

NORTH BERWICK HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 NOVEMBER 2022 in the SCHOOL

Parent Members: S Wellwood (Acting Chair)
J Massie
L Gurney
C Jones
L Forrest
A Clark
D Edmondson
J Leslie
P Bekkers
S Bain, Head Pupil

Other Parents Present: K Duncan, G Milne, M Nelson, N Bradley, E Revell, Z Lovell

Apologies: J Cottrell, A Clubb (Acting DHT) T Heal

Staff Members: M Moore, Head Teacher

Councillors Present: Cllr Carol McFarlane

A Cosgrove, Clerk.

1. **Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

She advised that it had been hoped to have an EGM to finalise the Constitution, but had been advised by East Lothian Council that all constitutional amendments required to be passed to the Legal Department first, and that the agreed amendments did not stand until this process was complete. Members present voted and agreed the circulated amended constitution was approved by the PC. It was agreed that members could not find previous copies of the Constitution and that a copy of the amended Constitution which was based on an edit of the template constitution provided by Connect would be put on the PC webpage, with a note that it was subject to ELC approval, and the Parent Council would agree to abide by any terms imposed by the Council. Action for Clerk to ask Diane Bruce to post up the new constitution along with wording that subject to ELC review.

2. **Approval of Minutes of AGM and Meeting of 25 October**

Agreed with the addition of Jacq Cottrell to the attendance list.

3. **Summary of Trips/ DoE meeting with Robert Jones**

DoE Update – A Clark reported that the S4 group (Bronze) have carried out all requirements apart from the expedition. This was timetabled to take place just after Easter.

The S5 group (Silver) were not able to move on.

There was a new S4 group undertaking the Bronze award. There was a problem with staff members able to help with ongoing preparation work, and the physical and volunteer skills required assessment. Up to 8 weeks preparation time was required for expeditions and volunteers were needed to lead this.

The School was offering 28 places a year from 170 actual applications: however groups in Edinburgh may be able to offer assistance as well as the Scouts who already do a DoE programme.

Agreed actions were: to inform the Parent forum that assistance to widen the programme was being sought via the FB page: and to contact the Friends of Duke of Edinburgh for assistance. Mr Jones and another member of staff had given a lot of time to this, for which they were thanked.

J Leslie advised that the S6 group had completed everything for the Bronze Award but it required to be signed off. She had met with Jennifer Purves from East Lothian Council (DoE co-ordinator) who had encouraged parents to provide support and would be happy to organise a meeting for the School. The Head Teacher agreed to send out information to parents and would check with Robert Jones about the wording – noted that PVGs were required for any participating parents.

Trips – there had been a 70% reduction in the amount of trips available since pre-Covid days. Currently there was difficulty with the number of staff offering to help, which Mr Jones had explained as a culture that needed to be rebuilt. Some experienced staff have left the school and others had not come forward.

The Head Teacher advised that the focus would be on the S3 residential trip, and there was discussion about the normal visit to Dalguise, which would cost £455 per person for a 3 night trip, a significant increase in cost. She would ask Mr Jones to send a reminder to parents about participation and encourage them to apply for help with funding cost, if that is an issue.

Action for Parent Council: to draft a survey for parents – Mr Jones will be asked to work with the PC on this). Parents also questioned whether a shorter stay could be considered in the future and if staff could be asked if there was a reason they didn't wish to participate.

Michelle advised that there was a minimum number of young people needed to sign up to make the trip viable. She believed it was 100 and that number has not been met yet. This would be reviewed as the deadline for sign up had not yet passed.

A non PC parent suggested that if funding was an issue that there were possible avenues to follow one of which would perhaps be the NB Trust given the cost of living crisis and impact COVID has had on the confidence of young people to venture away from home for many for the first time.

4. Playing Fields Letter

The Chair advised that the draft proposed letter to ELC seeking clarity and detail on the proposed expansion had been circulated to all PC members and Head Teacher in advance of the meeting. It was voted and agreed that the wording was approve. The Chair had included Cllr C Hoy in the letter at the suggestion of one member and nother suggested that all 8 MSPs should be added not just the 3 in the draft. The Head Teacher and Mr Jones had not had chance to read this document due to interviewing and Michelle asked to review and reply to the Chair prior to this been sent. G Milne also asked to review this as she was returning as a PC member. ,

A member of the public had contacted the Chair and Head Teacher regarding concerns over the playing fields and resulting impact of the proposed hedge removal. Neither Michelle nor the Chair had acknowledged or replied to this and the Chair sought input from the PC committee as to how this would normally be handled. Cllr Carol McFarlane advised that as this communication was not from a parent but a member of constituency that she should response to this. Chair passed a paper copy of the email to Cllr McFarlane who confirmed she was action and respond on behalf of the Council.

5. Update from Head Teacher

Ms Moore referred to the National Discussion on Education, saying that a letter had been sent out to all parents asking for their views. Noted that the Hayward Review was specifically looking for views on assessment in the senior phase only.

She asked all parents to participate, raising the following questions:

- Should there be a changing balance of exams to assess young people's learning?
- Should there be more arts tuition? Or more science? More diversification? More technology?
- Do we want exams to be the same as before?

Ms Moore observed that not all subjects had exams and portfolios were used as evidence. Staff were looking at these issues during training time on Friday.

On *Punctuality*, after discussion with staff, this had been narrowed down to three groups of young people: those not getting up in the morning, those with transport issues and those unhappy at school. There would be an Assembly on Friday on this subject, with impact of latecoming explained.

Sandy Bain advised that every time he was late, it was bus-related and outwith his control, and Ms Moore noted that the initial target group were poor timekeepers. Some targeted approaches were being carried out, and parents were very supportive of tracking and monitoring pupils who were regularly late. Noted that consequences needed to be sustainable.

Recognising Achievement – the School was evaluated for achievement and attainment every year under How Good is Our School (HIGIOS) standards. There had been a small BGE achievement ceremony last year, praise postcards and a full Senior Prizegiving this year but an exploration of how recognition of success is tracked and celebrated across the school would be useful.

M Moore had shared a document from Knox Academy setting out a robust system that was rolled out pre-COVID as to how they recognise achievement across all areas. M Moore sought the PC's views on this as something to be considered in the new academic year as would need detailed consultation with parents and pupils and any programme would need to be specific for NBHS. PC agreed that would be supportive of a review and that this topic would need to be revisited in more detail when more time was available.

Industrial Action – a new pay offer had been made that day but rejected by EIS: a communication would be going out to parents tomorrow. The SSTA had action day on 8 December, and the EIS another two likely days, one in December and one in January.

Staffing – a staffing update was made to parents.

AOB – Emma Davidson had not attended three consecutive meetings with no apologies offered so in accordance with the wording of the constitution it was therefore proposed by A Clark, seconded by L Gurney that she be removed from the Parent Council list.

G Milne was proposed as a PC member by L Forrest, seconded by Sharon Wellwood. K Duncan had been nominated to the Parent Council by A Clark, seconded by L Gurney.

All members were in agreement with the action and the nominations were approved.

A Clark had attended the NB Coastal Area Partnership meeting, where Lara Neri had been commended for her work. Noted that there was a place on the Area Partnership for the School and G Milne offered to take this up. Noted that it was a good opportunity to meet Councillors and Council officers.

Date of Future Meetings – Monday 16 January 2023, Wednesday 8 March, Thursday 25 May.