

PORTLETHEN ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of virtual meeting Thursday 27 May 2021

PRESENT

Fiona Squires (Chair), Erica Kemp (Secretary), Tracey Robinson (Minute Secretary), Anne Wilkins, Fiona Lindsay, Viv Persson, Alex Robertson, Andrew and Nicola Cameron, Mrs Robertson and 1 other

Neil Morrison (HT), Barry Drennan, Craig Cowie (DHT)

APOLOGIES

Ken Watson, Nadine Bown

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on 4 February 2021 were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The balance remains the same as at last meeting - £3,268.80

WELCOME AND CHAIR'S REPORT

Fiona Squires welcomed Barry Drennan to the meeting. He will take up the post of Head Teacher when Neil Morrison retires this summer. Mr Drennan was appointed after competitive interviews, with the post attracting a very high calibre of applicants. Fiona Squires and Tracey Robinson had been invited to participate in the interview process.

Fiona Squires represented the Parent Council at virtual monthly meetings with Director of Education, at Portlethen Academy's School Leaver Profile conferences and at a NPFS (National Parent Forum of Scotland)/SQA webinar. Information covered at these sessions has been intimated to parents by Laurence Findlay, Head of Service or by Neil Morrison.

Neil Morrison forwarded an invitation for 2 parents to attend, alongside 2 members of staff, the *Learning from Lockdown Session for Education Practitioners and Parents/Carers* at the end of April and Tracey Robinson and Erica Cargill participated.

Fiona Squires noted that this would be her last meeting as Chair and Erica Kemp's as Treasurer. She thanked Erica for her support.

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

The current Chair and Treasurer are stepping down from their posts at the end of this term. There were no nominations forthcoming at the meeting so the election of the Chair and Treasurer will take place after the summer holidays. Parents are invited to consider taking up the posts and both the Chair and Treasurer would be very happy to talk with interested people about what the posts entail.

For the next Parent Council meeting Anne Wilkins volunteered to chair - for this meeting only.

HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

Neil Morrison reflected on the support of the Parent Council over the years and his appreciation of this. He voiced his thanks to Fiona Squires and Erica Kemp.

1. COVID mitigation - young people's attitudes have been good and they have been following guidelines re wearing face coverings and sanitising their hands, however they were subdued at first when they returned to school and the school has been very aware of their health and well-being.

Pressure on the senior phase pupils has tried to be mitigated by

- Trying to spread the assessments
 - Last 2 weeks Senior Pupils have not had to come into school unless for assessments
- As well as helping young people recover, it has also helped with the safety of the school.

S1 young people have been using the theatre as a social space and are now able to use the rest of the school.

Staff - for all staff it has been a difficult environment to work in. S2 and S3 tracking reports and S1 written reports are due soon. The S1 written report will be short as staff doing marking and moderation.

2. SQA – an announcement on the appeals system is expected and teachers are having to be reactive to events. Craig Cowie has been working with Principle Teachers with regard to marking and moderation.
3. School leavers – unfortunately there are no real celebrations for school leavers due to COVID pandemic restrictions.
4. Staffing update - Barry Drennan has been appointed as Head Teacher. Jenny Law has been appointed as Depute Head Teacher. There is a further 0.4FTE Depute Head Teacher post to be filled and there is an interview scheduled week commencing 31 May. A new guidance teacher for Elsie House will start in August. Three new probationers (Biology, Chemistry and Modern Languages) will start after the summer and there may be two further probationers. All other vacancies have been filled, with interviews for a Teacher of English week commencing 31 May and a Technician is being recruited.
5. School Improvement Plan - this is actively being developed and Barry Drennan has been involved
6. Canteen - looking at how the recent changes in response to new regulations can be resolved
7. Timetable - the new timetable should be out soon however there is still uncertainty over what is planned for next year in relation to exams and what the contingency measures will be. Clarity is being sought by Aberdeenshire Council, Head Teachers, Unions and parents. Fiona encouraged parents to consider subscribing to communications from the National Parent Forum for Scotland. <https://www.npfs.org.uk/>
8. Expanding school roll - The school roll is anticipated to rise with the new housing being built in the catchment area. The capacity of the school is currently 970 pupils with potential to increase the capacity to 1000. This capacity is projected to be reached in the next few years. The current contract for the building with Robertsons will soon revert to Aberdeenshire Council ownership at the end of the original 10 year contract at which point extension to the existing buildings can be considered. In the meantime discussions continue with Robertsons and the Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estates Team on potential solutions. Note that the catchment for Primary School (and later Secondary) at Chapelton does not include Newtonhill area and it will be sometime before that new school is built as the pace of house building is slower than originally anticipated.

9. Occasional days – there will be 3 occasional days next school year (27 September 2021, 10 and 11 February 2022)
10. Primary 7 transition - There are virtual inductions for P7 pupils although Support For Learning staff have been able to bring certain pupils on to site.
The Parent Council agreed to fund school ties as part of the welcome pack for pupils starting S1 in August.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING TO BE CONFIRMED

CLOSING

The Chair noted that a number of Parent Council members were stepping down (School Leaver families) and thanks were given for their support and best wishes extended for the future.

Thanks were given to Neil for all his work and support for pupils and staff, particularly in leading the school over the difficult COVID months, and he was wished all the very best for the future.

A warm welcome was given to Barry Drennan who expressed his thanks and how much he was looking forward to working with staff and parents after the summer.