

Minutes for Gelston Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 1st June 2021 at 7pm via Facebook Messenger Room Facility

1. Welcome/Apologies

Present

Pam, Emma, Kay, Mary

Apologies

Abby, Abbie, Justine

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting on 10th March 2021 were reviewed and agreed.

3. Chairperson's Report

Pam attended the DGPCF AGM and subsequent meeting on 27th May 2021 via Zoom. The meeting was attended by John Thin, Head of Education (Learning and Resources). He answered questions on the current Partnership review. The Partnership Review Committee meets again on 22nd June 2021. Any outcomes will be announced following this meeting.

The main points of the discussion were as follows.

- Since the roll out of the Partnership working there are 500 less pupils throughout the school network so a review was needed to ensure the current Partnerships are still effective.
- The review included looking at the purpose of schools – could the buildings be used during the holidays? After School?
- Particularly in smaller, rural settings – is the school at the centre of the community? Could the school be used to foster bonds within the community?
- Looking at a viable future for our schools within D&G
- Looking to ensure the maximum number of schools in a Partnership is two
- Due to the COVID restrictions the full results from the review are not expected to be completed until October 2021
- The hope is to roll out any changes to the Management requirement from the academic year commencing August 2022

He was very keen to make clear the distinction between 'engagement' and 'consultation' during the review process. The process is about changing the management requirement for schools in the region for which there will be a degree of engagement with the schools affected. This is not a legal change so there will be no consultation period as any changes brought about as a result of this review are solely to the management structure and not covered by any legal agreement.

He also felt as though at some point there should be a catchment area review as many of the catchments as they stand at the moment are old parish boundaries. Given the age of these boundaries, some are not fit for the purpose of the needs we have today. This is a huge undertaking as it involves looking at many different aspects of the communities both present and future to establish the best fit for our school community. There are no plans at present to carry out this review.

Mel, the chair of DGPCF, is collating various Mental Health Support resources and is adding them to the Dropbox account for all Parent Councils to access. If anyone has found anything useful or to support children's mental health and would like to share it with the wider Parent Forum then forward it to Pam to forward to Mel.

Action- Once the pack has been launched Pam will share it via the Parent & Carers Facebook group.

Mel has also been working at putting a list of potential grant resources that Parent Councils could approach for funding.

Outdoor Learning Survey

The response to this has been brilliant. As of the 27th May 2021 there had been a total of 210 responses. The survey closes 18th June 2021 so if anyone wishes to complete it but hasn't yet there are still a few days left!

The survey came about as a result of Head Teachers being given a similar survey and DGPCF wanted to gather parents' views to compare results to see if there were any common barriers that could be identified.

Action - Pam will share the results of this survey when available.

A summary of the meeting has been added at the end of this document for reference

4. Treasurer's Report

Account balance - £2030.16

£175.15 cheque has been cashed by the council - unspent funding returned to be reallocated to school funds by council

Action- Mary to check to see if this has been completed

There is still no sign of the council funding for this academic year as yet.

Action-Pam to email regarding process to claim the funding

The Parent Council has agreed to pay for the School Leaver's Ties and the P1 books again this year. Since the children won't be able to have a trip this year the Parent Council will pay for the bouncy castle for the Fun day/picnic.

Action- Kay to source a bouncy castle! Liaise with Mary regarding organising delivery etc

Kay has received the relevant forms to allow us access to online banking and will keep us updated on the progress of our application. All agreed that online banking was the way forward to manage the account, reducing the need to use cheques as they are quickly becoming a thing of the past!

Action- discuss online banking protocol at next meeting – Pam to prepare draft

5. Head Teacher's Report

Dates for the next few weeks

Thursday 10th June – Sports day

Thursday 17th June – P6 and P7 pupils to the Galloway Activity Centre

Friday 18th June – P7 pupils to visit Castle Douglas High School

Monday 21st June – Fun Day & Picnic

Thursday 24th June – End of Year Assembly

6. Fundraising Opportunities

The grant application for £5000 to the Regionwide Community Fund was submitted at the end of April 2021. The successful projects will be announced in early June 2021.

Action – Pam to update when the outcome of application is announced

Due to COVID restrictions this year we have been unable to hold our biannual Summer Fete. After discussions around alternatives it was decided to hold a Christmas Market event in late November this year instead in the hope that we are in a position to hold social events by then. The idea would be to charge stall holders a 'pitch' fee as well as selling mulled wine/ Christmas fayre etc. The details will be discussed at the next meeting but the concept was agreed on.

Action- Pam to put together a 'plan' for discussion at next meeting

We also discussed looking at 'family sponsorship' event where each family chooses their own sponsored event to carry out in their own time to raise some funds during the first term after the summer break. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Abbie kindly put together a letter which we presented the Castle Douglas Rotary Club asking for a donation to go towards our Outdoor Classroom. After discussions with the Chair, James Robertson, he felt that once we have secured a larger portion of the funding total they would be in a position to offer us a slightly higher donation than they would at present so he is holding our application until we have the outcomes of the larger grant applications. He also asked if the Castle Douglas Men's Shed could be of any assistance as they will be looking for new projects after July this year. He agreed to join us at our next meeting in September to talk to us about the Men's Shed and the Rotary Club.

7. AOCB

Our next meeting will be our AGM in September 2021.

Action- Pam to arrange suitable date nearer the time

Dumfries & Galloway Parent Council Forum
Thursday 27th May, via Zoom, 7.00pm

Summary of meeting discussions – full minutes/transcript from page 4

1. Welcome & housekeeping – attendees and apologies received at Appendix 1

Mel welcomed everyone to the meeting, reminding attendees to keep microphones turned off but to feel free to turn them on at any time to contribute to the meeting. She explained that the screen would be recorded for completing minutes afterwards and then deleted.

2. AGM Business

Chair's report – attached at Appendix 2

Election of Role Bearers – Mel McGill (Chair), Diane Laws (Treasurer)

Update on bank account – forms completed online, not active yet

3. Approve minutes from 23 February 2021 meeting as accurate record and matters arising

Minutes were approved.

Reminder that Mel has set up a Dropbox account that contains all documents produced by DGPCF to support Parent Councils and meeting minutes: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/g3npbi03bq381g5/AADElsl-TW_n0xwJNvyET2Qa?dl=0

CHANGE TO AGENDA...

4. John Thin, Head of Education (Learning & Resources), D&G Council Skills, Education & Learning Directorate (DGC E&LD)

John introduced himself and outlined his career to date – he is attending to answer any questions parents may have at this time. Full transcription from page 5

Recent elections indicate that more changes may be coming to education (and hopefully more funding). Focus now is on recovery post-COVID.

With 500 fewer children in D&G Primary Schools now than in 2015, E&LD is looking at forward capacity of our school estate. E&LD is committed to look at school catchments and matching provision to local need and demographic changes.

JT outlined that E&LD is working with unions, staff and HTs to provide information to parents and teachers on changes to Partnership model. It is important to enable parents to understand the change better.

Partnerships

Q: How will annual review of partnerships impact on head teacher recruitment and retention?

JT: School Rolls and condition surveys will be taken to E&L Committee every year so members can see what's happening to school rolls. It's not about changing headteachers every year. There are set "triggers/criteria" for review, e.g. headteacher retirement, reduction in roll by 20% over three years.

Partnerships will NOT be changing in 2021/22, stability is needed for COVID recovery. August 2022 is the planned timescale due to delay caused by COVID.

Q: What is the success rate of partnering? Do we have figures for ease of recruitment and retention? Has turnover dropped? Is it easier to recruit? Post-COVID rural communities may attract more people.

JT: We are in a different environment to that in 2013 when Partnership model was developed, and we had teaching headteachers. The age profile of headteachers and demographic changes forced the change in the past as there was a risk that we would not have headteachers for our schools. Our leadership development programmes, from probationer teachers onwards, have proven very successful in growing our own school leaders.

Unpicking triple schools will lead to headteachers changing their management arrangements. There is a short-life working group doing scenario planning just now on how to support schools and communities on potential changes, and plan to complete their work by October 2021.

Q: Is it possible to consider continuing a "watching brief" rather than immediate action? (Parent happy with status quo at her school)

JT: Specific school questions can be taken offline but stress that equity, parity, transparency and fairness are important in this process.

Transitions

Latest Scottish Government guidance on this: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/pages/upcoming-changes/> (updated 25th May).

JT: All headteachers have been told they can consider transition activities. Activities outside are being encouraged. Schools have done a great job of implementing health and safety protocols and reducing COVID transmissions. Need to make sure safe working practices are in place and they're following the guidance.

Q: What is the position on the changes to the Auldgirth/Dunscore catchment?

JT: Paper on this is being taken back to E&L Committee in June. The statutory consultation is still in process as unable to complete the 6-week statutory consultation period due to COVID. It therefore needs to be restarted again and should take place from Autumn 2021.

5. Alternative Certification Model (ACM) 2021

This year young people, parents and teaching unions have worked together with Scottish Government on an alternative to the usual exam diet for this year which can't take place. Last year was awful for all involved so there needed to be another way of awarding national qualifications for senior phase pupils.

Pupils are being assessed through closed-book "exams" based on a bank of SQA approved questions. Pupils are only being tested on areas of the curriculum they have been able to study over the last academic year (this may differ from school to school depending on isolation periods required) and all are being marked against same grids, with teachers cross-marking papers internally and with another school so that there is confidence in the accuracy and consistency of grades through this moderation process. Different schools have slightly different ways of organising the assessments.

Appeals procedure to be announced soon, with Ministers for approval now. Link will be circulated when available.

Action: Mel to survey secondary parents before 25th June to feedback to SQA via NPFS on views of ACM

6. Mental Health support resources

Mel is keen to highlight the range of resources available to support young people and families as we move on from lockdown.

Action: Mel to circulate document before 25th June

7. Outdoor Learning survey

Mel developed this survey for primary school parents across Dumfries & Galloway with David Maxwell, Education Officer with additional responsibility for Learning for Sustainability and Outdoor Learning. Thank you to the 200+ parents that have already responded, survey is open until 18th June:

<https://forms.office.com/r/EkBVstU4Y9g>

Once the survey closes, Mel will circulate a report with the results and will pass on main points of feedback to E&LD. The report will also include details of local and national grants available for Parent Councils to access to fund learning resources/outdoor clothing/etc.

Parent Councils can find it hard to get permissions from DG Council once supplies have been sourced so Mel will try to get a step-by-step guide together to help with this.

Action: Mel to produce report with results of survey, to include a guide for PCs to working with schools/DGC to provide outdoor learning resources/equipment

8. DGC Parental Involvement Work update - Vanessa Morris, DGC E&LD Support Officer, Curriculum & Quality Improvement Team

Vanessa was unable to attend this meeting but sent information to share with Parent Councils (Appendix 3):

Headings: Cost of the School Day
RespectMe training – 8th June and 17th June – Vanessa will circulate more information
Parental Involvement and Engagement Critical Friend
Volunteer Policy

9. Next meeting dates (to be confirmed in August 2021)

Tuesday 21 September 2021, 7pm via Zoom

Wednesday 17 November 2021, 7pm via Zoom

Thursday 24 February 2022, 7pm via Zoom

Wednesday 25 May 2022, 7pm via Zoom

10. AOB

Details in full minutes – page 18

Appendix 1 - attendees and apologies

Appendix 2 - Mel's Chair's report

Appendix 3 - Vanessa Morris's information for sharing in her absence