

**Minutes – Extraordinary General Meeting
Shared Headship
PTA – EGM 25.08.2014**

**Eastfield Primary School and Nursery
Parent Council**

time of meeting 7 pm

date of meeting 25 August 2014

location Eastfield Primary School

3 pages in total

Present

Name	Initials	Position
Ellen Doherty	ED	North Lanarkshire Council
Mrs Di Nardo	PDN	Head Teacher
Kerry McGhee	KM	Deputy Head Teacher
Lesley McPhee	LM	Deputy Head Teacher
Peter McLaughlan	PM	Chairperson
Julie Baxter	JB	Parent Council Group
Catriona McLaughlan	CM	Parent Council Group
Hazel McMillan	HM	Parent Council Group
Rosie McKenna	RM	Parent Council Group
Jennifer McGowan	JM	Parent Council Group
Pamela Renton	PR	Parent Forum
Kate McLean	KM	Parent Forum
Lynsey Brown	LB	Parent Forum

Apologies / Additional Distribution

Mrs Kelly	FK	Principal Teacher
Chris Munro	CMR	Vice Chair
Liz O'Reilly	LO	Treasurer
Alison Munro	AM	Parent Council Group
Shirley Watson	SW	Parent Council Group

Distribution to all of the above

	Minutes	Action
1.0	Welcome & Introduction PM opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present. PM explained that the meeting had been convened to discuss the proposed shared headship with Chapel Green Primary School in Queenzieburn.	

2.0 Summary of the issues around the shared headship and how this was reported to parents:

Summary:

A letter was issued to all parents and carers of Eastfield Primary School pupils on Friday 20 June 2014, (one week before the end of term), regarding the shared headship with Chapel Green Primary School. The letter was issued by Eastfield Primary School, following NLC instruction.

The Parent Council are unhappy about the content of the letter and how NLC dealt with the issue. The letter stated that the shared headship was announced *"following successful consultation with elected members and Parent Council representatives"*.

PM noted that the Parent Council were never consulted on this matter (never mind successfully). PM explained that Ellen Doherty of North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) phoned Peter McLaughlan (Chair of Eastfield Parent Council) on the evening of Wednesday 18th June about the headship. The discussion with Ellen was in no way a "consultation". PM noted that neither the chair, nor the Parent Council, had been notified of the shared headship, nor had the opportunity to formally discuss the matter.

The Parent Council feel the letter issued to parents was misrepresentative, and implied that the Parent Council supported such a decision. PM noted that during the phone call with Ellen, he was simply told the shared headship was happening, and Ellen was phoning out of courtesy. PM explained he expressed several concerns but was told it was NLC policy and would be implemented for the new term.

This is an issue which we feel both the Parent Council and wider Parent Forum should have been consulted on, but weren't, and feel that North Lanarkshire Council have handled poorly. The Parent Council have already been questioned by parents asking why the Parent Council allowed this to happen, and this has put the Parent Council in a difficult position.

Additionally, to have this news conveyed on the final week of term is poor timing by NLC, considering the impending retirement of the head teacher at Chapel Green would have been known for some time. Additionally, the timing did not allow any opportunity for discussion or comment from the Parent Council.

In summary the Parent Council felt:

- The letter was misrepresentative of the Parent Council, (and will have misled parents);
- NLC should have consulted the Parent Council and also the Parent Forum;
- The timing of the announcement was poorly managed;
- The shared headship arrangement would not be in Eastfield Primary School's best interest.

3.0 Discussion (centred around a number of questions):

3.1 The Parent Council were never "consulted".

Q. Why were the Parent Council not consulted?

Q. Why did the letter state we were consulted?

Ellen explained that the Parent Council were not consulted, due to the timing of the decision of the shared headship being so close to the end of the school term. PM queried the timing, given that the decision must have been taken earlier in the year, in order to put procedures in place for the shared headship arrangement.

Ellen acknowledged that the letter may have appeared misleading in saying that the Parent Council had been consulted (see item 3.2 below), but thought that the discussion with PM was sufficient. PM disagreed, and noted that the phone conversation was not a consultation.

3.2 The newsletter has mis-represented the Parent Council, (and compromised our reputation amongst parents).

Q. Will North Lanarkshire Council issue a newsletter clarifying the issue?

Ellen agreed that a letter from the authority relating to the authority's specific management and communication of the shared headship arrangement would be issued. Within this letter it would clarify that the Parent Council were not consulted on the matter of the shared headship and also explain the reason for the timing. Ellen agreed to issue a draft to PM for comment, prior to issuing to all parents. NLC

- 3.3 The wider Parent Forum should also have been consulted, but were never given the opportunity for discussion.

Q. Why were the Parent Forum not consulted?

Ellen explained that North Lanarkshire Council were not obliged to consult with the Parent Forum on this particular matter.

- 3.4 North Lanarkshire Council would have known about the retirement of the Chapel Green Head Teacher from earlier in the year.

Q. So why were the Parent Council, and Parent Forum, only told about the shared headship in June (one week before the school broke up)?

Ellen reiterated that the timing of the decision of the shared headship, and the choice of Mrs Di Nardo, dictated the timing of when parents were informed.

- 3.5 Mrs Di Nardo is newly appointed to Eastfield, and has only been in her current Head Teachers role for a year, so is still getting to know the school. In addition, the two Deputy Heads have only been at the school for less than 6 months, so again the senior staff are still getting to know the school.

Q. Why choose a Head Teacher, who is only relatively new in her current school, to become a Head Teacher in an additional primary school (with additional responsibilities)?

Ellen highlighted that Eastfield have 2 deputy heads (although relatively new), so there are other senior management staff to assist with the management of Eastfield. However PM noted that the Parent Council had understood that the 2 deputy heads were appointed to assist Mrs Di Nardo in managing the size of the school, with one of the largest roles in NLC. It therefore seemed counterproductive to then redeploy the head teacher for part of her time.

PM explained that Mrs Di Nardo has only been at the school for a year, during which time there have been a lot of positive developments, and the Parent Council were keen to maintain this momentum. However to have Mrs Di Nardo's time split with another school, the Parent Council felt would impact negatively on Eastfield. This was compounded by the fact that the senior management team have only been in place for a short time at the school also.

- 3.6 Eastfield Primary School has one of the largest school roles in North Lanarkshire.

Q. So why choose a Head Teacher from a large school (such as Eastfield) for the shared headship (given that Mrs Di Nardo is new to the role). Why not choose an established Head Teacher, and one from a smaller school?

Ellen noted that NLC felt that Mrs Di Nardo was a suitable choice, given that Chapel Green is a small school, and Eastfield have 2 Deputy Heads.

PM noted that the Parent Council felt the school needed Mrs Di Nardo's full commitment (not shared with another school) otherwise this would compromise the Head Teachers role at Eastfield Primary School.

- 3.7 Ellen explained that Mrs Di Nardo would be taking up the position of shared head for a year initially. NLC would monitor the arrangement during the course of the school year (2014 – 2015), and feedback to the Parent Council, at which time NLC would then seek the views of the Parent Council. Ellen could not confirm if it would be a permanent arrangement. NLC

Ellen also confirmed there were management procedures in place to ensure the shared headship arrangement would not be detrimental to either school.

4.0

Date of Next Meeting

Monday 06th October 2014 – 7.00pm.

5.0

Additional Feedback Update (Term 1 Session 2014-2015)

Hazel McMillan- Parent group

We knew that NLC were making drastic cutbacks and it was going to have an impact on our school when we were informed about the Shared Headship. I realised it wasn't an ideal situation at first, and I remember we were saddened to hear we were having to selfishly share our strong leader who was relatively new in post and had made an amazing impact in such a short space of time. However, having said that, as a school, we are lucky to have a very strong management team consisting of 2 deputies and 3 principal teachers, who all have great strengths in abundance and are the eyes, ears and voice of Mrs Di Nardo in her absence.

I was a bit wary of the changes, however, I did feel that Ellen Doherty and Mrs Di Nardo were very open at the meeting and I did feel reassured after their input.

So far, and to this day, I don't think that Eastfield standards have slipped because of the Shared Headship, in fact, I think they have strengthened and the leadership of the school is at its best and continuing to drive us forward.