

Minutes of HPCP Routine Meeting

Wednesday 28th February 2018, 1030-1330, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness

Attendees:		Apologies:
From 1030		
Jon Greenhowe (Meeting Chair)	North Kessock Primary	Wendy Hennem, Tain Royal Academy
Mark Gunn (Sec)	Nairn Academy	Andy McKenna, Lochaber High
Samantha Blyth	Dingwall Academy	Niall Watson, Crossroads Primary
Kate Morris	Charleston Academy	Jenny Renaud, Dingwall Primary
Barbara Gray, Jo-anne Pugh	Fortrose Academy	Alison Clarke, Invergordon Academy
Rebecca Langlands	Portree Primary (via Video Conference)	Kate MacDonald, Inverness Royal Academy
Abby Hardwick	Farr Primary (via VC in Wick)	Carol, Ben Wyvis Primary
		Michelle Tyler, Rosebank Primary
From 1110 until 1200		Laura Trappitt, Croy Primary
Cllr Andrew Baxter	Chair, People Committee, HC	Fergus Weir, Kirkhill Primary School
		Jane Scott, Inshes Primary
1135 to 1310		John Whitfield, Golspie High School
Jim Steven	Head of Education, HC	
Ros Bell	Policy Officer, C&LS, HC	

1. Introductions and Apologies. As Fergus Weir was unable to attend due to pressure of work, Jon Greenhowe stepped in as Chairperson for the meeting and welcomed everyone, including the Video Conference attendees “beaming in” from Highland Council (HC) facilities in Portree and Wick. With Fergus absent and many of the outstanding actions dependent upon him, the Chair noted that relatively few points arising from the last meeting had been completed. However, the HPCP had successfully collated and submitted a comprehensive response to the Scottish Govt consultation “Empowering Schools” on the proposed Education (Scotland) Bill, for which all those involved were thanked. It was also noted that Fergus “was trying to engage with key people” and would in due course update the HPCP on progress. Cllr Baxter, Jim Steven and Ros Bell were not present for the whole meeting (as per attendee list above), and whilst the minutes below are set out as per the Agenda, they amalgamate discussions that were held in several phases including AOB.

2. Update and confirmation of minutes from 28 Nov 17. There were no amendments to the previous minutes or Actions Log v1.1.

3. Matters Arising.

3.1. Communications.

3.1.1. G-Suite. The process to migrate the HPCP onto G-Suite, with the aim of having all HPCP business and communications (including the email addresses for Parent Councils (PC)) available on the new domain by Spring 2018, was progressing but only very slowly. In the absence of Fergus, Mark would begin issuing new emails to key HPCP members in March and the engaged school PCs in March and April as per the Action agreed (3.1.1) in November 2017.

3.1.2. Access to Email Addresses. No further progress had been made regarding access to email addresses held by HC and the wider issue of data capture. Mark agreed to meet with the relevant HC personnel on 21 Mar 18 in the HC HQ (1000-1130) to try to find a way forward on this Action

(3.1.4 of 28 Nov 17); other HPCP members wishing to attend would be welcome. One outcome from the rapid HPCP survey done on the Parental view of the Management of Schools Programme Phases 1 and 2 (asked for by Cllr Baxter) was that communication by HC out to Parents and PCs was generally viewed as patchy, inadequate, not timely, and even occasionally prevented by Headteachers (HT). This in turn meant that many Parents felt that HC consultation exercises were either ineffective or just “going through the motions”.

3.1.3. PC “Starter Pack”. The Chair reported that work on the “starter pack” for new PCs/Office Bearers was progressing slowly (Item 3.1.5 of 28 Nov 18). Mark informed the meeting that he had received very clear guidance from the Information Commissioners Office that all PCs (or equivalent) that held any form of personal data (even if just email addresses) would be Data Controllers under the incoming EU-wide General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and thus have to be compliant (nominally from 28 May 2018). So far no national Parents’ organisation (NPFS, SPTC, UK PTA etc) had provided detailed guidance on practical compliance, but this had been requested by Mark (of the NPFS and SPTC) to assist all PCs with achieving compliance as painlessly as possible. The requirements were not unduly onerous but would include the need to set up some basic processes and controls, eg to:

- Ensure that PCs conducted an audit of what personal data they held (initial and then at least annual).
- Decide what the defined Legal Basis of holding protected data (likely to be either Public Tasks or Legitimate Interests, but could also be Consent).
- Ensure that all data held was up to date, accurate, subject to password-protected access control and/or encrypted, and not passed on to others without the consent of the data owners. Data (eg email lists) held on USB sticks for example should be encrypted.
- Generate a compliant statement to use with all emails etc that explained why any communication was being sent out (ie the Legal Basis) and how to be removed from future communications.
- Ensure that anyone contacted by the PC had a simple way of requesting that their data was removed/deleted.
- Employ simple housekeeping techniques such as ensuring that emails to individuals used the “blind carbon copy” or bcc option for all addressees to prevent the inadvertent (and thus unauthorised) release of addresses.
- Contact all those that data was held on to confirm positively that the PC could continue to hold and use that data (ie, that they agreed to opt in).
- Delete completely all data held on those who did not positively opt in, except potentially that held for meeting for example a Legitimate Interest (but only if that is the chosen Legal Basis for holding data).
- Review the information at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/> and take all other necessary steps for compliance.

3.2. People Committee.

3.2.1. Voting Rights. There had still been no progress on achieving voting rights for the HPCP rep to the People Committee, and the action on Fergus Weir and Sam Blyth (Item 2.3 from 9 Jun 17) remained. It was considered that the HPCP could give assurances that our rep on the People Committee would only seek to vote where there was a clear majority Parental view as determined by PCs engaged with the HPCP. It was also considered that the HPCP had at least as good a claim to be properly (and democratically) representative of the Parental constituency as any Church/Religious reps to HC Committees. Efforts to obtain speaking and voting rights would continue.

3.2.2. Access to Papers. Getting access to People Committee papers in advance and in time to generate consultation responses remained an issue, although no new Education Service originated papers had been generated recently, excepting one on the Management of Schools Programme but

held back by Bill Alexander as Director of Care and Learning Services and not yet released into the Education Services team [Post-meeting note – the HPCP received this on 7Mar 18, ahead of the 15 Mar 18 People Committee meeting].

3.3. PC Insurance and Grant Funding.

3.3.1. Ros Bell confirmed that insurance paperwork for PCs, provided by Zurich but paid direct by HC, was being sent by Zurich direct to HT for onward distribution to PC Chairs.

3.3.2. Ros Bell confirmed that whilst many PCs had submitted their Grant Funding applications, some, including Secondaries, had not done so, and would lose the 2017-18 funding at the end of March if they did not apply.

3.4. Social Media Policies. No progress since the last meeting; Action Item 3.5 from 28 Nov 17 remains incomplete.

3.5. Chromebook Roll-out Plan and Virtual Learning.

3.5.1. Jim Steven provided a brief update. The service provider (Wipro) was not yet meeting the service delivery targets and had made a number of staff changes. The network was suffering ongoing capacity and reliability issues making virtual learning difficult to provide in some areas. Problems with software updates had caused a very high Chromebook failure rate but personnel and actions were in place to sort that problem out. The HPCP Chair pointed out that the Chromebooks were most desperately needed in the Secondary schools to improve access to qualification-bearing courses, and that the rollout plan needed to be adjusted to address this. Jim Steven agreed to consider this.

3.5.2. Several PCs had expressed concerns that the “post-code” lottery on what subjects could be offered and at what level (National 4/5, Higher or Adv Higher) was getting worse, not better. Some schools could not offer all the sciences at Higher, others (indeed most) has too few or no ICT teachers, and whilst the slight increase in numbers of school-leavers reaching “positive destinations” was welcome, there was little evidence that the Virtual Learning system was actually delivering much of benefit. Jim Steven commented that such issues were understood and that in some areas it might be better to move Advanced Higher provision into the Colleges, enabling school teaching to focus on Nationals and Highers. Linking into colleges via the IT network to be taught AH in school but via the virtual system could be an alternative to physically going to the colleges, but it was recognised again that this would still present challenges. Jim agreed to look at this in concert with the chromebook issues above.

Action: Jim Steven to look at Chromebook roll-out and the wider course delivery implications for all Highland Secondary schools by the next meeting (27 Apr 18).

3.6. Annual Conference.

3.6.1. There had been no progress on a Chair’s Report or Feedback Survey from the 2017 Conference and time passing made it less relevant. A summary of key points from the 2017 Conference would however be relevant to the planning and publicity for the 2018 event, so the existing Action (Item 4.1 of 28 Nov 17) should be amended to cover that. It was agreed that the 2018 Conference would be held in the Council Chamber on Saturday 17 Nov 18 [booking has been confirmed by Ros Bell], and that this time around it would be reasonable to ask for keynote speakers from the Holyrood Opposition parties, the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative, Education Scotland, the SQA etc, aiming for perhaps a maximum of 2 or 3. Mark would begin writing out to relevant bodies to gauge interest and make initial bookings, but ideas on other possible relevant non-parental attendees were invited.

Action: Mark Gunn to write to selected organisations asking for keynote speakers for the

2018 Conference.

3.6.2. 2018 Conference Planning Group. It was agreed that the 2018 Conference Planning Group should meet as soon as practicable to begin work. Sam, Jon and Mark would get the ball rolling but another 5 or so volunteers would be required to take on various tasks, including the Eventbrite booking set-up (Mark would check if he could set this up in the absence of Fergus). Ideally each sub-Area would have a rep on the Conference Planning Group (not necessarily the official Regional Reps who would likely be busy with routine Regional business).

Action: Sam Blyth to book a room for the initial Conference Planning Group meeting (Apr/May 18) and advise all of the date/time.

3.7. Regional Groups. No progress on the formal Action (Item 4.3.1 of 28 Nov 17) but the Area Reps were working hard to build Area and ASG collaboration. This was slow but there was plenty of evidence that PCs across ASGs were talking more, and the problems with the Management of Schools Programme were driving some of the improved communications between PCs. It was noted that the level of engagement achievable would never be 100%, and in reality most PCs would be lucky to get regular involvement from more than 10% of Parents, but building awareness was a useful goal in its own right and would slowly improve active engagement. Where there were particularly polarised views either within a PC or between PCs within an ASG, the HPCP Regional Reps would do their best to reflect the breadth of opinion, but ultimately would try to represent the widest consensus or majority view, and let those with different or opposing views know that they could comment separately as and when needed.

3.8. HPCP input to Education Bill Consultation. A great deal of work had been done on this by individual PCs and the HPCP, with the result of not just a good input from the HPCP, but many more PCs submitting comments than would otherwise have been the case. That was real evidence of the benefits the HPCP could bring on improving the Highland Parental voice on strategic matters, going well beyond Highland. Cllr Baxter noted that the concerns raised by HC in its response overlapped in many areas with the HPCP views, and many HTs were very concerned about the implications on workload for them should the Education Bill be enacted as set out in the consultation.

3.9. Regional Governance. No specific progress reported by Fergus.

4. OSCR. Mark had updated the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator with his address for any official paperwork from OSCR, although almost everything was now done online anyway. The annual return will be due in July as routine business.

5. Annual Conference. Covered in Matters Arising.

6. Management of Schools Programme (MoSP). Cllr Baxter was present for these discussions.

6.1. The HPCP was thanked for generating and gathering input in response to Cllr Baxter's request for PC views on how the MoSP was being run. It was evident from the responses and previous meetings with PCs, and comments from various schools in the HPCP meeting today, that Parents were experiencing widespread confusion, dissatisfaction and lack of trust in the MoSP, and that information provision and wider communication by the HC on the MoSP had not been of the level required to enable effective consultation. The Director of Care and Learning was preparing a paper (PEO15/18) for the People Committee meeting of 15 Mar 18 to address the above issues and advise on what should be done regarding the current (Phase 2) MoSP position.

6.2. Cllr Baxter was clear in his view that HC needed to provide better and more accessible information on MoSP, ensuring that Parents and school staff were clear about critical factors. This would not eliminate all resistance to change, but it was unreasonable to expect Parents (or teachers) to agree to change when the case for that change was not being put across fully or coherently. The information needed to explain, for example:

- The improved educational outcomes sought from the MoSP were clearly stated together with how these would be achieved.
- The implications for career structures and recruitment of teachers, including how clustering and/or 3-18 campus models would affect salary levels and thus attract high-calibre HTs.
- The additional leadership demands placed on HTs by clustering and 3-18 models would be identified and suitable additional training and support provided.

6.3. In wider discussion including Jim Steven it was noted that with so many other changes being faced by teachers (curricular, SQA requirements, Education Scotland /Inspectorate demands on HT and Deputies), there was a risk that the MoSP could pile yet more workload onto HT, which might then for example result in 'non-teaching' HTs becoming the norm, not something many HTs or Parents would wish for. Jim also advised the meeting that the challenges faced in filling teaching vacancies (in Highland, but also across Scotland) were significantly greater than was the case just five years ago. Many of the smaller secondaries in Highland could only place the HT on the same pay-scale level as a Deputy HT in a larger school.

6.4. It was abundantly clear that the HPCP could perform a vital role in facilitating ASG and multi-ASG consultation meetings about the future of the MoSP, possibly also by pulling together a "mini-conference" on the MoSP, and it was agreed that HC would ask for HPCP help in due course once the decisions from the People Committee meeting of 15 Mar 18 were known. However, the HPCP was equally clear that it must also retain its independent voice and ability to input critical comment to HC as a trusted collective Parental voice, ie working with, but not for, HC. Many isolated communities for example feared ending up having to bus children over very long distances, or even ending up having to board, which would make communities vulnerable to depopulation and ultimately disappearing.

7. Education Budgets – Revenue and Capital. Cllr Baxter and Jim Steven provided a number of comments about the recent Revenue Budget decisions and Capital Budget proposals. The legacy of many years of Capital underinvestment and inadequate maintenance budgets was now compounded by the enforced halving of the Capital Budget across Highland, driven by the inability of the Revenue Budget to support additional interest payments for borrowed Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) funds. The Council would press the Scottish Govt for more CAPEX from match-funding sources like the Scottish Futures Trust as well as making a special case for additional direct grant CAPEX in recognition of the unique circumstances affecting Highland. However, the Council recognised that it needed to consider how to minimise build costs and maximise commonality of new school estate provision, a model successfully used for example in Stirling. It was also clear that previous decisions about where to build new schools and of what capacity had not always been thought through in a coherent manner, so a better approach to strategic planning was needed for the school estate.

8. AOB. The three matters raised in AOB have been incorporated into the above at the appropriate points.

9. Date of Next Meeting. As the initially selected date cannot be accommodated in the HC HQ (no rooms available) the date for the next meeting is now a day later, so **Friday 27 Apr 18**, 1000 to 1300, in Inverness.

Mark Gunn, HPCP Secretary.