

PORTLETHEN ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 4 March 2020

Present: Fiona Squires (Chair), Erica Kemp (Treasurer), Elaine Northcroft, Anne Wilkins, Fiona Lindsay, Graeme McColl, Ken Watson, Kirsty Campbell-Robertson (Depute Head Teacher), Lynn Buchan (Senior Community Worker, Community Learning and Development).

Apologies: Neil Morrison (HT), Nadine Bown (Secretary), Alex Robertson, Tracey Robinson, Erica Cargill.

Approval of Previous Minutes and Matters Arising: Minutes of 9 January 2020 meeting approved by those present. No matters arising.

Financial Update:

£10 cheque paid to Aberdeenshire Council (re application for license to serve alcohol at Morocco Fundraising event).

Information from Quarterly Bank Statements showing deposit (November 2019) of £499.50 from Aberdeenshire Council re annual payment to Parent Council.

Current bank balance of £4048.30 (inclusive of above)

Chair's Update:

Primary Schools Rezoning Consultation

A Statutory Public Consultation is underway regarding possible rezoning of primary school catchment areas in Portlethen. This is related to planning application to build 175 new houses in Hillside. Proposals include 'rezoning' so that some pupils living in the Hillside area would attend Portlethen Primary School. Fiona to send information and links to PAPC members regarding ways of participating in the consultation ending 27 March 2020.

As an increase in pupil numbers is already forecast for Portlethen Academy, PC was assured that staff are looking ahead to projections and potential implications. It was acknowledged that this matter will involve ongoing discussions.

Invitations to meetings/events

1. *Parent Council Training Events* - organised by Connect. Topics include role of PC and office bearers' responsibilities etc. Fiona attended last year and has declined repeat invitation.

2. *Parent Council Chairs Meeting* – choice of venues. Fiona and Erica K will attend Laurencekirk venue. Neil will also attend one of the meetings. This is a good opportunity to communicate and share information between Aberdeenshire Parent Councils, Education officers, Director of Education and Head of Education.

3. *Scottish Government - Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 – Revised Statutory Guidance Consultation*
The Scottish Government is updating guidance on this Act and aims to make the role of Parent Councils clearer. Further information and survey via link below. Please participate in the survey before 30 April 2020.

<https://consult.gov.scot/learning-directorate/parental-involvement-act>

4. *Portlethen Paths Development Group* – An invitation has been received from PPDG for Pupil Eco Groups and interested pupils at Portlethen Academy to participate in a tree planting project (1560 tree saplings) during Climate Week North East, 20 – 29 March, 2020. Kirsty to follow up.

5. *Morocco Fundraising* – Thank you to the 3 PAPC parents and 2 family members who responded to the Morocco Fundraisers' request for assistance at their Mothers and Daughters Event at end of February. The pupils ran a well organised, very enjoyable and successful event.

Excelerate Learning Initiative:

Kirsty gave an update re this pilot project which will focus on a development of interdisciplinary and project-based learning for pupils in S1 – S3. Portlethen Academy is 1 of 4 schools involved in the pilot.

The current phase is an information gathering/sharing and preparation year and has involved staff visits to schools in Nashville, Newcastle and Doncaster. A Stakeholders Conference in Aberdeen was attended by Portlethen Academy staff and pupils. Fiona attended on behalf of PAPC and reported that it was an inspirational event.

A Business and Community Support Officer has been appointed for Portlethen Academy who will provide information and regular updates to the whole school community.

The Science and Technical departments are currently developing and running some project-based learning projects.

Parent Surveys Feedback:

Kirsty presented documents with statistical information regarding feedback from latest Parent Surveys. This includes the 2 following questions

Q 21. I feel encouraged to be involved in the work of the Parent Council.

Q 22. I am kept informed about the work of the Parent Council.

The percentage of each year group represented at evening parent meetings varies from 68% to 81% and of this the percentage of attendees completing the surveys is as follows:

- S2 - 53% (61 completed surveys)
- S3 - 30% (33 completed surveys)
- S4 - 13% (14 completed surveys)
- S5 - 18% (14 completed surveys)
- S6 - 13% (14 completed surveys)

The school is looking at ways of trying to raise the percentage of completed surveys, including more active promotion by duty prefects and increased opportunity to complete online surveys.

Kirsty highlighted that positive numbers responded 'agree/strongly agree' to Q 21. It was noted that following Aberdeenshire guidelines about posting Minutes on the school website that previous postings had to be removed and it was suggested that the Parent Council should now reconsider options related to informing parents about the work of the Parent Council.

Validated Self Evaluation: nothing to report.

Uniform: It was noted that uniform compliance has increased as a result of active promotion across all faculties. Fiona reported that other Secondary Schools in Aberdeenshire experience similar issues to Portlethen Academy regarding compliance.

Head Teacher Update:

As Neil was unable to attend the meeting, updates regarding any relevant matters will be provided at the next meeting.

Neil arranged for Lynn Buchan to facilitate a discussion about financial implications for families of attending school: Cost of the School Day.

Cost of the School Day

Lynn Buchan was welcomed to the meeting and she provided details of child poverty in Scotland and at a local level in Aberdeenshire. (Source of following statistics: *Local Indicators of Child Poverty 2017/18*)

- 1 in 4 children in Scotland are living in poverty
- 65% of children living in poverty in Scotland are in households where someone works
- 39% of lone mothers live in poverty
- In Aberdeenshire parliamentary constituencies, between 12.5 and 15.9% of children are living in poverty. This rises to 21% in Angus North and Mearns after housing costs.

The Scottish Government is committed to tackling child poverty and it is high on their agenda. Lynn and her department are tasked to raise awareness and be part of the local team which shapes and implements strategies to alleviate the financial burdens for local families.

Recognising that poverty issues are associated with barriers to attainment and to mental health issues for pupils this work is handled discreetly and confidentially and aims to minimise the financial barriers that exclude children, including assistance with breakfast club projects, access to food banks, costs related to school trips, help to buy school uniforms, subsidising school activities and classroom materials, prom outfits, direct financial payments, transport costs for study out with school building, tackling truancy issues and causes.

Her department has also been involved in school discussions about costs to families of in - house school fundraising events and consideration has been given to the number of charity/fundraising activities that school pupils and families are invited to be involved in - as it has been identified that this can be an extra burden on households.

It was noted that Portlethen Academy has a larger number of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals than has been registered (by their family) for this scheme. The Pupil Equity Fund allocated to each school is calculated on registered numbers.

During discussions parents commented that the financial costs generated by Portlethen Academy seem to have decreased over the last few year.

The Parent Council extended their appreciation and thanks to Lynn for leading the discussions regarding the Cost of the School Day.

AOCB: Some of the local Air Cadets will be involved in forthcoming assemblies. Parent Council was informed that part of the Air Cadets' qualifications (some badges and coursework) will be recognised and credited by SQA and included in individual's certificates. It was also noted that First Aid Certificated courses (some completed in local Primary Schools) are entitled to SQA points.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 23 April, 2020, 7 – 8.30 pm