

Balerno High School Parent Council

Minutes of Meeting of Monday 28th October 2013

PRESENT: Tony Foster (chair), Helen Purves (parent), Sally Gartside (parent), Bill Henderson (councillor), Ricky Henderson (councillor) Mike Humphries (parent, minutes), Graeme Sives (Head Teacher), Lindsay Fullerton (staff rep), Sandy Waller (Head Boy), Hannah Fisher (Head Girl), Kirsty McKeown (parent), Jessica Bryce (parent), Lindsey Middleton (parent), Karen Gilhooley (parent), Rhona Baird (parent), Mandy Irvine (parent), Rehana Shanks (Dean Park Head), Yolanda Montero (parent)

APOLOGIES: Dominic Heslop (councillor), Liz Carrie (Treasurer), Marion Milne (community rep), Karen Scott (PTA)

1. Previous minutes and matters arising

1.1 Greame commented on the following items:

S6 area.

There is no change to current arrangements - proposals to move the community library into the school may have caused uncertainty. Also, the open nature of the area means it's not possible to have a kettle there.

Pentland Savers

Graeme said that a letter had gone out – from the Maths Dept. Some parents at the meeting didn't think they had received a letter.

Blazers

Letters regarding blazers went out in May. Delays in supplying some blazers were caused by one of Aitken & Niven's sub-contractors. These problems are not expected to recur as future order volumes will be lower.

Communications

It's unclear what is meant by communications being 'pushed forward'.

1.2 CCWP

If anyone is interested in attending CCWP (3 meetings per year) on behalf of Parent Council can they please let Tony know. The preference is for the same person to attend all meetings. It was suggested that someone from the wider parent forum (i.e. not a member of the PC) might be interested in attending. If a representative can't be found it should be possible to get feedback on CCWP via Dean Park.

1.3 Website

Helen and Tony met Sue McLeod to learn about updating the website.

1.4 Clerk

It was agreed that the PC will not employ a clerk.

1.5 Head Teachers' surgery

The surgery held with Rehana Shanks (Head at Dean Park) was worthwhile and a second one has been scheduled. It was suggested that this event could be extended to the Heads at Ratho and Kirknewton or separate events held. Graeme will pursue this.

1.6 Housing developments

There was further discussion of the proposed developments. It was recognised that the school role could be impacted positively if developments go ahead and negatively if they don't. It was agreed that the Parent Council will not take a formal position on the proposals.

1.7 Music tuition

Letters have gone out.

1.8

BGE (S1-3) Pupil Council attending SELMAS conference in Larbert with students from cluster.

The scary world of student leadership: What will education and schools look like in 2023 and how will you play a role in leading that?
<http://welcometoselmas.wordpress.com/2013/10/25/selmas-october-conference-student-leadership-event/>

2. Councillors' update

Bill provided an update on the all-weather pitch. The funding application will be submitted w/c 10/10 and a decision is expected in 4-6 weeks. Scottish Water have changed their mind about building on top of the sewer and will now permit it.

If this project goes ahead time will have to be allocated for community use of the new pitch.

Bill and Ricky left to attend another meeting.

3. Head Teacher Report

3.1 Exam results

Results have returned to more typical level following the excellent achievements of the year that left in 2012. That said, Graeme is particularly pleased with the results from last year's S6. Further details can be found on the school website.

3.2 SQA reviews

Graeme and his team are just completing the process of going through these. They will be discussed further at the next meeting.

3.3 Library

The possible move of the library into the school is still under discussion. A lack of council funding is hampering progress. One option may be to sell the janitor's house and use the income generated to finance this. If the move goes ahead it may be necessary to switch the After School Club to Dean Park.

3.4 School role

The cap on numbers at Dean Park has been lifted.

Balerno continues to depend on 'out of catchment' placing requests to maintain the role. Graeme is keen for Balerno to be viewed as a creativity 'centre of excellence'.

3.5 Review of community access to schools

There is a proposal to 'de-designate' Edinburgh's 8 Community High Schools. The intention is that all Edinburgh High Schools should incorporate community access. Graeme is unhappy about the potential impact on Balerno's funding and is challenging the proposals. Tony will raise this with the Edinburgh Parent Council Network.

The proposal can be found on the Council website.

3.6 School inspection

A visit will take place shortly to follow-up on and close off minor items identified at last year's full inspection.

3.7 Project Scrooge

Graeme invited Lindsay to provide an update.

Following the success of last year's Project Dream, Balerno's S3 will now participate in Project Scrooge from the 10th – 12th of December. Balerno is the only school which has been selected to take part again.

The format will be similar to last year and will include a trip to the Lyceum to see 'A Christmas Carol'. 6 groups will be formed and each will be challenged to provide a 'creative response'. All S3 students will participate.

Parents of S3 students will be invited into the school on 12/12 to see the results. Graeme will pass on a link to the video made last year to Tony for distribution.

4. Senior Pupil Perspective

Both junior and senior pupil councils have been set up and the first meetings held. 1 fund raising event has been held and another is imminent.

5. Parent voice

5.1 lunch options

There is some feedback that students don't find the Riverside Café very appealing. Queues can be long and particular items may sell out before demand is met. Can something be done to make it more attractive and to encourage healthier eating ?

Take-up of school meals at Balerno is the lowest of all Edinburgh secondary schools. Graeme suspects that the issue is the venue rather than the food. The café is small and poorly designed, making it feel crowded. The food is prepared on-site, although menus are decided centrally by City of Edinburgh Catering.

The school can't force students to use the café or prevent from them from going up to the village at lunchtime. Something that might help is if funds could be added to Young Scot cards via Wisepay. This would allow parents to ensure that lunch money is spent in school rather than used in the village. This will be possible eventually, but rollout of Wisepay capability is slow.

Graeme suggested asking the Pupil Councils for their views on the Riverside and other options. Hannah said the Riverside is not all bad ! Paninis and pasta are popular.

5.2 PTA

The meeting was informed that support for the PTA has declined and that it is desperately in need of new members.

6. Communication review update

Helen met with 4 parents to review the results of the communication survey issued by Jim Gladstone. Key conclusions are:

- The website is a great tool but needs to be developed. Would it be possible for a parent to join the in-school group that maintains the site ?
- Use of Wisepay should be optimised. Over 90% of first year students have signed up.
- Some parents feel they don't have sufficient access to teaching staff
- Parents' evenings are essential

2 members of staff will be allocated to take this topic forward in Jim's absence.

7. Election of Vice Chair

Mike agreed to take on this role.

8. AOCB

Karen Gilhooley is a member of a group which encourages students at state schools to pursue 'professional' subjects in tertiary education. Graeme indicated that he was open to someone from the group coming into school to talk to senior students.

Graeme was asked about the status of the historical budget deficit he had inherited. He confirmed that it was almost dealt with.

Tony plans to meet Graeme on the first Monday of the month. Please contact him to discuss any items that should be raised at these meetings.

Can new Council members please send Tony a photograph for the website.

Can any school articles in Currie and Balerno News also be submitted to equivalent Ratho and Kirknewton publications ? Mike to provide details of Ratho 'Interchange'.

9. Next meeting

The next meeting will be at 6.00 pm on 11/12/13 at Ratho Primary School.