes out on Thursday.

ME asked whether the PC would get a percentage or a fixed rate.

SR said that it varies from company to company.

ME commented that if the parents knew about this system and that it benefits the children then they would use it.

ME also asked where else the PC gets their income.

LR responded saying that they get an allocation from the Highland Council every year.

Any Other Business:

KC mentioned about a growing problem with the minibuses. Many of the younger teachers are unable to drive the minibus as they do not have the required section on their licence. Some companies have started making light-weight minibuses that the younger teachers can drive.

KC is looking at prices for new buses.

HT asked if it would be 3 at once.

KC said no. One at a time and should become a target to get all three.

HT asked when this would occur and KC responded saying over the next 2 years.

NG suggested using 1 bus more than the others.

ME asked whether they would get funding from the HC.

KC said no, it's completely the school's responsibility and that she is hoping to have figures for the new buses by the next meeting.

HT mentioned that at an old school there was a school fund that all the parents gave £1 a year/month that used to raise lots of money for the PC and school.

KC said that it was worth canvassing popularity with the parents.

AMac expressed interest in seeing the response.

SR asked about a possibility of hiring a bike trailer for the minibuses.

KC responded saying that they could but would need to talk to staff about it.

AMun asked about the S1 lunches.

KC said that they are allowed out on certain days and if there are any problems with not being able to go with friends they should go see her and get their day changed if they want.

KC mentioned that the HC has opened a system online for parents to money on the children's cards.

AMLn said that councils are interested in getting young people involved.

NG said that 2 DA pupils are going along to the Dingwall Community Council meetings which have been really successful so far.

KC mentioned that Conon Bridge and Maryburgh Councils have come to her looking for pupils which is a good sign.

GM mentioned that Dingwall Academy has moved up the roster for gritting. The Sport Centre car park used to be Morrison's but is now the HC's and anything on the Academy campus is Morrison's but he is trying to get the HC to also grit there.

SR asked whether the Council provided salt for the school.

KC Morrison provide salt for the school.

GM clarified that the HC had changed the timings of priority not the category that DA is in.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: 28 January 2013 at 7pm.