

## St Ninian's High School

### Parent Council Meeting

13<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")  
S. Reid (Joint Chair)  
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)  
D. Wilson ("DW")  
J. McLaughlin ("JM")  
C. Wallis  
J. Miller  
J. Mackie  
M. Pagliocca ("MP")  
K. Adams  
K. Kelly (part only)

By video-conference

(Zoom): K. Kelly (part only)

Apologies: C. Umeh  
S. MacConnell  
T. Gordon  
P. Hessett

Absent: G. McLaughlin (Church Representative)

School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil" or "HT")  
J. Cumming  
J. Wilson  
C. McCrea  
T. Creighton  
C. Boyle

#### 1. **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

The new Office-Bearers introduced themselves and welcomed all attendees to the first Parent Council Meeting of 2022. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer.

The School's new Head Teacher, Mr G. O'Neil, was introduced to the PC members, congratulated on his appointment, and warmly welcomed to the PC Meeting.

JS read out a personal letter of thanks from Mr Docherty to the Parent Council expressing gratitude and best wishes to the Parent Council for the retirement gift presented to him last month and for the PC's support over many years.

## 2. **Apologies**

A note was taken of the PC members in attendance and of intimated apologies.

The Office-Bearers explained that a priority intention is to check (and update) the current contact details of all PC members.

Updated email contact details were taken from all PC members who were present. The same exercise will be carried out with the absent members.

## 3. **Adjustment/Approval of Previous Minutes**

Draft Minutes of the PC meeting on 9 December 2021, and of the additional PC Meeting on 20 December 2021, were tabled for adjustment/approval.

No adjustments were intimated.

The Minutes were approved.

It was explained that a priority intention of the new Office-Bearers is that Minutes of PC Meetings will in future be published at the earliest opportunity on the PC website (located within the School's website). In recent times, Minutes of PC Meetings have not consistently been published to, or accessible by, the Parent Forum.

The Office-Bearers also explained that they intend to produce draft Minutes fairly quickly after PC meetings, and to post those drafts (albeit expressly subject to adjustment/approval) to the PC website as soon as possible, in order that the Parent Forum has an earlier insight into the matters discussed at PC meetings.

## 4. **Draft Action Plan**

The Office-Bearers tabled a draft "Action Plan" for discussion.

It proposed the following key objectives:

- To improve communication between the Parent Forum and the PC;
- To improve parental engagement with the PC;
- To identify current issues that require the PC's immediate attention;
- To identify any future issues that may require the PC's attention in due course.

Each objective was discussed in turn:-

### (i) New PC Email address

The Office-Bearers reported that a new PC Email account has been set up. It is now live. It is: [pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com](mailto:pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com). The Meeting welcomed the development.

### **AGREED ACTION:**

**The Parent Forum is to be advised of the PC's new Email address and to encourage direct communication with the PC.**

(ii) New Social Media Accounts

There was lively and constructive discussion as to the best means of communicating with the Parent Forum on social media.

It was agreed that social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) be set up for the PC, but that a careful eye be maintained on them to address/remove any inappropriate postings/comments, so far as reasonably possible.

MP agreed to set up the new Accounts on behalf of the PC and to assume responsibility to monitor/administer appropriate use in the first instance.

**AGREED ACTION:**

**MP to set up FB and Twitter Accounts on behalf of the PC and, for a trial period, to monitor/administer appropriate use of the Accounts.**

(iii) PC Website

There was discussion regarding the PC website (hosted within the School website).

It was agreed that the PC website requires to be rejuvenated.

On behalf of the PC, MP agreed to liaise with the Office-Bearers and the School to refresh, update and re-design (if appropriate) the PC website and its content.

Ms Boyle (of the School's teaching staff) kindly agreed to liaise with MP in this task, and to provide the necessary IT support.

Ms Boyle also kindly agreed to act as the School's liaison (or initial point of contact) on IT-related matters, notably to seek to identify IT solutions that would facilitate communication between the PC and the Parent Forum.

**AGREED ACTION:**

**MP to liaise with the Office-Bearers to re-design, update and re-populate the PC website, with IT support from Ms Boyle; and to agree an efficient mechanism regularly to update and refresh the content.**

(iv) Parental engagement with PC

There was discussion as to the best means to encourage parents to become more engaged with the PC.

It was agreed that parents be encouraged to attend PC meetings, in person or electronically (IT permitting), and to submit ideas/issues/concerns to the PC email address (or via social media) in advance of meetings.

A proposal to try to establish year-group volunteers among the Parent Forum (for the purpose of feeding issues/ideas/concerns back to the PC) was discussed, but met with no substantial support.

The School staff welcomed the increase in parental engagement with the PC but would wish to ensure that it did not detract from the excellent parental engagement which already takes place directly with the School.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**The Office-Bearers shall intimate on the PC website and social media platforms the dates of forthcoming PC meeting to encourage parental engagement, notably by parental attendance at PC meetings and/or by encouraging the submission of ideas/issues/concerns to the PC email address in advance.**

#### (v) Format of meetings

There was discussion regarding the preferred length, frequency and format of the PC meetings.

The Office-Bearers expressed a desire to try to substantially reduce the duration of meetings (perhaps by encouraging the submission of written reports in advance). This met with general approval. It was agreed that the Office-Bearers will liaise with the HT to discuss suitable mechanisms to achieve this.

There were mixed views expressed on reducing the frequency of meetings.

As for the format, the Office-Bearers suggested greater use of a hybrid format, whereby meetings took place in person but with PC members/parents able, if they so wished, to attend electronically by means of, say, Zoom video-conference.

This "hybrid" arrangement had been trialled, with moderate success, at the 20 December 2021 PC Meeting. That meeting had been held in a school lecture theatre, which enjoyed slightly better acoustics than the main dining Hall. Those attending remotely on that occasion had reported that the audio facility had been poor but just about tolerable. The IT advice to the Meeting was that improvements could be achieved.

The "hybrid" arrangement had also been put in place for this evening's Meeting (on 13 January 2022), which was held in the Dining Hall, to try to allow the PC Meeting to proceed both "in person" and by Zoom video-conference. One PC member participated for a short period by Zoom but reported that, while the video connection was good, the sound was inaudible.

The IT advice to the Meeting was that the "hybrid" format (both in person and by Zoom) will not work satisfactorily until the meeting is convened in a smaller area (such as a lecture theatre or classroom) with better acoustics.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**The Office-Bearers shall keep under review the use of the Zoom video-conference facility for PC meetings, but acknowledge that the use of a hybrid option (whereby PC members and/or parents can attend electronically) may be unsustainable until COVID-19 restrictions are eased and meetings can take place in one of the School's smaller lecture theatres or classrooms.**

(vi) Current Issues requiring immediate PC attention

The Office-Bearers proposed to the Meeting that the current issues that required the immediate attention of the PC were (i) the Eastwood Park Development, (ii) the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on pupil education and well-being, and (iii) the Scottish Government Health & Well-being Census.

No objections, or alternative current issues, were intimated.

(vii) Future Issues requiring PC attention in due course

The Office-Bearers proposed that future issues that will, in due course, require consideration by the PC were (i) the Scottish Government's Education Recovery Plan; (ii) the Scottish Government's Education Reform proposals and (iii) a review of the PC Constitution.

For the benefit of PC members, briefing papers were tabled on all three issues.

No objections, or alternative future issues, were intimated.

Due to pressure of time, none of the issues was further discussed at the meeting. The issues were held over for consideration at subsequent PC meetings.

## 5. **The Proposed Development in Eastwood Park**

By way of background, it will be recalled that last year, without prior notification to the School or the PC, East Renfrewshire Council ("ERC") lodged an application seeking planning permission for a substantial development within Eastwood Park (namely, the demolition of the existing Eastwood Theatre/pool, and the construction of a new leisure centre, to be operated by a separate Trust entity).

The planning application causes concern to the PC for three main reasons:

- (i) the proposed demolition and construction works raise safety concerns for School pupils, staff and parents;
- (ii) the proposed development seem likely to cause substantial traffic disruption and related risks, both during construction and after completion, due to the limited access points to and from the Park; and
- (iii) the proposed development abuts and encroaches upon ground and amenity currently enjoyed by St Ninian's High School pupils, and substantially curtails the scope for future expansion of the School's outdoor sports facilities and academic accommodation.

At short notice, the PC had appointed a sub-group to investigate and to prepare a response to the ERC application.

In September 2021, following feedback from the sub-group, the PC lodged "Representations" intimating objections/concerns to aspects of ERC's planning application (specifically, concerning safe access and construction management, and also seeking to extract and secure certain minimum benefits for St Ninian's pupils from the proposed development by way of recompense for the prejudice to the School caused by the proposed development).

At this evening's Meeting, the Office-Bearers updated the PC members.

The Meeting was advised that ERC's Planning Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday 19 January 2022 to consider the planning application – and that the Planning Report (and recommendations) should be published on ERC's website on Friday 14 January 2022.

DW agreed to monitor the ERC website and to circulate to PC members a copy of the Planning Report and Decision once available.

Mr O'Neil and members of the School staff observed that ERC will often "partner" with local Schools to allow pupils to benefit from, and gain experience of, infrastructure projects, such as by arranging for pupils to observe and learn about construction phases and project management.

The PC members welcomed such "partnering" projects with the Council, but requested greater clarification and detail, to ensure that all available opportunities for the pupils from this major project were not missed – given that the School and its pupils are likely to endure significant disruption and loss of amenity throughout a lengthy construction process.

The PC members also requested some guidance from the School staff as to the specific needs/deficiencies in facilities and/or physical accommodation within the School (now or in the foreseeable future), in order to better inform the PC as to whether any such current or foreseeable needs/deficiencies might usefully be addressed by creative arrangements relating to the use of the completed proposed development.

Mr O'Neil kindly agreed to make enquiries (and to report back to the PC at its next meeting) on the vocational opportunities that may be made available to the School's pupils during the construction phases.

Further, Mr O'Neil kindly agreed to make enquiries (and to report back to the PC before Easter) with his own assessment of the needs/deficiencies in facilities and/or physical accommodation within the School (now or in the foreseeable future), and of the extent (if any) to which those current or foreseeable needs might usefully be addressed, in whole or in part, by opportunities presented by the proposed development.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**DW shall monitor the ERC website and circulate to PC members copies of the Planning Report and Decision once available.**

**Mr O'Neil shall make enquiries with ERC (and report back to the PC at its next meeting) on the vocational opportunities that might usefully be made available to the School's pupils during the construction phases of the proposed Eastwood Park development.**

**Further, Mr O'Neil shall assess the current and foreseeable needs/deficiencies of the School in the availability of facilities and/or physical accommodation (whether they be sports, academic, vocational or other educational facilities; and whether relating to academic or administrative or other suitable accommodation), and of the extent, if any, to which those current or foreseeable**

**needs/deficiencies might usefully be satisfied by creative opportunities arising from the proposed development.**

**The Office-Bearers shall seek to make contact with the operating Trust, in order to open a dialogue.**

## **6. The Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on Pupil Education and Well-being**

The Office-Bearers tabled a Briefing Note for the information of the PC members. This set out the updated Scottish Government COVID-19 Guidance issued to schools (as at 5 January 2022).

Two specific questions were raised with the HT, namely:

- (i) when was compulsory mask-wearing by pupils expected to be discontinued; and
- (ii) what were the current and anticipated arrangements for the conduct of examinations in 2022?

As regards question (i), Mr O'Neil reported that he currently had no information from the Scottish Government or ERC on the timescale for discontinuation of compulsory mask-wearing by pupils.

As regards issue (ii), Mr O'Neil reported that up-to-date information and useful links are available on the School's website explaining in detail the current examination arrangements, and alternative possible scenarios.

He reported that, to the best of his knowledge, there was currently no intention (on the part of SQA) to cancel any of the 2022 examination diets. SQA was currently proceeding with so-called "Scenario 1" (which involved a full diet of examinations being sat in person). This strategy may be reviewed by SQA towards the end of March 2022, the outcome of which remains to be seen.

## **7. The Scottish Government Census**

The Office-Bearers reported to the PC members that, as previously instructed, the PC Joint Chairs had duly written to ERC and interested parties expressing the PC's vigorous opposition to, and grave concerns regarding, the planned distribution of the Scottish Government's "Health & Well-being Census" to pupils at St Ninian's High School.

For the information of the PC members, a copy of the Joint Chairs' letter of objection was tabled, together with an email response dated 10 January 2022 from ERC.

The ERC response disclosed a present intention on the part of ERC to proceed with the Census before the end of April 2022, albeit in what was described as a revised format. The Office-Bearers have been invited to attend a Parent Council Chairs Forum Meeting (date, time & venue to be confirmed), hosted by ERC, at which the Census is to be discussed.

The Office-Bearers reported that no response or acknowledgement had yet been received from any of the 18 elected Councillors to whom the PC's letter of objection had been copied.

For the information of the PC members, the Office-Bearers also tabled a separate copy letter dated 6 January 2022 from Connect (the leading representative body of Scottish parents) to the Scottish Government. The Connect letter also contained extensive objections to the proposed content and format of the Census.

There was further heated discussion among the PC members regarding the Census.

Many PC members expressed dismay, alarm and outrage at ERC's stated present intention to proceed with the Census in the format suggested in the ERC email response.

No PC member spoke in favour of the Census.

Mr O'Neil confirmed that he had not yet seen the content of the Census.

It was agreed by the PC members that, on behalf of the PC, the Office-Bearers should maintain the PC's formal objections to the Census and continue vigorously to oppose the circulation of the Census (including in its revised format) to pupils within St Ninian's High School.

Further, it was agreed that, on behalf of the PC, the Office-Bearers should continue to pursue satisfactory responses from ERC and interested parties to the PC's objections.

Further, it was agreed that the Office-Bearers should attend a forthcoming Parent Council Chairs Forum Meeting (hosted by ERC) (date and time to be confirmed) in order to learn more about ERC's intentions regarding the Census and to maintain the PC's opposition thereto.

Meantime, in response to a request from the Vice-Chair, Mr O'Neil undertook that the Census would not be circulated to pupils within St Ninian's High School prior to the next PC Meeting, to allow the foregoing steps to be taken and for further enquiries to be carried out with ERC regarding its intentions.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**On behalf of the PC, the Office-Bearers shall maintain the PC's formal objections to the Census and continue vigorously to oppose the circulation of the Census (including in its revised format) to pupils within St Ninian's High School.**

**On behalf of the PC, the Office-Bearers shall continue to pursue satisfactory responses from ERC and interested parties to the PC's objections to the Census.**

**The Office-Bearers shall attend a forthcoming Parent Council Chairs Forum Meeting (hosted by ERC) (date and time to be confirmed) in order to learn more about ERC's intentions regarding the Census and to maintain the PC's opposition thereto.**

**Meantime, Mr O'Neil shall procure that the Census will not be circulated to pupils within St Ninian's High School prior to the next PC Meeting, to allow the foregoing steps to be taken and for further enquiries to be carried out with ERC regarding its intentions.**



## 8. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neil expressed his delight and excitement at taking up his new position.

He proposed to use the intervening months, prior to the production of the new School Improvement Plan, to work with pupils, staff and parents to agree a "Shared Vision" for the School which placed love of the children at its heart.

These comments were warmly welcomed by the PC members.

## 9. AOCB

Two issues were raised by members of the Parent Forum (in written communications to the PC), namely:

- (i) The cancellation of the Advanced Higher Music Concert and
- (ii) The resumption of Residential School trips

As regards issue (i), deep disappointment and disquiet had been expressed to the PC by many parents at the sudden cancellation of the Advanced Higher Music Concert, particularly in the context of the national trend of easing COVID restrictions on large gatherings and the apparent ability of other Schools (for example, in West Dunbartonshire Council) to recommence music ensembles.

PC members reported the enthusiastic willingness of many parents to assist to ensure that the Concert proceeds - not least by identifying alternative venues to host the Concert, if the School premises are not to be made available.

Mr O'Neil confirmed that, having investigated matters, he and the entire School staff are absolutely committed to hosting such events, if at all possible, as they are acknowledged to be an integral part of the community life of the School, as well as being essential to creating positive memories and experiences for individual pupils.

He reported that the cancellation of this particular Concert (which had been scheduled for February 2022) was felt to be necessary due to a combination of three factors:

- (i) staffing challenges within the School's Music Department,
- (ii) the inability of an external sound technician to carry out preparatory "setting-up" work within the School premises and to support the event on the night due to COVID restrictions; and
- (iii) current "Guidance" that inhibits the gathering of groups of singers, wind and brass instrumentalists in small areas, and which impairs the ability of pupils and staff to rehearse for the Music Concert.

Mr O'Neil advised that he and the Music Department staff will keep the issue under active review – and are investigating the possibility of trying to re-arrange the Concert to a later date, possibly in or around May 2022. Various factors (such as attendance, rehearsal opportunity and impact on preparation for SQA exams) will need to be taken into consideration to ensure the final outcome is in the best interests of the pupils, but the School staff are keen to make the Music Concert happen, if possible.

The PC members reiterated their willingness to support to the HT and staff in taking all necessary action to seek to ensure that the Music Concert did proceed.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**Mr O'Neil shall actively review the possibility of re-arranging the Advanced Higher Music Concert to a later date, possibly in or around May 2022 – and shall notify the PC of any specific steps that might usefully be undertaken by the PC/Parent Forum to achieve that objective.**

As regards issue (ii), Mr O'Neil reported that he had no information on the likely timescale for lifting restrictions on outdoor residential visits. He understood that foreign trips were unlikely to be approved by ERC for the time being, until the country was heading out of the pandemic.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next Parent Council Meeting is on **THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2022 at 7pm** in St Ninian's High School.

**[SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS  
ATTACHED]**

**SUMMARY  
OF  
AGREED ACTION POINTS**

-----

<i>Improving Parental Communication</i>	<i>Who is to action this?</i>	<i>Timescale?</i>
1. The Office-Bearers shall publicise to the Parent Forum the PC's new Email address and encourage the Parent Forum to use that email to communicate directly with the PC.	OB	30 Jan 22
2. MP to set up FB and Twitter Accounts and, for a trial period, to monitor/administer appropriate use of the Accounts.	MP	30 Jan 22
3. MP to liaise with the Office-Bearers to update and re-populate the PC website (within the School website), with IT support from School staff, and to seek to agree an efficient mechanism to update content.	MP/OB	30 Jan 22
4. The Office-Bearers shall publicise the dates of forthcoming PC meeting to encourage parental engagement and the submission of ideas/issues/concerns to the PC in advance.	OB	30 Jan 22
5. The Office-Bearers shall keep under review the use of the Zoom video-conference facility for PC meetings (to allow PC members and/or parents to attend remotely, if they so wish).	OB	Ongoing

<i>The Eastwood Park Development</i>		
6. DW to circulate to PC members the ERC Planning Report and Decision, when available on ERC website.	DW	14 Jan 22 19 Jan 22
7. HT shall make enquiries with ERC on the vocational opportunities that might usefully be made available to the School's pupils during the construction phases of the proposed Eastwood Park development.	HT	10 Feb 22
8. HT shall undertake an assessment of current and foreseeable needs/deficiencies of the School in the availability of facilities and/or physical accommodation, and the extent, if any, to which those current or foreseeable needs/deficiencies might usefully be satisfied	HT	Easter

<b>by creative opportunities arising from the proposed development.</b>		
---	--	--

<i>The Scottish Government's Health &amp; Well-being Census</i>		
<b>9. The Office-Bearers shall maintain the PC's formal objections to the Census and continue to oppose the circulation of the Census (including in its revised format) to pupils within SNHS.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>10. The Office-Bearers shall pursue satisfactory responses from ERC and the interested parties to the PC's formal objections to the Census.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>30 Jan 22</b>
<b>11. The Office-Bearers shall attend an anticipated Parent Council Chairs Forum Meeting (hosted by ERC) (date and time to be confirmed) in order to learn more about ERC's intentions regarding the Census.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Feb 22</b>
<b>12. Meantime, HT shall procure that the Census will not be circulated to pupils within SNHS prior to the next PC Meeting.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Ongoing (to 10 Feb 22)</b>

<i>The Advanced Higher School Concert</i>		
<b>13. HT shall actively review the possibility of re-arranging the Advanced Higher Music Concert to a later date, possibly in or around May 2022.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>14. HT to notify the PC of any specific assistance that might usefully be provided by the PC/Parent Forum to allow the Advanced Higher Music Concert to proceed in or around May 2022.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>