

Minutes of Meeting

Friday 09 June 2017, 10am, Committee Room 1, Highland Council Headquarters,
Glenurquhart Road, Inverness

Attendees:

Apologies:

<u>From 10am</u>		
Fergus Weir	Kirkhill Primary School	John Greenhowe North Kessock Primary Graham Meeks Nairn Academy Audrey Angus Raigmore Primary
Giles Baker	Grantown Grammar	Jo Anne Pugh Fortrose Academy
Samantha Blyth	Dingwall Academy	Kirsty Shaw Portree Academy Lorraine Thain Drakies Primary
Andrew McKenna	Lochaber High School	
Eve Von Delft	Holm Primary	
Liz Green	Culloden Academy	
Kate Morris	Charleston Academy	
Kate MacDonald	Inverness Royal Academy	
Pauline Whittee-Jezewski	Ben Wyvis Primary	
John Whitfield	Golspie Academy	
Mark Gunn	Nairn Academy	
Jane Scott	Inshes Primary	
<u>From 11am</u>		
Jim Steven	Head of Education, Highland Council	
Ros Bell	Policy Officer, Highland Council	

1. Update and confirmation of minutes from 23rd February 2017

Agreed correct.

Proposed: Andrew McKenna

Seconded: Sam Blythe

Fergus apologised for being unavailable for the past 2 months and thanked people for their patience, in particular with the late release of minutes from our last meeting. He will need to delegate duties HPCP wherever possible as he continues to have a huge amount on.

1.1 Unclaimed Parent Council grants from the Council for this last academic session was the first matter arising. The deadline has now passed for this year. Next year's grant will be available from August. A Council email is sent from the Fort William Highland Council office to all parent council emails on the gmail system in August, then a reminder is resent in January and March. The application form requires details of all PC office bearers, bank details and signatories. At our next meeting on 27th September we will have a list from Ros of who has and has not claimed their grant. The HPCP regional/area reps will then try to contact PCs who have not claimed to guide them through the process.

ACTION Ros to have list of PCs not yet claimed 2017/8 grant for meeting 27th Sept.2017

1.2 Communication and Charitable Status Out of the total 172 primaries, 29 secondaries and 5 special schools, only 70-80 schools are viewing the gmail system on a regular basis. To help improve this uptake and increase HPCP control over the gmail system (like being able to reset passwords), HPCP has, thanks to the work of Giles Baker from Grantown PC, gained charitable status. Having charitable status enables HPCP to have a free google business account and be eligible to other benefits such as:

- the potential to be a Highland Third Sector Voice and Partner
- to make large donor applications for umbrella group funding for example using 'kickstarter'. Nairn Academy have some experience of this. Some Edinburgh schools have managed to raise tens to hundreds of thousands of pounds based on a pupil's Youtube starter. Members thought this could be a possible topic for the conference

ACTION conference planning group to include these topics

1.3 Constitutional amendment. To gain charitable status HPCP needed to make a small amendment to its constitution in para 2 which was agreed at this meeting - proposed by John Whitfield and seconded by Andrew McKenna.

1.4 Trustees. The trustees of HPCP charity are automatically the executive office bearers (ie Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary) plus each of the HPCP Regional Reps. HPCP needs to report, at the end of the year, following our AGM in December whether there have been any trustee changes. Also on the first of July, HPCP needs to change its correspondence email address from Giles to hpcpsecretary@gmail.com.

ACTION Giles to switch email contact 1st July

1.5 The HPCP Communication via google can now be progressed

ACTION Fergus to set up new business google email account

2. Education Committee

2.1 The Education Committee sits 4-5 times per year. Following election of the new Council, its new Chair is Alistair Christie (Lib Dem) and its name will change - temporarily it is called the 'People's Committee'. The next meeting is on 21st June 2017 and Sam Blythe from Dingwall Academy is our HPCP representative with observation rights only and no speaking rights. There is however a prior briefing meeting the day before where our HPCP rep can try to brief the Chair.

2.2 HPCP feedback The briefing papers are meant to come out 2 weeks prior to the Education Committee Meeting and we have timed our HPCP meetings to be before each Education Committee so that we can discuss the issues. However, it is more common for the papers to arrive 1 or 2 days before, leaving us little opportunity for discussion. This is an issue we plan to raise at the conference. All PCs will be alerted of the Education Committee dates in advance and alerted to expect questions and deliver feedback.

ACTION Conference Planning group to add HPCP feedback on Educ Comm.

2.3 Lobbying for voting rights We still hope that HPCP can work towards getting voting rights. Among all the Council regions in Scotland, about 50% of PC reps have voting rights and 50% have none. The National Parent Forum for Scotland is lobbying for statutory change and a Scottish Government Review. Currently Councils are free to decide either way. Highland Council is reticent to have any external votes and any vote to change this would require the whole Council to make a decision. Given this background it was discussed how the Council Leader Margaret Davidson could perhaps help to lead the Council in persuading the Education Committee to accept 2 HPCP reps with voting rights. It is believed that the local media would support HPCP's case.

ACTION Fergus and Sam to book a meeting with Margaret Davidson

3. HPCP Conference Sat. 18th November 2017

3.1 Invites Fergus sent an invitation to John Swinney in early May and received the usual office reply. Agreed that we may have a more positive response and leverage on Swinney, by inviting the Shadow Education Minister. Also agreed would be good to invite the new Chair of the Education Committee for a brief presentation.

ACTION Fergus to invite the Shadow Education Minister to the Conference

ACTION Conference planning group to discuss whether to invite Alistair Christie

3.2 Conference planning core group. The following PC reps agreed to part of the conference planning team and a doodle poll will go out soon. We are probably looking at 20, 21 or 22

June for our first meeting. The names we have so far are listed below. Please get in touch if you would be able help also.

ACTION Fergus to set up doodle poll of above dates for names listed below

Jon Greenhowe	North Kessock Primary
Kate Morris	Charlston Academy
Kate MacDonald	Inverness High School
Fergus Weir	Kirkhill Primary
Eve Von Delft	Holm Primary
Liz Green	Culloden Academy
Mark Gunn	Nairn Academy
Samantha Blyth	Dingwall Academy

The importance of making the conference relevant to different Highland regions was discussed. Via email Jon Greenhowe suggested having breakout workshops led by the regional reps and perhaps using the new IRA building instead of Charlston.

ACTION conference planning group to agree location and program

It was also decided to send out a reminder letter in advance - **ACTION** Kate MacDonald

4. A Government Consultation on 20mph zones in all built up areas across Scotland is out now and has been sent to all Parent Council Chairs via their Head Teachers. This is a chance to get safer routes to school. The closing date for submissions is during the summer holidays, so PCs should alert their members before the summer break if they wish to comment.

5. New Structure and Remit of the Education Committee

Jim Steven explained to the meeting that the Council has reduced the total number of committees from five down to three basically covering People, Places and Resources as three separate committees. The People Committee will include the revenue (every day running) and policy side of education. Capital education projects, such as new schools will be covered by the Resources committee. The new Chair of the People committee will be Alistair Christie and the two deputies will be John Finlayson (retired primary head teacher from Skye) and Kate Stephens (now based at Loch Carron). Sitting under the committees will be a number of strategic groups with key stakeholders. Many present felt that HPCP should have increased representation as a clear Third Sector Voice.

Mark Gunn from Nairn Academy expressed concern about the state of their school building, with a roof like a sieve that requires numerous buckets when it rains and

with the roof cavity full of asbestos. The mesothelium action group is already interested in their case. Jim agreed that the Council may need to seek extra funds from Government to cover serious cases like Nairn Academy.

6. Staff/ teacher recruitment

6.1 Pauline from Ben Wyvis Primary reported on a letter that their Parent Council had recently sent to the Council expressing their concern about the impact on pupils of two teachers being away on long term sick leave. Pupils have been having supply teachers often different on a daily basis or the pupils are sometimes split up to form larger classes. With much work by the head teacher, Ben Wyvis has sourced one long term supply teacher from Dundee. Without a regular teacher, parents are seeing their children suffer both educationally and emotionally, with no some now reluctant to go to school.

Ben Wyvis Parent Council believe it imperative that the Council develops a back-up plan for schools in this situation and offer the idea of having an area supply bank as one solution that could provide more continuity.

Jim responded by acknowledging that there is a real shortage of teachers and probationers across Highland and that the situation is worst in West and North Highland as for many people it is too remote. There is a relatively high probationer 'drop out' rate as teachers are also in short supply and therefore high demand across other parts of Scotland. There are for example only 8 computer teachers across the whole of Highland.

6.2 Fast tracking teachers Although the Government is looking at ways of fast tracking teachers from other professions, the General Teacher Council for Scotland (GTCS) provides a real wall to recruiting teachers from outside Scotland. Not only this but every 5 years, teachers are required to have a professional review and update their training, which is forcing some to leave the profession.

6.3 Head Teacher new qualification 2018. From 2018 Education Scotland, at the Scottish Government has imposed a new mandatory qualification on Head Teachers. It is already difficult to recruit Head Teachers and this will make the task even harder. Mentorship of good head teachers is needed more than anything else. This issue is being tackled by the Northern Alliance and should be challenged by the National Parent Forum Scotland.

ACTION Fergus to look into NPFS re new Head Teacher qualification and recruitment

6.4 Management of Schools is the main paper going forward to the next Education Committee. Jim explained that no other authority has the high number of Head Teachers and schools that Highland has. The Council is moving towards a system where there Primary Principal Teachers working under a single Group Head Teacher and a Business Manager. This has already been set up at Farr where a group HT covers one secondary school and four primary schools with 140 pupils total across the five schools. Jim accepted that they are in process, awaiting proof of the concept in Highland but that working examples were now in place. The Council has a time table drawn up of the order in which schools will make the change over to this new management approach.

6.5 PSA staff allocation was also raised by Ben Wyvis Primary, in particular, requesting why PSA staff allocation was done yearly whereas school and pupil needs changed through the year. Jim explained that Bernadette Cairns does the ASN allocation and that there is only a small budget for emergency provision. Some schools are managing to use their Pupil Equity Equity Fund (PEF) for PSAs and for specialist staff training.

6.6 Pupil Equity Funding is allocated to schools based on uptake on free school meal entitlement and schools must report annually as part of their improvement plan. Jim explained that if schools use their money to provide non-teaching posts such as social work, children's behavioural support workers or psychologists, then the Council must claw back a small proportion of the funds for the purposes of professional supervision.

- 7. Allocation and usage of Parent fundraising** has been raised by a number of parent councils wanting to know whether the Council expects their fund-raising to cover not only extra-curricular activities but statutory items as well such as stationery and text books. Jim made it very clear that the school's resource budget should cover all 'core resources' and be provided for by the Council. There is however not an official written definition of 'core resources' to refer to.

Jim was pleased to report that for this school year 182 out of 202 schools were in the green and under budget with the rest on amber. Head Teachers have the option to carry over 5% or go into debt by 3%. There is now a bit more flexibility in the Council to plug gaps.

It would be a useful exercise to find out what Parent Councils are spending their fund-raising on and perhaps this is a survey that could be done in the lead up to the PC conference.

ACTION conference planning group to consider PC fund-raising as a topic.

- 8. ICT digital learning** update was given by Fergus who attended a meeting at the Council on Monday with the newly appointed ICT manager.

8.1 Chromebooks. The roll out of the 22,000 chromebooks is set to take place over a 2.5 year period starting in August 2017. Each pupil from P6 to S6 will one chromebook device. From P1-P5, the aim is to have one chromebook per 5 pupils. At nursery level there will be no chromebook provision. Each chromebook will have a life span of 4 years and then be recycled. Developing a model for parental contribution has been unresolved and due to administration being too complex, the Council has decided to have no parental contribution towards chromebooks. Stress testing of the band width in all schools is getting sorted. The aim is for the first phase I rollout of chromebooks in schools to become champions and mentors for the next phase. Google apps for education is now called G-suite.

ACTION Fergus to circulate the list of chrome book roll out sequence across schools

8.2 Online courses are being organised by Peter Finlayson. 13 online courses are currently available.

ACTION Fergus to fill in details of online course plans

8.3 Dyslexia screening Mark Gunn from Nairn Academy raised the interesting point that on average 15% of pupils have dyslexia or are dysgraphic as a norm. In Finland and Norway universal testing is an automatic part of early schooling. Chrome books offer an ideal opportunity to offer early testing in Scotland and providing the

opportunity to lift Literacy and Numeracy levels significantly. A simple change in the use of fonts, colours and presentation can change pupil outcomes hugely.

9. Social Media Policies

Aileen Mackay is in charge of devising social media guidelines for schools but was unable to attend the meeting today. Generally individual schools devise a Code of Conduct and Parent Councils would sign up to this when using Facebook or other social media.

Some Parent Councils have experienced unpleasantness on Facebook targeting specific parents, or teachers and consequently set up language filters including all swear words plus words such as teacher. Other PCs follow a school 'Code of Conduct' or have set up 'Moderated Public user groups'. Many PCs have not ventured beyond email.

Fergus stressed that the new digital culture within schools provided the opportunity for learning digital citizenship

ACTION Fergus to request whether any schools have social media policies.

10. AOB

10.1 PC funding was discussed with Jim and Ros. THE PC grant allocation each year is decided by the Finance department of the Council based on the size of the school role. The amount has decreased by 50% in Highland due to cuts, but is thought to still be much higher in other regions. It was agreed useful to get comparisons among other local authorities.

ACTION Ros to compare PC funding across authorities

10.2 PC insurance, which is for the actions and activities of Parent Councils will no longer be organised and paid for by Highland Council beyond April 2018. Some School PCs are already looking into getting their own insurance at great expense. As a matter of some urgency it was decided that a group deal should be looked into, perhaps in collaboration with the Northern Alliance grouping of schools.

ACTION Fergus and Kate MacDonald to look into group insurance options

10.3 PC guidelines for INSIGHT - Jim has found difficult to write these as he is concerned to protect the identity of teachers in smaller schools. At the moment PCs can look at literacy and numeracy data for their school and put it against a national comparator. As the system changed a few years ago, it is not straightforward to analyse trends for any one particular subject. The Council are developing a strategy to support Parent Councils.

10.4 Security across schools and Council premises was recently raised from a rating of severe to critical. In schools, it is up to schools to judge safety. All Head Teachers have been asked to tighten up on security and had training on lock down, which is the opposite to a fire drill, where all pupils and staff leave the building.

10.5 Co-opting Giles Baker as a member of HPCP was proposed by Sam and seconded by Eve. HPCP is grateful to Giles for continuing to offer his expertise, especially on charitable status.

10.6 Recruitment of HTs working group at the Council would like a parent council rep on their board. Mark Gunn from Nairn Academy has agreed to do this role and will liaise with Ros.

ACTION Mark Gunn to liaise with Ros

11. Date for next meeting

The next meetings in 2017 are scheduled to take place at Glenurquhart Road, Inverness Wednesday 27 September and Tuesday 28 November – please register your availability via Doodle website meeting planner: The HPCP conference this year will be held Saturday 18 November, with venue to be decided - please let us know your suggestions.