

## Dingwall Academy Parent Council 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**Apologies** - Stephen Mackenzie; Sandra Rae; Linda Moir; Heather Thornton

**Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> September** - approved by Linda Watson. Seconded by Sam Blyth

### **Matters arising**

1. Clarity was given on who is participating in the sub groups. Helen to arrange meetings and will be in touch with the various members.
2. Karen reported positive meeting with D&E coaches.

### **Curriculum for excellence**

1. Teachers finding the workload difficult.
2. Option form meets the requirements of the C.F.E.
3. Concerns by parents that S4, S5 & S6 will be in same classrooms. KC assured council that teacher will be aware of this and ensure everyone is supported.
4. The advantage of the senior phase is that great choice of subjects for pupils.
5. Information evening on 4<sup>th</sup> December, all parents welcome.
6. Concern from parents that employers will not understand the new qualifications.
7. New Reports/Parents update/junior school – New system, Colour coded, Red, Amber, and Green. Those pupils with Green will get a praise card sent home; those with 3 Red will be interviewed to see where the school can support. Second report issued with have more detail and thereafter issues can be discussed at parent's night. This is for years 1 2 & 3. Karen will demonstrate the system at the January meeting.

### **School Admin Software**

Karen explained the current system in place will no longer be viable. The company who has supported this system is pulling out of the UK. This has several implications on staff, the most concerning being the level of training required and finding the time to achieve this. KC there is no doubt that the transition period is a huge worry. Parents questioned would H Council be able to support the school by providing relief staff? KC said H Council is aware that this could have a massive impact and everyone is currently working towards a workable solution. KC will keep the PC updated.

### **Parents Questionnaire**

The electronic questionnaire distributed to the parents had a disappointing uptake. 12% were returned. National average is approx 30%. Discussions around the table on how to make these more attractive, included questions that require interactive discussions with the pupils, the re-wording of questions, use of a competition, etc. It was agreed Helen would take this information on board and draft a new provisional questionnaire for discussion, which Linda will distribute to the council members for comment.

## **Transport Costs**

A parent has asked the PC to reflect on the fact children who live with one parent and reside with another 2/3 nights per week may be charged to use school transport. G Mackenzie said as yet, this has not been enforced. The HC policy allows one residential address per child. However he is currently supporting another parent to dispute this fact. RO – suggested that this is indeed discrimination against the children who come from a broken family or indeed in any other circumstances they may find themselves to have two addresses. G Mackenzie will keep PC updated on the outcome of the case he is involved in, although will not disclose the names of the family. It can however get very complicated when two bus companies are involved.

## **TEC Services**

A Munro suggested takes over area of path, but would it be an H&S issue as adjacent to the river? KC - It would be low maintenance and allow skills to develop in a small group of pupils. KC asked what the chance would be of HC formalising an agreement for skilled training in the upkeep of such grounds. A Munro explained this is now sub contracted. A partnership with the Dingwall Environment group was discussed as they would be keen to work with the school. NG thought this possibility should be explored, if funding could be allocated. To be discussed further. Meantime Ali will get Sam Lowe to contact KC for discussions.

## **Sponsored Walk Feedback**

KC thanked the council for their input and for giving out the refreshments. A total of £6000 was raised.

Council raised concern however that while the school encouraged/allowed pupils to run the course, in reality the staff were not prepared for the speed of the pupils. Feedback has suggested pupils had to wait up to 30 minutes at the first checkpoint as teachers were not ready. It was also noted some children were confused with directions as all marshals were not in place early enough. It was suggested that these points should be resolved for the next event and timings re-addressed. It was discussed allowing cyclists to participate. KC felt this would only be successful as part of the mountain biking club.

## **Sub Groups**

- **Partnership group** – the sub group asked for clarity on KC vision for this evening. KC. An evening to bring parents, local people and local business together to discuss a way forward whereby we could introduce new partnerships to the school enabling pupils to achieve a skill base in various topics. We would introduce the current partnerships who could explain what is involved. We are looking to introduce a cross section of businesses on both short/long term projects. The aim will be to host this evening in March/April/May. KC prefers March if it can be arranged in that time frame.

- **Mini Bus Fundraising Group** – School buses on last legs. The aim is to lease a smaller bus, enabling more staff to drive. To look at funding from HC to pay for the tuition required for the Mini Bus Drivers.

#### **Treasurers update – from last meeting.**

- Income -£15.40 from the Giving machine. £1055.76 given from HC.
- Expenditure – Sponsored walk snacks - £207
- Balances - £1459 in current account
- - £1177 in the deposit account.

#### **AOCB**

- Request from Ms Swallow - would PC consider fundraising by doing tea at the Christmas events? KC said all nights had already been covered.

#### **Public meeting held – (regarding the ongoing “Railway Crossing” debate).**

- This meeting had been poorly advertised and therefore poorly attended.
- Network Rail has proposed they will close the crossing concerned. Therefore closing Craig road. This would create additional traffic around the school area at peak times, as Tulloch Street is already busy to breaking point. It was pointed out by GM that they do not have the authority to close the public road. HC to write a letter of objection on behalf of the school.

#### **Future Dates**

The next meeting will be held on 20<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm