

St Ninian's High School

Parent Council Meeting

14th March 2022

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair)
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair) ("AW")
J. Mackie
K. Adams

Apologies: D. Wilson ("DW")
J. McLaughlin
M. Pagliocca ("MP")
S. MacConnell
C. Umeh
C. Wallis
K. McDiarmid
J. Miller
T. Gordon
P. Hessett
K. Kelly
G. McLaughlin (Church Representative)

School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil" or "HT")
J. Cumming ("JC")
C. Boyle ("CB")
M. Gallagher

1. **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

The Office-Bearers ("OB") extended a warm welcome to all the Parent Council ("PC") members in attendance, and the members of the Parent Forum who had also taken time to come along. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer

2. **Apologies**

A note was taken of the PC members in attendance and of intimated apologies. (A number of parents from the Parent Forum were also in attendance.)

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

Draft Minutes of the PC meeting on 10th February 2022 (as adjusted), were tabled for adjustment/approval. No adjustments were intimated. The Minutes were approved.

The OB undertook to publish the approved Minutes on the PC website.

4. Update on Progress with previously-agreed Action Points

The OB updated the meeting on progress achieved with "Agreed Action Points" from the previous meeting:

4.1 Improving Parental Engagement

It had previously been agreed that the PC's new FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts would be published in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication.

This seems to have been largely achieved (for which the PC expressed gratitude to Mr O'Neil and the school staff, notably CB), but there remained some dubiety as to whether details of the PC's Gmail account had been included in that School newsletter. HT/CB agreed to check the position.

Separately, some work remains outstanding in re-designing, updating and re-populating the PC webpage (within the School's website).

(Ideally, the OB would like the PC webpage to contain general information about the PC, its role and functions, office-bearers, and contact details (Gmail, social media accounts), with separate folders/links to:

- (i) The PC Constitution;
- (ii) PC Minutes of Meetings (as approved)
- (iii) PC Minutes of meetings (draft only– approval pending)
- (iv) PC Newsletters
- (v) Specific Notifications likely to be of interest to parents

CB kindly confirmed she was happy to liaise with MP to finalise the webpage.

The OB requested that the School continue to assist with parental engagement by circulating details of the PC's FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication.

AGREED ACTION:

The HT shall publicise details of the PC's FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication.

MP to liaise with CB to complete the re-design, update and re-population of the PC webpage (on the School website); and to devise an efficient mechanism regularly to update and refresh the content.

4.2 Eastwood Park Development

It had previously been agreed that the OB would contact ERC (i) to reiterate the PC's interest in the development, (ii) to request an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, (iii) to request the opportunity to be consulted on the drafting of that Plan, and (iv) to seek clarification of ERC's "master plan" (if any) for Eastwood Park (specifically ERC's plans, if any, as to the future development of the School).

DW had reported to the OB, prior to the meeting, that he had made initial contact, on behalf of the PC, with the principal planner, and awaited feedback on progress.

It was acknowledged that it remained “early days”; no contractor had yet been appointed; no draft Construction Management Plan was yet in existence; so there was presently limited scope to influence discussion regarding steps to be taken to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils during the construction phase. In a similar vein, the School’s assessment of vocational opportunities arising from the construction was unable to progress materially until a contractor was appointed.

Mr O’Neil reported to the meeting that physical accommodation within the School was likely to be “tight” but he did not envisage that there would be a need to extend the School accommodation, given the previous change in catchment rules and the anticipated reduction, in due course, in the School roll.

The OB observed that next year’s school roll was likely to exceed all previous records.

Mr O’Neil acknowledged this, but reiterated that he did not presently anticipate any need to expand the School accommodation to cope with pupil numbers.

The OB noted that the PC had previously been told by senior School staff that there were deficiencies in science lab accommodation within the School; and that the existing “temporary” accommodation was expected to be required as a permanent feature.

Mr O’Neil acknowledged that this “may come to fruition”; that pupil demand for courses such as computing was on the rise, and may necessitate more classrooms to accommodate that demand; that it was difficult to gauge the level of need from one year to the next; but that he presently did not see a deficiency in physical accommodation or resource.

The OB observed that the purpose of the HT’s ongoing assessment was to gauge the longer term needs of the School (in the next 5, 10 or 15 years), rather than merely in the short term, given the long-term constraints that will otherwise be imposed, in the long term, upon School expansion by virtue of the new leisure centre development.

The OB requested that Mr O’Neil to continue with his assessment with a view to reporting more formally in due course.

Further discussion on this issue was held over to a specific agenda item later in the meeting (see paragraph 7, below).

AGREED ACTION:

The HT shall continue with his assessment of the needs and deficiencies of the School (in terms of both physical estate and intangible resources) in the short, medium and long terms – with a view to seeking to ascertain the extent, if any, to which those needs and deficiencies might be capable of being addressed (in whole or in part) by means of negotiated access to the completed leisure complex development.

4.3 The Scottish Government Health & Wellbeing Census

Further discussion on this issue was held over to a specific agenda item later in the meeting (see para. 8, below).

4.4 Advanced Higher School Concert

The HT reported that he continues to actively review the possibility of re-arranging the Advanced Higher Music Concert - and is actively working with staff to try to re-arrange it for Monday 30 May 2022. It was acknowledged that this will be difficult to achieve in the tight timescale, but all best efforts are being applied.

Separately, the HT reported that staff are working hard to try to host the School Prom on Wednesday 1 May 2022 and the Graduation on Thursday 9 June 2022.

It remains to be seen whether parents can attend

The OB extended to Mr O'Neil and the School staff the PC's whole-hearted support and enthusiastic assistance for these efforts, and will be happy to assist in any way possible (including, if necessary, by seeking to identify suitable venues outwith the School premises, if that would assist).

AGREED ACTION:

HT shall continue to actively review the possibility of re-arranging the Advanced Higher Music Concert (and other events).

4.5 Diocesan Parent Forum

The next Diocesan Parent Forum meeting will be on 9 May 2022 in the offices adjoining St Mirin's Cathedral, Paisley. The OB will be represented there.

PC members and Parent Forum members are encouraged to submit, in advance, to the PC Gmail account (or PC WhatsApp) any questions or issues they wish the OB to raise at the meeting.

AGREED ACTION:

PC members to submit, in advance, to the PC Gmail account (or PC WhatsApp) any questions or issues they wish the OB to raise at the forthcoming Diocesan Parent Forum Meeting.

5. **Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis**

The OB expressed their profound sympathy and support for the people of Ukraine, following the Russian invasion.

The OB invited discussion and proposals from the PC members (and the wider Parent Forum) regarding ways in which the PC and School might usefully respond to the humanitarian crisis that was developing in Ukraine.

From the spiritual perspective, JS reported that, from the very outset, with Mr O'Neil's support, the School's Faith Committee had instigated the praying of the Rosary in the Oratory every day during Lent at 12.30pm, for peace in the world. Prayer is being led by a mixture of pupils members of the Faith Committee, parents, clergy and staff members. All parents are welcome to attend.

From a practical perspective, all thoughts and ideas were invited.

Various interesting ideas were exchanged. Inviting cash donations via Parent Pay appeared to be the simplest option. Bucket collections were also mooted, in particular at the 6th Year Masquerade Ball, S1 Disco, and a forthcoming Music Concert at the end of March. Other options aired were: (i) a sponsored walk; (ii) the purchase of batches of Ukraine badges/buttons for onward sale to pupils and others; (iii) reinstating the "Tea for Life" (previously organised during Lent) and the splitting of those funds with Ukraine charitable collections.

It was noted that, in order to maximise benefit, any funds collected should probably be donated to SCIAF, in order to attract the "match funding" promised by HM Government.

There was a general acceptance that monetary donations appeared to be the most efficient way of providing support. In contrast, the collection of physical goods raised just too many practical problems of collection, storage and transport.

It was suggested that the PC may wish to make contact with the St Andrews Ukrainian Catholic Church in Edinburgh (which appeared, from press reports, to be heavily involved in organising humanitarian assistance) in order to ascertain if they had any better-informed ideas on positive ways to assist.

It was also observed that some School pupils may well have Ukrainian relatives and contacts.

There was discussion regarding the UK Government's Ukrainian Refugee scheme. The PC members welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to act as a "corporate sponsor" of refugees, thereby expediting the entry of more refugees into the country. The PC members expressed interest in knowing what steps East Renfrewshire Council intended to take to re-house Ukrainian refugees.

In the course of the discussion, it emerged that the School does not have a Charity Committee. This omission may usefully be revisited in due course.

Given the time constraints, and the relatively poor attendance at tonight's meeting, the PC members felt constrained to leave matters on the basis that the PC enthusiastically supports the School's ongoing efforts to collect financial donations in such manner as the HT and his staff see fit. The issue will be monitored. The PC remains ready and willing to assist.

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall (i) encourage and support the collection of monetary donations within the School for the relief of the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis; (ii) invite suggestions from the Parent Forum for other practical means of offering

assistance; and (iii) monitor the position to identify further spiritual and practical ways to assist.

6. Review of the PC Constitution

The OB referred the PC members to the 1st draft of a proposed amended PC Constitution (as at March 2022) (presented tonight for discussion purposes only).

It was observed that while the existing Constitution had thankfully proved to be adequate to meet the PC's needs, certain aspects of the existing Constitution would benefit from review and amendment.

Given the time constraints, and the relatively poor attendance at tonight's meeting, the OB suggested that this issue be held over to the next meeting to allow members the opportunity to review the draft proposed amended Constitution, and to consider matters in more detail.

It was acknowledged that, even if the PC members decided in due course to initiate an amendment procedure, the Constitution could only be amended by obtaining requisite consent from the Parent Forum.

7. Proposed Development in Eastwood Park

The OB repeated that DW had made initial contact with the relevant Planning Officer.

DW had also circulated to PC members a copy of the Minute of the Planning Committee which appeared to record some acknowledgment of the School's valid interest in the Development and to identify the School's pupils as potential beneficiaries of the Development (per Councillor Miller). Provost Fletcher had also noted at that meeting that the PC had requested priority use of the facilities by SNHS School pupils.

The OB reported that it was essential that contact be made with the Trust, which is intended to operate the leisure facility, in order to seek to secure access to the facilities for SNHS pupils, notably to the swimming pool and theatre resources.

The OB expressed the hope that, through the good offices of ERC, the Trust and the HT, scope may exist for some tangible benefit to be negotiated for the School's pupils, given the fact that it is those pupils who will suffer most from the disruption associated with the prolonged construction process, and from the loss of amenity caused by the large-scale construction within the Park's green space. It was reiterated that the proposed development abuts and encroaches upon ground and amenity that is currently enjoyed by SNHS pupils, and substantially curtails the scope for future expansion of the School's outdoor sports facilities and academic/office accommodation.

Accordingly, the OB repeated their assertion that, by way of recompense, it was only right and fair that SNHS pupils be afforded more liberal access to the Development's facilities.

The OB noted that ERC's "master plan" (if any) for SNHS remained unclear (on issues such as expansion, car parking, the façade, etc).

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall contact ERC (i) to reiterate the PC's interest in the development, (ii) to request an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, (iii) to request the opportunity to be consulted on the drafting of that Plan, and (iv) to seek clarification of ERC's "master plan" (if any) for Eastwood Park (including, but not limited to, ERC's plans, if any, as to the future development of the School, the accommodation "footprint", car parking facilities, and upgrades to the façade).

In addition, the HT shall maintain contact with ERC to request (i) an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, and (ii) clarification and assurances regarding the steps to be taken to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils during the construction phase.

8. The Scottish Government's Health & Wellbeing Census

The OB updated the meeting on the PC's ongoing opposition to the Census.

The OB reported that they had continued to engage with relevant parties and vigorously to oppose the roll-out of the Census.

A meeting of the full Council of ERC was convened on 3 March 2022. The Census was raised as an agenda item. A vote was taken of the 17 councillors then in attendance. In practical effect, 11 councillors voted in support of the Census; 6 voted against it.

A list of the Councillors who voted in support of, and those who voted against, the Census, appears as Annex 1. (The full Council Meeting, and the detail of the discussion and vote, can be viewed on-line through YouTube, to which reference should be made.)

Following that Council meeting, ERC's Education Department has formally intimated that it intends to proceed with the Census.

However, following the extensive efforts made by the SNHS PC, a number of significant improvements have been made to the Census by ERC's Education Department.

Firstly, the Census will now be fully "opt-in", rather than "opt-out". In other words, the consent of parents and children to participate in the Census will now no longer be assumed. Instead, parents and children must actively "opt-in" to participation in the Census.

Secondly, in order that parents can decide whether to "opt-in" to their children's participation in the Census, a full copy of the final Census questions is to be made available to parents in advance.

Thirdly, the Scottish Candidate Number ("SCN") will now be removed entirely from all parts of the Census. This is designed to ensure that all responses to the Census are truly anonymous (though whether that objective is actually achieved remains an issue in controversy).

Fourthly, many of the more explicit, graphic and sexually intrusive questions have (apparently) been deleted or significantly amended. While some questions do remain in the Census (for S4, S5 & S6 pupils) regarding their sexual experiences, it is understood that the wording of these questions has been significantly diluted from the original version of the Census.

The OB reported to the PC meeting that while these improvements are welcomed - and due gratitude has been expressed to ERC's Education Department for its willingness to listen and to make these amendments – the OB still do not support the Census.

The OB observed that the PC members (and the Parent Forum) have yet to see the amended version of the Census questions. Besides, even if the original wording of the Census has been amended and improved (which remained to be seen), it was concerning that the Scottish Government (and ERC) had ever contemplated asking the original questions in the first place. The real risk existed that the Census had the potential to “morph” in later years into a more objectionable intrusion into private and family life, in breach of the religious and philosophical beliefs of parents as to how their children should be educated at a Catholic school. For that reason, the OB considered that the PC was correct to take a clear stand now. Second, and more fundamentally, the entire rationale and purpose of the Census (with its associated intrusion into private and family life) has yet to be persuasively justified.

The OB reported to the meeting that SNHS PC is not alone in these views.

The PCs of Williamwood High School and of St Luke's High School, Barrhead, had similarly advised ERC that they do not support the Census.

As matters currently stand, despite the PC's expressed opposition and non-support, ERC's Education Department has now advised that it intends to proceed with the Census, albeit in a significantly amended form.

Mr O'Neil then advised the meeting that he had now seen the final Census questions.

Mr O'Neil kindly agreed to share the questions with the OB in early course.

Mr O'Neil advised that parents would receive an email with a “unique code” which would allow parents to access the Census questions and then to respond to state whether or not they consent to their child's participation in the Census. He advised that it was not expected that any child will be asked to complete the Census prior to 25 April 2022.

The OB asked Mr O'Neil whether the parents of children who were 16 or over would also be sent a copy of (or link to) the Census questions, and whether those parents would also be asked whether they consent to their child's participation. Mr O'Neil did not know the answer to this specific question, but agreed to make enquiries.

The OB expressed concern that if the parents of children aged 16 or over were not so consulted, it was unclear how and when “full and informed consent” of those children (aged 16 and over) would be sought and obtained.

The OB expressed the view that the parents of children aged 16 and over were still entitled to be notified in advance of the timing and terms of any invitation or approach that might be made by ERC (or School) staff direct to those children to participate in

the Census, in order that parents can have a fair opportunity to discuss the matter with their children, in advance, in the privacy of their own homes.

The OBs expressed concern that the procedure to obtain informed pupil consent had not been thought through properly.

Mr O'Neil agreed that the mechanics of obtaining consent required further thought. He agreed to look at it. He stated that "nothing will happen till June" (in the sense that no pupil will be asked to participate in the Census prior to June).

The OB reiterated their view that ERC has a moral and legal obligation to provide education at SNHS in accordance with Catholic beliefs.

The OB noted the determined mood of the PC members in opposition to ERC's plans regarding the Census.

AGREED ACTION

The Office-Bearers shall monitor the position, review the final version of the HWB Census once it is made available by ERC, and report to the Parent Forum on ERC's intended roll-out of the Census.

9. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neil reported on the success of the recent Careers Convention (held online on 24 February 2022).

He also reported on a huge number of School events that are presently in the pipeline, and which staff hope to host, provided COVID restrictions allow.

The PC offered Mr O'Neil its full support in these ventures.

Mr O'Neil also indicated that he intends to prepare a 3 Year School Plan, and wishes to add that to the Agenda for the next meeting.

10. AOCB

Three issues were raised by members of the Parent Forum (in written communications to the PC Gmail account and orally at tonight's meeting):

- (i) The Cost of the School Day Survey
- (ii) The wearing of "hoodies"
- (iii) Rejuvenation of "The Friends of St Ninian's"

As regards issue (i), the OB asked Mr O'Neil if the PC can assist in any way in making school uniforms affordable, for example by arranging an online uniform "swap shop", or uniform exchange or donation scheme (perhaps at the end of school years). Concern was expressed regarding storage space; the PC members offered various possible solutions; it was agreed to re-visit the issue at the next meeting when more PC members were present.

As regards issue (ii), it was reiterated by Mr O'Neil that pupils are not allowed to wear school hoodies outwith PE classes. The School's uniform policy was clear that grey school jerseys should be worn.

As regards issue (iii), a consensus emerged among the PC members present that fresh life should be breathed into the organisation known as "The Friends of St Ninian's" which has traditionally taken on formal fund-raising and social activities for the School. The OB urged a resuscitation of this body, especially post-COVID, to stimulate greater parental engagement with the School via social and fund-raising activities.

JC kindly agreed to identify and approach persons who had previously been involved in "The Friends of St Ninian's", and to encourage the convening of a meeting to reinstate formal fund-raising and social activities.

AGREED ACTION

JC shall seek to identify and approach persons who had previously been involved in "The Friends of St Ninian's" (or who might be willing to do so); to seek to clarify the basis of that entity's actings; and to encourage the convening of a meeting to reinstate formal fund-raising and social activities.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next Parent Council Meeting is on 12 May 2022 in St Ninian's High School.

**[SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS
ATTACHED]**

ANNEX 1

List of ERC Councillors voting in support of / against
the Census
at Full Meeting on 3 March 2022

Councillors voting in support of the Census (incl. Sex Survey)	Councillors voting against the Census (incl. Sex Survey)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cllr. Tony Buchanan (Ward 2)2. Cllr. Paul O’Kane (Ward 2)3. Cllr Jim Fletcher, Provost (Ward 3)4. Cllr. Betty Cunningham (Ward 1)5. Cllr. Danny Devlin (Ward 1)6. Cllr. Angela Convery (Ward 1)7. Cllr. Charles Gilbert (Ward 2)8. Cllr. Colm Merrick (Ward 3)9. Cllr. Annette Ireland (Ward 4)10. Cllr. Alan Lafferty (Ward 4)11. Cllr. Caroline Bamforth (Ward 5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cllr. Gordon Wallace (Ward 3)2. Cllr. David Macdonald (Ward 4)3. Cllr. Stewart Miller (Ward 4)4. Cllr. Barbara Grant (Ward 5)5. Cllr. Jim McLean (Ward 5)6. Cllr. Paul Aitken (Ward 1)

Note: The position of Councillor Jim Swift (Ward 5) is not presently known. He was not in attendance at the Meeting.

**SUMMARY
OF
AGREED ACTION POINTS**

<i>Improving Parental Communication</i>	<i>Who is to action this?</i>	<i>Timescale?</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The HT shall publicise details of the PC's new FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication. 2. MP to complete the re-design, update and re-population of the PC webpage (on the School website), with IT support from CB; and to devise an efficient mechanism regularly to update and refresh the content. 	<p>HT</p> <p>MP/CB</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>May 22</p>
<i>The Eastwood Park Development</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OB shall contact ERC (i) to reiterate the PC's interest in the development, (ii) to request an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, (iii) to request the opportunity to be consulted on the drafting of that Plan, and (iv) to seek clarification of ERC's "master plan" (if any) for Eastwood Park (specifically ERC's plans, if any, as to the future development of the School). 2. The HT shall contact ERC to request (i) an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, and (ii) clarification and assurances regarding the steps to be taken to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils during the construction phase. 3. The HT shall continue with his 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 by creative opportunities arising from the proposed development. 	<p>OB</p> <p>HT</p> <p>HT</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Easter</p>

<i>The Scottish Government's Health & Well-being Census</i>		
1. The Office-Bearers shall continue to monitor the position; review the final version of the HWB Census, once it is made available by ERC; and report to the Parent Forum on ERC's intended roll-out of the Census.	OB	Ongoing

<i>The Advanced Higher School Concert</i>		
1. HT shall continue to actively review the possibility of re-arranging the Advanced Higher Music Concert to a later date, possibly in or around May 2022.	HT	Ongoing

<i>Diocesan Parent Forum</i>		
1. The PC members shall consider and submit questions or items for discussion at the Diocesan Parent Forum in advance of that May meeting.	All	9 May 22
2. The OB will attend the next Diocesan Forum Meeting on behalf of the PC.	OB	9 May 22

<i>The Friends of St Ninian's</i>		
1. JC shall (i) identify the remaining members (or willing potential members) of the organisation known as "The Friends of St Ninian's", and the constitution (if any) of that entity; and (ii) seek to convene a meeting with a view to resuscitating its activities.	JC	May 22