

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL HELD ON Wednesday 18th September 2013 AT 8pm IN EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

PRESENT: Sanat Mehta, Graham Smith, Mark Taylor, Lesley Smith, Ian McIntosh, Grace McCarthy, Jacqueline Keenan, Kash Ali, Karen Armstrong, Susan Clark, Mags Jerfel, Gillian Morgan, Connie Hume

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Maxwell (Head Teacher), Shona McWilliam (Clerk), Cllr Charles Gilbert and Ailsa Connelly, Chair of Crookfur Parent Council (to observe only)

APOLOGIES: Alex Stewart, Diane Dakers, Andrew Keir, Michelle Keir

INTRODUCTION

Sanat welcomed everyone to the extraordinary meeting which was requested by the members to discuss the recent article in the Extra Newspaper, stating that there is a proposal to build a mosque on the grounds of the old Eastwood High School.

Apologies were noted.

S Maxwell mentioned that the official opening of Eastwood would be on Wednesday 30th October between 10am-12noon. Shona will e mail the PC to ascertain who can attend, Formal Invites from the Local Council will then follow, unfortunately there will be a limited number of tickets.

Before Sanat called the meeting to order, Stuart wished to clarify his position. As a senior official of East Renfrewshire Council he cannot comment on anything that is discussed this evening.

The meeting commenced.

L Smith asked, who owned the ground where the proposed mosque is to be built. East Renfrewshire own the land.

Sanat said that the mosque was discussed last week at the Council meeting and is open for consultation approx October for 6 weeks.

K Armstrong asked if Cllr Gilbert could let us know when the consultation would take place. A few years ago there was a similar proposal for Leslie Ave, where a traffic control assessment was completed by the Council in the summer! Karen feels that every bit of green belt land in East Renfrewshire is sold to the highest bidder for houses. There is another proposed site of 200 houses behind the school, at Barcaple, a mosque will only add to and cause more congestion with traffic.

Cllr Gilbert stated that he is also concerned about the traffic and unfortunately he is not privy to any information at the Council. He is a local councillor and not a member of the administration.

G Smith asked if the school was going to lose the new football pitch which is under construction at the moment. No was the answer, the pitch is to sit within the old back gates, with a banking for spectators to sit on. The original back entrance will remain for deliveries to the kitchen and wood deliveries to the technical block. The area beyond the back road of the school is scheduled to be landscaped into an outdoor learning space, woodland walk and social area. G Morgan said that to lose that area would be a great loss to the pupils and school.

K Armstrong stated that it all seemed very last minute the proposal with no communication from the council.

G McCarthy said that the council are very good at not telling you the information you need to know.

Sanat said that he recently spoke to Cllr Swift and he is all for the proposal. MSP Ken McIntosh backs the proposal as well. Sanat stated that pupil safety is paramount, we need our school campus to be safe. If the car park was to be shared it would be very difficult to control. Cllr Gilbert stated that the council says that the school car park is a public car park. After Dunblane school campuses became much more security conscious and should remain that way.

Scottish Future Trust funded two thirds of the development; surely they wouldn't be happy with this proposal before the school development is even finished?

G Morgan asked if we can request to see the proposed plans, access road etc

K Armstrong mentioned that the last time there was a proposal for a mosque in Leslie Ave, only about 120 residents were notified.

Sanat also informed the council that on early finish days (Wednesday and Friday) the pupils at present have to leave school 5 minutes early during the demolition, to be able to walk up to the train station which causes classroom disruption to pupil teaching. If any more building work was to commence at the back of the school it would cause more disruption to the pupil's day.

Sanat said that he estimated the land is valued at 2.1 million; would they sell it the highest bidder? He recommends that we inform everyone we can and ask them to raise their objections to the council. He proposes a letter to be sent to the parents.

G Morgan said that Maidenhill was originally earmarked for the mosque. It would have been a very good site.

K Armstrong asked if we as parents can ask for Gillian McCarney from planning to attend a meeting with the parent council members.

G McCarthy In "Briefing Notes" the community newsletter last week stated the proposal for the mosque which would go out to consultation for 6 weeks. How long did East Ren know about this? Why is the land up for sale? The plans are not drawn up for the mosque yet. Jim Murphy and Ken McIntosh visited Eastwood last weekend check out site. She would like the Muslim community to introduce themselves to the council. The council had a meeting on 11th September where it was discussed, below is the link:-

<http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10036&p=0>

The community newsletter Grace referred to, is Briefing Notes, and may be accessed by emailing briefingNM@gmail.com and putting Subscribe in the subject line and giving their name and address in the main body. All personal information will be treated with complete confidence. It may also be accessed through Face book by searching for Briefing Notes, it has a red circle logo with Briefing Notes inside it.

Grace also stated that the Council agreed that Maidenhill was an ideal site for a mosque but said they could offer them a better site at Eastwood. If you check the Council website it gives information of the consultation but not specific details.

K Armstrong requested that with the Freedom of Information Act, how can they change their plans without anyone knowing as quickly. Can we just not ask the council when the date is for consultation?

She requests that we seek an urgent meeting with Gillian McCarney, next week before a letter gets distributed to the parents giving details of the consultation.

G McCarthy requests that perhaps we should organise a sub-committee to discuss matters with the council.

I McIntosh asked Cllr Gilbert that with his experience would it be a good idea to request a meeting with the Council. Could we propose a letter to be sent to Gillian asking her to attend a meeting either at the school or at her offices if more convenient. Ian suggests that we take a vote.

Question - The original plans for the Eastwood High School site should remain the same' - unanimous

M Taylor wondered if Crookfur Primary was dda compliant for 2015, if not and if the cost was too much, Eastwood's grounds would be ideal for a rebuild of Crookfur PS.

Sub Committee members: Sanat Mehta, Ian McIntosh, Susan Clark, Grace McCarthy and Karen Armstrong

Sanat will send letter to Gillian tomorrow, requesting a meeting with her either Wednesday 2nd or 9th October or earlier if possible. G Morgan suggested that we could go to the Council office for the meeting if more convenient for her.

Ailsa Connelly said that she will take all this information back to Crookfur's Parents' Council. It is a concern as a feeder school for Eastwood. She is happy to take part in the process. Its hard to imagine the school losing their recreational facilities with the Commonwealth Games next year. She would be very concerned over the amount of traffic congestion on a Friday.

I McIntosh is happy to be involved on the Working Committee. Someone needs to be in direct contact with the Council.

K Ali said that he personally disagrees with the site for a mosque. Traffic would be a huge issue on Fridays, with prayers, the car park at present wouldn't cope with the amount of traffic that the mosque would create. He mentioned that his son's friends and many pupils of all faiths within the school are opposed to the plans. Muslim pupils and their parents will object to the plans. Children from other schools would have to walk through our campus to get to the mosque which might create some tension. The school campus is more for education and as a non denominational school no religious building should be located on a shared campus

20th Sept - A note from Karen Armstrong

Dear All – just to say that I follow East Renfrewshire on twitter and I send a tweet asking for a date for the consultation and how local people will be informed. They came back saying that it will be early to mid October that the consultation will start and that it will be communicated through several means, including local press, library etc. I have asked that I be alerted when the consultation begins.

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