

# The Gordon Schools Parent Council

Tuesday 28 January 2014

The Library, The Gordon Schools

## **MINUTE**

**PRESENT:** Fiona Alderson - Chair, Tracy Buckley, Lynne Driver, Catriona Duncan, Alisanne Ennis, Carol Fraser, Councillor Moira Ingleby, Eleanor McGowan - Pupil Representative, Hazel McIntosh, Sybille McLeod, Carol Mearns - Minute Taker, Anne Murray - Creative Practitioner, Fi Thomson - Networks of Wellbeing (175 Parade Co-Ordinator), Stewart Chalmers, Alexander Hall - Rector

**APOLOGIES:** Lara Bestwick, Tracy Brook, Pat Emslie, Councillor Sheena Lonchay, Uschi Mitchell, Elaine Rough.

Fiona welcomed all to the meeting. Introductions were made round the table.

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

At this stage in the meeting, apologies (as listed above) were accepted.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting, action sheet and matters arising**

#### ***Minutes of the last meeting***

The minutes of the last meeting were approved on the proposal of Alisanne Ennis and seconded by Tracy Buckley

#### ***Action Sheet/Matters Arising***

#### ***PTU issues re bendy buses***

Fiona advised that she is still waiting a date for a further meeting.

#### ***Parent Council Citizenship Award***

PC members were reminded that nominations for this award are required by the end of March, can we remind people of this.

**ACTION ALL**

#### ***Recruiting Parents***

Fiona stated that The Parent Council are always looking to recruit new members either to be on the Parent Council or to join any of the sub groups. Fiona requested that if any member knew of anyone who would be willing to join the Parent Council, or one of the sub groups, to let her know.

**ACTION ALL**

#### ***Relaxation classes for Pupils***

It was agreed in principal at the November meeting that the Parent Council would pay for some relaxation classes for current S4 pupils to aid the stress around the new CfE exams. The Head. Girl

and Head Boy thought that this would also benefit S5/6 pupils and this was agreed by the PC - although the main focus should be S4. Fiona had made enquiries re this and advised that Networks of Wellbeing had put forward a proposal (included in discussion below) for the 4th, 5th and 6th year pupils with regards to relaxation (coping with stress and anxiety).

The PC looked at the funds available and considered that the cost of 16 sessions at £50 each (total £800) was more than could currently be afforded - given the ongoing commitment to Easter Revision classes. There was a lot of discussion (and concern) about only 20 pupils (and 4 staff) being able to access an 8 week course and concerns (due to the number of places available) that not everyone who needed it would benefit. If over subscribed, how would pupils be picked? - was one of the questions asked.

In general PC members thought that an 8 week course for 20 pupils would be too much for the pupils and would not necessarily get to the pupils who needed it most. They thought that the pupils would not necessarily come along to all sessions and thought it would be good if more pupils could have the opportunity to learn new skills - and for pupils to be able to ask to come along, rather than being referred via guidance. They did think that the main focus should be 4th year with 5th and 6th year able to come along if they wished. Zander was able to advise that guidance were now focussing on 4th year pupils.

Parents are really keen on some form of information, advice, guidance, exercises, tips and tactics for coping with anxiety around exams and course work and Fiona A was asked to go back to Networks of Wellbeing and ask about costs for the following as an alternative to the groups mentioned above: -

- 1 workshop per year group lasting for 45 minutes, this could either be 1 x 4th year; 1 x 5th year; and 1 x 6th year
- or 1 x 4th year and 1 x 5th and 6th year combined (dependent on what was thought best) - and Zander suggested that the 45 minute PSE session could be used for this purpose.
- PLUS an Easter Revision session.

The prevailing view was that these workshops may flag up pupils who needed more support and the PC could then consider costs for that separately. On being asked if PC members wanted to cap the amount available person suggested £600 - however the PC agreed that it was too early to consider this and that it would be considered once the additional information was provided.

**ACTION FA**

### ***Easter Revision***

This has not been finalised as yet but Zander advised that this would go ahead as normal.

### **3. Accounts/Treasurers Report**

In the absence of Elaine Rough, Treasurer, Fiona reported that there was £2140 in the Parent Council account at present, an additional £538 was raised from bag packing at Asda. This does not include the funding from HDT's Cultural Fund of the funding from 'Be Part of the Picture'. These 2 funding allocations are ring-fenced for the 175th Anniversary celebrations. When allocating funding we need to bear in mind the fact that we traditionally support Easter Revision Classes and these may cost in the region of £1700 this year.

### **4. Anne Murray – Creative Practitioner**

**To follow**

## **5. Fi Thomson – Networks of Wellbeing (175 Parade Co-Ordinator)**

Fi informed the group that she was the staff member allocated by Networks of Wellbeing (formerly Huntly Mental Health Ltd) to act on behalf of the PC with regards to helping to organise the parade for the 175th Anniversary celebrations. (As per the successful 'Be Part of the Picture' funding application.)

The parade will take place on Saturday 29 March from the Cooper Park to the War Memorial, then on to the square. Various organisations will be taking part in the parade, such as Pipe Band, Army and Air Force Cadets, Brownies, Cricket Club, Rugby Club, Ski Club, Kindergarten etc. Fiona A has also been in touch with 39 Engineer Battalion at Kinloss and they are sending a unit down to take part in the Parade.

It is hoped that a Tea Dance will follow on after the parade. It is anticipated that there will also be stalls in the square and that the square will be decorated. Various other activities will also be included on the day.

It is hoped that a large number of pupils and staff from TGS will participate in the parade.

## **6. Pupils Contribution**

Eleanor advised that there was nothing new to report. However she did report that toilet locks and toilet seats were still an issue. There are no locks on most of the toilet doors and pupils have been requesting for some considerable time that this is attended to. PC members noted that this was a frequent cause for concern amongst pupils and asked if it could be looked into. Soap dispensers particularly in bus park toilet (girls) and P.E. (boys) need refilling.

It was also suggested that coin cans next to the vending machines might be a good idea - although it was thought that these would need to be secured in place.

**ACTION AH**

## **7. Rectors Report**

### **To follow**

Additionally Mr Hall advised that he had been in meetings with Principal Teachers with regard to the new Highers. Principal Teachers were asked to put their proposals in writing and most at this stage are looking to stay with the existing Higher for the coming session.

Expressive Arts, Admin, History and Maths intend to use the new revised Higher. Concerns are being raised by Principal Teachers as to whether the SQA will be able to keep up with what is happening. Mr Hall added that this is not an issue for pupils and parents but it is more of an issue for the school.

## **8. Sub-group Information:**

### **CfE update – including information on Highers for 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years**

Stewart advised that the group had not met since the November meeting and was unsure at this stage as to when the next meeting will be. The information on new Highers is included in the Rectors Report (Item 7).

Fiona A advised that she had attended at PC chairs and Head Teacher meeting in Oldmeldrum and the new highers were discussed there. Aberdeenshire Council has agreed to ask all secondary schools what they would propose with regards to implementing the new highers. Basically the session 2014/15 can adopt the new highers in full or implement a combination of old and new highers - the session 2015/16 would however be only the new highers. Fiona also advised that concerns had been expressed about the levels of anxiety experienced by S4 pupils and that it was considered that National 5's were not on a par with Standard Grade Credit Level but that they were pitched

somewhere between intermediate and higher level. One PC chair advised that in the prelim at their school all Nat 5 chemistry pupils failed the exam and that out of curiosity the school had asked the higher and advanced higher pupils to sit it - again they all failed!

Fiona also advised that Mr Sterling (Aberdeenshire Council) had agreed to contact all secondary schools in Aberdeenshire as well as speaking with neighbouring authorities (Angus, Aberdeen City, Moray, Highland) to see if they had put together information for their pupils. He will collate and distribute anything he finds - hopefully before the exams in May/June.

### **Fund Raising Group Update**

Fiona reported that the bag packing at Asda had raised £538. Fiona also wanted it noted that the pupils who helped out on the day were a credit to their parents and to the school. There is another bag packing day planned for 8 March and this will help boost funds. If anyone is able to help on 8th March please let Fiona know - along with your preferred time (between 10am and 4pm). Fiona will be there all day and any help, would be most appreciated. Funds raised are for the benefit of the pupils at the school.

### **Communications Group Update**

There was nothing new to report. Lara is doing a good job, Facebook has 138 likes, the mailing list is not growing so much however.

## **9. 175th Anniversary Update**

As indicated at previous meetings the school will be 175 years old this year. This is a major milestone in the school's history.

Alisanne, Fiona A, Fi (Parade) and TGS staff are all part of the 175 Anniversary group who are working on this and on other celebratory activities throughout 2014.

To celebrate the Anniversary the PC have proposed and are working with the 175 group on a number of activities including: -

- Photography Competition
- Art Competition
- Revamp of school song
- School picture made up of all pupil/teacher photographs
- Parade around Huntly – celebrating the past and the future
- Formal dinner
- Anniversary Ceilidh
- 175th Anniversary Merchandise ... and much more.

## **10. A.O.B.**

### **Thank you letter from Mrs Marbeth Ritchie**

A letter was received from Mrs Marbeth Ritchie, Teacher of R.M.P.S. thanking the Parent Council for their contribution towards travel costs for 2 senior pupils, Kathryn Merchant and Annabelle McLeod to attend a trip to Auschwitz. All members agreed that the girls should attend the March meeting to give a presentation on their experiences from the trip.

## **11. *Date and Time of next meeting***

The next meeting will be held on Monday 10 March 2014 at 7 pm in the School Library.