

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL HELD ON
Wednesday 12th November 2013 AT 7pm IN EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

PRESENT: Sanat Mehta, Ian McIntosh, Diane Dakers, Connie Hume, Mark Taylor, Lesley Smith, Mark Taylor, Grace McCarthy, Jacqueline Keenan, Kash Ali, Andrew Keir, Michelle Keir, Karen Armstrong, Susan Clark, Mags Jerfel, Gordon Wallace, James Meneely, Gordon Ford, Cathy Wilkie-Thompson, Dana Fowler

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Maxwell (Head Teacher), Shona McWilliam (Clerk)
Ailsa Connelly (Chair, Crookfur Primary), Brent Murphy (Parent, Crookfur Primary)
Pauline Green (Chair, Neilston Primary)
MSP Stewart Maxwell, MSP Ken McIntosh, Cllr Fletcher
Dr Amir Hussain, Dr Mahmood, Mr Rashid
Mr & Mrs Allan (parent observers)

APOLOGIES: Alex Stewart, Graham Smith, Gillian Morgan, Cllr Gilbert

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Sanat welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies were noted.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – (23rd October 2013)**

Minutes approved and will be entered onto website,

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES – (23rd October 2013)**

Nil

4. **Presentation by Dr Amir Hussain**

Sanat asked if Dr Hussain would like to give his presentation to the Parent Council. He explained that 2% of the community was Muslim and their key objective was to create a religious building in the local community. The offer of Maidenhill and Barrhead as sites was not suitable or central enough for their purpose. He listed the advantages of having such a building in the grounds, stating that Woodfarm's Education Centre (WEC) has enhanced the surrounding area and has won awards for inclusion and harmony. There will be no soup kitchen or halal butcher on site.

The safety issue will have minimal impact on the school. The mosque will be used more after school hours thus having little effect on traffic and parking. It would hope to promote youth and good relations within the neighbourhood. The mosque would not intrude in any of the school activities.

Dr Hussain was thanked by Sanat for his presentation.

5. **Presentation by Mr Ian McIntosh (Vice Chair)**

Ian gave his presentation to the members and guests.

Sanat explained to Dr Hussain that we would now have a question and answer session.

Question 1 (Grace)

“Having seen the presentation do you not now agree that this land is clearly within the school campus and clearly NOT residual or adjacent land terms which the Council frequently use? According to the planning brief in 2009 for the replacement school it states formal recreational space; informal open space should form an integral part of the design.

My question to ERC who I believe pride themselves in Educational Attainment is it not about time you followed the example of Hillpark Secondary and ensure that the children and young people of Eastwood High School get all elements of Curriculum for Excellence including learning”

Cllr Fletcher was asked to reply. He stated that it was quite clear that the school would not use that amount of ground. It would take a lot to convince him and his fellow councillors to what benefits the ground would bring to the school. His daughters attended Eastwood many years ago and after speaking to them and their friends, they can't imagine why and what we would use the land for.

Karen suggested that maybe things in education have changed since the time when his daughters attended Eastwood. Had he not heard of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and how they have devoted 28 pages to the benefits of outdoor learning?

Grace said that it was part of the initial discussion with pupils back in 2009 that they decided outdoor learning space would enhance the new building and BAM were contracted to create a landscaped natural amphitheatre for outdoor learning.

Question 2 (Karen)

“You have an obligation to ensure all our children are taught in a safe environment. Do you think having a religious facility on school grounds provides a safe environment and can the Parent Council please have sight of the paper/report or national strategy that we can look at to see when the Council changed the school campus to community land? I know that local residents have tried several times to obtain access to Capelrig House for community use but have always been told only **after 4.30pm as NO access to school grounds is allowed.**”

Cllr Fletcher responded by saying that schools are not prisons! Schools all over Scotland are designed differently infact the new Lasswade High school entrance is through a public cafe and they don't seem to worry about security. It was explained to him the strangers would be walking through the school campus to go to the mosque during school time which is not acceptable.

Question 3 (Susan)

“Can I just ask a really simple question but one that I know the local community is keen to know the answer to. Can I ask the representatives of EMREC who are here tonight, how they came to know about the land being up for sale? The local community have all just been merely looking at the progress of our new school. The question is who told you?”

“I would also like to know why this particular site and what will you gain that you cannot get from the 3 other ERC sites and the 4th suggested site at Patterton. Why do you think your proposal is more important than our children's education?”

Cllr Fletcher said that they were approached by the Muslim community. Dr Hussain said they were interested in the site as it was centrally located and had easy access. Patterton is zoned as green belt (marketed for housing) and is in the hands of receivers and is not owned by the council.

Grace asked Dr Hussain did he approach the council and ask for the land and if so who did he speak to. Dr Hussain decided that it wouldn't be appropriate to answer this question. MSP Mr McIntosh suggested that perhaps we could divulge the name of the councillor as at a recent meeting he informed him of the planning officer. There seemed to be a bit of confusion as Dr Hussain suggested that this was in fact incorrect.

Ian said did they realise that the ground in question is a quarter of the original site. It took a lot of time to design the amphitheatre which is during for completion early 2014.

MSP Ken McIntosh arrived during the meeting and was immediately questioned over his recent debate in parliament about how his daughter would rather play in a tree house than a Wendy house this emphasising the importance of out door space in education. He did say that he was in favour of the ground being used for a mosque. He apologised for being late and missing Ian's presentation. He agreed that outside space was important and it isn't a done deal as yet. He also confirmed that it was one of East Renfrewshire's proudest moments when the new Eastwood High was finally opened.

Question 4 (Diane)

"Mr Fletcher as leader of the Council can you explain how you hope to recover both the cost of developing this land as outdoor learning green space at a cost of around one million pounds as well as the actual value of the land from the proposal group. Can you acknowledge that the Council have a duty to ensure that there is no financial loss incurred."

"Can I also ask if the proposal group can afford to cover this fully as you are effectively proposing to buy from ERC taxpayers?"

"Professor Hussain if you are taking away school ground do you have the full funds to see it through, including excavation of the 40 foot hill to make it level for the mosque so that it is not overlooked. The reason I ask is the recent example of the abandoned building site of the unfinished mosque (i.e. Cumbernauld) which is now lying empty and occupying prime land"

Dr Hussain confirmed the funds had been met.

Mrs Green asked if in fact you would be breaking the contract with Scottish Future Trust if you decided to take the ground away from the school.

Cllr Fletcher said that the district valuer would put a price on the land.

Question 5 (Mark)

"Due to local developments in the area we are anticipating a large increase in traffic in and around Capelrig Rd and the schools. The children walking from Patterson station already face increased risk of accident by the narrow pavements and crossing the road to enter the school. We are extremely concerned that any further development on the school grounds will increase further danger on a daily basis to our young people at Eastwood High and Crookfur Primary. Can I therefore ask what your vision is for this additional traffic flow. In your response you indicated that there would be a very minimal amount of increased traffic. Have you undertaken a traffic survey and can I also ask to all of our invited guests tonight will the car park of Eastwood High be used as an overflow or even a main car park for this development"

Mark asked "how do you see the traffic flow working" Dr Mahmood said it's a little premature to worry. Timing of prayers would not affect the school opening and closing times.

Kash said from past experience there would be a lot of traffic; people would hang about, waiting in cars etc. Dr Hussain said that they would accommodate the school times and change their pray times accordingly. Kash asked what volume of traffic they would be expecting. Dr Hussain stated it would be approx 50/60 cars, going by Woodfarm's centre and they have no issues with parking and volume of cars.

MSP Maxwell said that when he had a discussion with Dr Hussain he claimed there would be approx 90 cars, a slight difference. Dr Hussain said that at Ramadan yes we could have 90 cars. MSP Maxwell felt from Cllr Fletcher that it was 'a done deal' we shouldn't have to prove ourselves it is obvious to everyone that the ground in question is within the school boundaries and has been for the last 50 years. Woodfarm centre is not a good example. The centre is close to the school but not within the school grounds. Different road design. MSP Maxwell asked Dr Hussain if he could confirm the planning officer's name but he confirmed that he wouldn't as it would not help the situation. MSP suggested could they perhaps re zone Maidenhill if owned by the council. He can highlight some initial problems. The safety/security of the children (Cullen Report). An additional facility in the grounds would not benefit the school. Eastwood is a non denominational school and therefore should not have a religious building on its grounds.

Brent thanked the guests for coming to the meeting and said it felt that you are not taking us seriously "not in our back yard" springs to mind. Can you not feel the feeling of the parents?

Mrs Green was very concerned with security on the trains. She has recently had a bad experience on the trains and feels that if the pupils missed their train, due to disruption on the roads and if not supervised at the train station, there could be a serious accident.

Ian McIntosh thanked all our invited guests for coming and answers our questions and re-iterated that it was not a race issue but about losing our outdoor facilities to our new state of the art school. He suggested that perhaps it would be a good idea if the councillors and Dr Hussain and colleagues get together some time soon and try and find a suitable site for their mosque.

After the guests left the meeting the parent council continued with their meeting. Sanat thanked the members for asking the questions and was surprised to find out that one of Dr Hussain's colleagues didn't know that the land in question was within the school grounds.

Ian said tonight's objectives were to inform all groups involved of where the land in question was situated and hopefully it would change their opinion.

Next stage is to send a third letter out immediately informing parents of the deadline and urging them to object. Shona will organise this and will also text parents to inform them when the letter will be in the school bags.

Ian's presentation and 3rd letter will be put on Eastwood's web site under 'Parent Council'

Lesley said we must remember to object ourselves as a group, Eastwood's Parent Council. It was agreed that Shona will email 3rd letter to all Parent Council Chairs of feeder primary schools.

It was unanimously agreed not to involve the press at this moment as well as not having a protest march.

Dana mentioned not to forget about Mearns Primary. Shona will email Chair the letter.

The next planned meeting will be Wednesday 22nd January 2014 at 8pm.

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