

Minutes of the Loanhead PS Parent Council Annual General Meeting

20-Sep-22, 7.00 - 8.30 PM

Chair: Claire McLean (vice)
Minutes: Lynn Waight

Attendees:

Claire McLean, Poppy Kyles, Lynn Waight, Libby McAdam, Karen Hinton, Rhonda Mag Fhogartai, Ian Carpenter, Jo Gillies, Raul Pardinaz-Solis, Ashley Allen, Alex Kitchen, Gemma Stevenson, Melanie Caldwell.

Apologies:

Kerry Crichton, Lorna Kennedy, Denise Claxton, Michelle Brown

1. Loanhead Parent Council Chair's Report 2021-2022

The past year has continued to bring challenges, with the continued COVID restrictions, but also lots of positive changes, as restrictions eased.

The Parent Council focused on creating activities to both, fundraise and involve the school community.

We achieved this through online events at Halloween, creating tea towels with all the children's self portraits on them, a scavenger hunt and an outdoor Easter event.

We worked closely with the school staff to identify funding needs. More details will follow in the treasury Report.

Road safety was paramount to the Parent Council throughout the year. We worked with Midlothian Council and Crudeness Property Development to ensure that our safe route was improved after the completion of residential building work. A new zebra crossing was implemented near Engine Road, which we are continuing to discuss with Midlothian Council in order to ensure our children's safety. We also worked with school staff to ensure that the emergency access road, around the side of the school, is kept clear and safe as much as possible by the gate remaining shut. We will continue to work with the parent forum in an effort to raise awareness of safety in the car park, by reiterating the need for safe and legal parking.

The Parent Council made considerable effort to improve parental engagement through the school year in the following ways:

- Creating a direct email address to the Parent Council.
- Engaging the parent forum in a number of surveys and feeding back to the school management.
- Encouraging the parent forum to approach the school to discuss certain topics directly.
- Circulating more information about the running of the Parent Council and encouraging new members to join.

We recognise that communication and engagement can still be improved which will be one of our focuses this year.

Another area that we have focused on has been environmental factors. The creation of the gardening group has been a great success with all children enjoying the experience. We have had discussions with the school management, and worked alongside them, to reduce plastic and paper waste.

In conclusion, this has been a successful and positive year. I would like to thank all that have offered support and ask for your support to continue in the coming year.

As we move into the school year, 2022-2023, we are delighted that funding is already secured to support the school in a number of areas which we also hope will ease the pressure on parents as we enter a 'cost of living crisis'. We will continue to have open discussions, with both the school and parent forum, to identify any areas of support or funding that can be offered.

Kerry Crichton
Chair

2. Treasury Report

Treasurer - Poppy Kyles

Summary

Grant income	£1,350.00
Donations	£1,332.66
Cash	£285.15
Expenditure	£1,249.29

Total Fundraised 2021-2022 £2,967.81

Breakdown:

Grants

<i>Arnold Clark</i>	£1,000.00
<i>Scottish Midland</i>	£350.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>£1,350.00</u>

Donations

<i>Bank of Scotland</i>	£150.00
<i>West End Skoda</i>	£500.00
<i>Tea Towels</i>	£230.66
<i>Scavenger Hunt</i>	£102.00
<i>DPBC</i>	£100.00
<i>Dandara</i>	£250.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>£1,332.66</u>

Expenditure

<i>Christmas</i>	-£464.05
<i>Pre-school bus to Beecraigs</i>	-£199.99
<i>P7 bus</i>	-£99.50
<i>P7 Bowling</i>	-£180.60
<i>Poetry Competition prizes</i>	-£20.00
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>-£964.14</u>

Cash (used for event floats)

<i>Balance</i>	£285.15
<i>Ice cream (Beecraigs)</i>	-£33.30
<i>Pre-school graduation (Jane)</i>	-£19.93
<i>Pre-school graduation (Claire)</i>	-£33.42
<i>P7 Leavers McDonalds</i>	-128.81
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>-£215.46</u>

Bank Balance	£2,044.33
Cash	£285.15

3. Moving Forward

3.2 Class Reps

It was suggested that pre-school should also have a class rep.

The following people volunteered to be class reps:

Pre-School	Rhona Mag Fhogartai
P1	Claire Williams [confirmed with Claire after the meeting]
P2	Ian Carpenter
P3	Poppy Kyles
P4	Laura Burnett [confirmed with Laura after the meeting]
P5	Gemma Stevenson
P6	Raul Pardinaz-Solis
P7	Denise Claxton [confirmed with Denise after the meeting]

3.1 Chair's authorised amount

Following discussion around the room it was recognised that we have trust in a Chair which the Members have voted for, as well as the need for access to small amounts of money at short notice and that less cash is used/available these days.

After discussion a vote on a £30 limit was passed with the conditions of it being used when discussion at a PC meeting is not possible and it should be restricted to being used once a term.

3.3 Increasing the maximum number of members to 25

The Parent Council Constitution currently states a maximum of 20 Members. This year we have had request from 21 parents to become members of the Parent Council, proposal to increase the maximum number of Members to 25 was passed following a vote. It was noted that for a vote to be valid 25% of members must be present, it was felt that this would continue to be manageable if the number of members increased to 25.

The constitution will be updated accordingly.

3.4 Discussion out with Parent Council meetings

A background on the origins of the WhatsApp group was given, centring on inclusion, shared information and a social forum for the Parent Council group. Recently discussions in the group have escalated to include decisions being sought and votes requested, it was therefore suggested that we require guidelines for the use of the chat group as many members of the WhatsApp group have the chat muted and only check it from time to time. Additionally some topics are not time sensitive and can wait for the next meeting. The discussion also acknowledged that the WhatsApp conversations can help them form opinions on topics or see other view points in advance of being raised at a meeting.

Therefore the chat will continue to operate with all members taking responsibility for closing down counter productive discussion and moving topics to the agenda of the next meeting, in particular when differing views are evident.

4. AOB

4.1 Meeting format

We should continue to begin the let 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting to allow people to arrive for a prompt 7pm start and for members to socialise and organise a refreshment in advance of the meeting. The agenda will be emailed to the parent forum by the school as before and published on the Parent Council Facebook page along with meeting reminders.

It was requested the Agenda for each meeting is published a week in advance of each meeting, any late additions can be added to AOB. It was also suggested that a call goes

out to class reps, prior to the agenda being issued, for any suggested agenda items that have been brought to their attention.

A suggestion was made that time is allocated to each item on the agenda with anything which is not time sensitive being moved to the next meeting if required, to prevent meetings running over or items from the agenda having to be missed.

Unusually the AGM was the second meeting of the school year as a result of the return of in-persons meetings and the need for discussion around the format of the Parent council in advance of the AGM. It was requested that for the next school year the first meeting back should be the AGM and it should include the voting in of committee members and council members. Date of the next years AGM was discussed toward the end of the meeting, 06-Sep-23 was proposed.

4.2 Crossing Guide at Clerk St/ The Loan main crossing

This crossing guide has been moved to cover the Fountain Place and Edgefield Road crossing area, as a result there has not been a crossing guide at the Clerk St / The Loan area. It was acknowledged that, unlike the Clerk St / The Loan crossing area, Edgefield Road does not have a pedestrian crossing so the guide is needed there. It is unknown how long this arrangement will continue or whether a replacement guide will be found in the mean time. It is also understood that the Engine Road crossing guide is also due to be unavailable for 6 week beginning in October, Engine Road is known to be difficult and potentially dangerous for the children to cross because of the parked cars and heavy vehicles which use the road.

Will a replacement crossing guide be in place, particularly if this planned unavailability overlaps with a continued vacancy at Clerk St / The Loan?

Kerry said in advance to the meeting that she would email Gillian Bathgate at Midlothian Council for more information on this issue.

4.3 Retirement gifts

Following on from a discussion which started on the WhatsApp chat, the following points were noted:

- Historically the PC have acknowledged staff retirements with a gift, typically flowers / wine etc, in the interest of fairness it was suggested this continue. This would not necessarily stretch to include gifts for staff leaving to continue their career elsewhere.
- Some discomfort at using PC funds was voiced.
- There was appreciation for the idea of the PC presenting retrial gifts to recipients at their leaving assembly, as has happened in the past.
- The idea of promoting good values and a sense of community was also raised.
- After discussion and a subsequent vote it was agreed that £30 could be spent on retrial gifts.
- JG volunteered to organise flowers and a card for Mrs Cairney's retirement at the end of term in October.

4.4 Halloween Disco

Date: 27-Oct-22, 6.00 - 7.30 PM, nursery to P7.

Full organising meeting to be arranged separately. People in attendance who put their names forward to help with organisation: CM, PK, GS, IC, LM, LW, AK, JG

- Students from Edinburgh College have offered to come to the disco to provide face painting at no cost to the children, this will give them credit towards their course. They ask for a signed disclaimer for children wishing to have their face painted. Disclaimer form to be sent out with an invitation to buy a ticket for the disco.
- Signed disclaimer and ticket money returned to school, PC collate and supply tickets, to be issued at school.

- Tickets would have children's name on them so they can be used to populate an attendance register and allow quicker entry on the night.
- Poster to be produced and put up on the PC display boards at both school gates. General maintenance of board required - PK has new backing paper and has offered to do this.
- During the disco set up the Community Room for parents to stay, provide tea/coffee/biscuits etc for a small cost.
- Maybe a tombola or guess the name event for adults to raise some funds.
- Juice and snack to be provided to each child as part of ticket cost.
- Prizes required for best dressed, best pumpkin.
- Arrange a swap box in the playground for outgrown Halloween costumes. To be organised in advance of the disco.

4.5 Parent Sessions

The idea of awareness/information sessions being run for parents was suggested, these sessions would reinforce skills being taught to the children. Topics might include sleep, road safety, and could be run by parents with applicable skills, knowledge or expertise. If run over Zoom it would not incur any cost to the school / PC and may be convenient for parents.

4.6 Religious representation in school

A parent raised their feeling that the Christmas trip to church was not balanced by similar trips to other religious sites or places of worship. They felt this is not a positive message, as LPS is a non-denominational school all religions should be explored at the same level, the school disagree with this sentiment. This was discussed and the following areas were covered:

- There are only Christian places of worship in our community.
- Could we visit other religious sites or places of worship? Travelling is expensive. Could representatives from other religious groups come to school?
- Loanhead Parish Church plays a large role in the local community of which the school is a part.
- The minister from Loanhead Parish Church, Mr Duffin, attends school to run an assembly every 6 weeks. No other religious representative does the same.
- In assembly Mr Duffin tells a story encouraging positive values relating to the time of the school year (the new school year, Leavers assembly etc), he encourages a time of reflection and thought, not prayer. Group members said their children enjoy Mr Duffin's assembly's.
- Having multiple assembly's run by different faith leaders could be confusing.
- The school have approached different religious communities to request their help or input in school but have been met with reluctance, this difficulty was echoed by another PC member who had put out similar requests to help with children's groups and organisation they are involved with.
- The school does not have strong connection with representatives from other religions. This could be something to work towards.
- Mrs Caldwell and Mrs Hinton described some of the other ways they explore other religions and religious holidays, families have helped them deliver this, for example - telling stories, sharing experience, bringing objects, cooking.
- Some of the group were unaware of the activities in religious education that take place in school. It was acknowledged that LPS is a good school which gives a well rounded education. The school should share many of the great lessons and initiatives it provides with the school community.

4.7 School Management

Clarification was sought on the PC's involvement in selection of school management, Head Teacher and Principal Teacher (PT). There was no advanced notice or consultation with the PC regarding the change in the senior staff when Mrs Donnelly took up a temporary role at another school, is this the usual procedure?

- Mrs Donnelly's unexpected departure at the end of the last school year meant everything happened quickly, should / could the Midlothian Council have been more transparent with the appointment of a new Principal Teacher?
- As Mrs Donnelly is due to return for the next school year both Mrs Caldwell and Mrs Coombs are acting in their roles until she returns.

It was explained that with previous appointments of new Head Teachers the Parent Council had 3 representatives involved with the interview process.

Group members also asked for the difference between a Deputy Head Teacher (DHT) and PT to be explained.

- Whether a school has DHT(s) or PTs is dependant on it's size.
- DHT is a non-teaching role, supporting the Head
- PT does include a teaching role with a focus on a specific area, maybe early years or nurture, for example.

4.8 Meeting dates

Date for next AGM: Wednesday 06 September 2023

Routine PC meetings will continue every 4 weeks, rotating through Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday evenings, 6:30 for a prompt 7:00 PM start. Provisional meeting dates as follows:

Tue	11 Oct 2022
Wed	09 Nov 2022
Thu	08 Dec 2022
Tue	10 Jan 2023
Wed	08 Feb 2023
Thu	09 Mar 2023
Tue	18 Apr 2023
Wed	17 May 2023
Thu	15 Jun 2023