

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

20 MAY 2024

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair)
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)
Mukesh Poddar
Meenal Poddar
Michela Pagliocca
Mo Wright
Samantha MacConnell
Christopher McLaughlin
Joanne Logan
Julie Flaherty
Lynsey O'Dwyer
Jennifer Clare Abalo
Mairead Brophy
Anne-Marie O'Brien
Dougie Wilson
Katrina Adams
Gerard McLaughlin (Church Representative)

Apologies: Elizabeth McHaffie
Iltaf Dean
Helen Alagbe
Adeolu Alagbe
Chimezie Umeh

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

1. Welcome

The Office-Bearers ("OB") welcomed the Parent Council ("PC") Members in attendance. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer.

2. Apologies

A note was taken of the PC Members & School staff in attendance, and of intimated apologies.

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

The draft Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting on 11 March 2024 were proposed and approved with one minor adjustment to item 11.

4. **Brief Updates on Action Points from last Meeting**

The following updates were noted:

- (1) **School Photographs** – Mr O’Neil will has spoken to the external school photographers to discuss concerns previously raised by parents (regarding pricing structure, withdrawal of offered discounts, and quality). All the concerns have been noted and assured of attention. The School’s experience of the photographers has been very good. Better communication of offers will be attempted.
- (2) **Fair Access to University** – The OB are considering the Report that has recently been published by the new Fair Access Commissioner. It is available on the Scottish Government (“SG”) website. Among other things, it reviews whether the SG’s targets to achieve “fairer access” to University education are being attained and whether the appropriate criteria are being applied to measure those targets. The OB will update the PC in due course
- (3) **RSHP Education** - No response has yet been received from the Scottish Government to the PC’s Submission last year on SG’s draft Statutory Guidance on RSHP (2023).
- (4) **PE Sports Kit** - Mr O’Neil’s enquiries are ongoing with Stevensons (on a “Dry Fit” option for PE/sports kit).
- (5) **Vaping** –A statutory consultative process is ongoing to determine how best to implement the Scottish Government’s announced commitment to ban single use vapes. The OB will monitor legislative progress.
- (6) **Amendment to PC Constitution** – Mr O’Neil has received a letter from the PC which is to be issued to the Parent Forum, requesting parental votes on the proposed amendment. The OB will send a re-dated letter to Mr O’Neil for circulation to the Parent Forum.
- (7) **Mobile phone policy** – This is a fast-moving issue, with developments in other forums. The OB will monitor those developments and revert with a proposal.
- (8) **Anti-Bullying Policy** - PC correspondence on ERC’s draft anti-bullying policy, as approved by the PC members, had been duly issued. A response is awaited.
- (9) **Cass Review** - PC correspondence on the implications of the Cass Review on education policies, as approved by the PC members, had also been issued. A response is awaited.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action points were:

1. The OB will consider the Fair Access Commissioner's latest Report.
2. The OB await a response from the Scottish Government to its Submission on the new draft Statutory Guidance on RSHP (2023).
3. Mr O'Neil will make further enquiries regarding the sports kit options.
4. The OB will monitor progress on implementation of the Scottish Government's commitment to legislate to ban single use vapes.
5. The OB will revert to the PC with a proposal on mobile phone use in schools
6. The OB will send a revised letter to Mr O'Neil to be issued to the Parent Forum inviting votes on the proposed amendment to the PC Constitution

5. The new Leisure Complex in Eastwood Park

The Director of Education (Mark Ratter) and Steven Renwick (Major Capital Projects Manager, of Turner & Townsend, ERC's appointed consultants on the Project) gave a presentation to the PC on the proposed new Leisure Complex in Eastwood Park.

Mr Ratter explained that the Council's aspiration is to replace the existing Eastwood Leisure Complex. It is the largest project the Council has undertaken in many years. The existing centre was said to be at the end of its life. While the new complex would cause disruption to SNHS, it was necessary to meet demand for sporting, cultural and leisure opportunities.

A planning application was originally submitted in 2021. However, budget pressures in 2022 forced a re-think. The project was changed (and reduced) in scale, and a fresh planning application now requires to be submitted. This means that a 12 week statutory consultation period must be re-commenced, and a fresh Planning Application has to be submitted, probably in late Summer 2024.

Detailed design and procurement issues will be addressed in the period through to Spring 2025.

ERC hopes to begin construction in 2025.

A diagram was exhibited to the PC showing a "neater and smaller" complex than the original design in the 2021 planning application. The new design will have:

- an eight lane 25 m pool;
- a children's pool;
- a four court Games Hall;
- two fitness rooms
- a spin studio.
- a replacement theatre (roughly comparable in size to the existing theatre);
- a library.

The front elevation presents to Eastwood Park.

It was conceded that the new Complex will impact on SNHS. But it was said that there ought to be curricular and learning opportunities and benefits for the School. No detail or commitment was provided.

Mr Ratter and Mr Renwick kindly answered questions from the PC members.

It was confirmed that this evening's meeting was part of a pre-planning application consultative process. The previous application had to be shelved due to changes in design (imposed by budgetary constraints). The original proposed design was 10,000 square metres in size; the new design has been reduced to 7,500 square metres.

Some members questioned the affordability of the project. The PC was advised that the current budget is £57 million. The project is being funded from ERC's Capital Funding Project Budget alone. No money is coming from the Scottish Government.

Concern was expressed as to how the Complex can compete with private gym/sports providers (such as David Lloyd or PureGym). Why not make it more of a fun pool for children? In that way it would appeal to a market that is not presently being catered for by the private sector.

Concern was expressed about the distracting effects of noise on the School. Mr Renwick acknowledged that there would be some disruption, but he sought to assure the PC that the contractor has considerable experience of building near existing school sites

Concern was expressed about access to the Park. Members observed that there is already a bottle-neck into the Park; the Project would make it worse. Mr Renwick confirmed that the existing access would be retained. No new access or exit will be constructed. This caused some concern within the PC members who asked what steps had been taken to measure and analyse existing and anticipated vehicular and pedestrian access – and to assess the adequacy of current access routes. Mr Renwick explained that a revised Traffic/Transport Assessment will have to be prepared and submitted to the Council for approval. The present thinking of the consultants is that the Project will not have a detrimental impact on access to the site.

PC members expressed concern for the safety of the children during the construction phase. Members suggested that the rejection of alternative traffic routes would have to be explained and justified. Mr Renwick confirmed that independent traffic engineers carry out the Traffic Assessment.

PC members urged the Council to take account of existing congestion at the Eastwood Toll roundabout, and the unsatisfactory sequencing of the traffic lights giving access to the Park at school start and finish times.

The PC members also requested that there ought to be a clear commitment by ERC to the provision of maximum benefit to SNHS pupils for their loss of amenity (namely the loss of parkland) and the disruption caused to them by the construction. That benefit ought to take the form of curricular use of the facilities and vocational and work experience.

Questions were also asked by members as to ERC's intentions regarding the existing ERC HQ. Mr Ratter confirmed that the building will remain in use for the time being.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action point was:

- 1. The OB will monitor the planning application process.**

6. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neill reported the following to the PC Meeting:

- (i) Exams were going well
- (ii) Lots of sporting success – the Senior Girls played at Hampden (and lost during injury time); the Senior Boys Basketball team won the Scottish cup
- (iii) Induction Days are running for P7
- (iv) School staff are heavily engaged in multiple school trips.
- (v) Easter School was busy and successful.
- (vi) The Ardeche Trip leaves soon
- (vii) The Porridge Pledge is well supported to raise funds for Mary's Meals
- (viii) Record numbers of S6 pupils have completed Caritas (quality checked by independent assessors)
- (ix) Mental Health Awareness Week for S1 was met with enthusiasm
- (x) S3 is about to depart on a Business trip to Paris.
- (xi) A visit is planned to St Ninian's Cave in Whithorn, with Mass on the beach, despite some access restrictions to the cave.
- (xii) S3 Careers Day will take place on 30 May 2024 – lots of specialisms to be represented.
- (xiii) Mr Love, Ms Harris and Ms Dougal are leaving, so much time is being spent on recruitment. 14 new teachers are to be appointed, including a new pastoral support teacher).
- (xiv) The S1 intake will be 340, which takes the School population to 2,000. The numbers are still going up, but at a less exponential rate.

7. AOCB

A PC member reminded the meeting that strips are needed for the S1 rugby team. Ideas were sought to fund-raise, or obtain sponsorship.

Mr O'Neil observed that the rugby team will face challenges as the teacher presently responsible for supervising the team will be leaving the School shortly.

Separately, it was observed that some S1 parents had noted that the S1 Reports contained a lot of mistakes. Mr O'Neil explained that the School's computer system (SEEMIS) is not entirely user-friendly and can create errors. He urged parents to contact Pastoral Support teachers with any concerns, rather than ventilating issues more widely on social media.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on Monday 9 June 2024.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

<i>Ensuring fair access to University</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1. The OB will consider the Report of the Fair Access Commissioner, and revert with proposals.	OB	Ongoing
<i>The new Leisure Complex</i>		
1. The OB will monitor the planning application process.	OB	Ongoing
<i>RSHP Education: Scottish Government Consultation</i>		
1. The OB will report on any response from the Scottish Government to its submission on the RSHP Consultation.	OB	Ongoing
<i>Vaping</i>		
1. The OB will monitor progress on the proposed UK and Scottish legislative interventions to restrict the sale of single-use disposable vapes	OB	Ongoing
<i>Review of the PC Constitution</i>		
1. The OB will issue the draft amended Constitution to the Parent Forum.	OB	May 24
<i>PE/Sports Kit</i>		
1. Mr O'Neil will pursue discussions with suppliers.	HT	June 24
<i>Mobile Phone Policy in School</i>		
1. The OB will revert to the PC with proposals	OB	June 24