

NORTH BERWICK HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16 JANUARY 2023 in the SCHOOL

Parent Members: S Wellwood (Acting Chair)
J Massie
L Gurney
L Forrest
A Clark
J Leslie
P Bekkers
T Heal
K Duncan
J Cottrell

Other Parents Present: Z Suggett, K Black, E Revell, F Hill, E Clark.

Apologies: C Jones, D Edmondson, Cllr C McFarlane, Jasper Cottrell

Staff Members: M Moore, Head Teacher, A Clubb, DHT

A Cosgrove, Clerk.

1. **Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, and thanked all members for their patience in dealing with the large number of emails since the last meeting. Given several events and volume of communications between PC since the last meeting several agenda items are needed to minute this and to provide recent updates. There is a very full agenda and limited time due to Facilities Management rota/staff issues resulting in 8:30 sharp finish.

2. **Minutes of Meeting of 22 November**

The undernoted had been omitted from the Minutes:

“K Duncan had been nominated to the Parent Council by A Clark, seconded by L Gurney. This was agreed by all present.”

With this addition, the Minutes were approved.

Action – Clerk to ask Diane Bruce to put these updated minutes on the website

3. **Matters arising**

An individual had written to the Parent Council raising concerns about the playing fields expansion and Cllr McFarlane advised at the last meeting she would reply to this. There has been a further email from the individual concerned as unfortunately Cllr McFarlane has not contacted them. Chair has replied to this second email apologising on her behalf and asked for her to follow this up in full

On the Constitution, the Chair had written to Leanne Ayton, the Principal Officer at ELC, but had been advised that there was no update from the Council’s Legal Dept.

Other matters raised in emails among members:

Conflict of Interest of Members – The Chair noted that all members signed the Code of Conduct, but members should also disclose membership of any community groups whose aims could be in conflict with the Parent Council. Parent council members are on notice about this by signing the Code of Conduct. There was some discussion on this, and J Leslie suggested contacting Connect for advice on what would constitute a conflict of interest. The Chair would do this.

Action - Chair

4. **Summary of Pump Track Meeting of 30 November. Called by ELC officers and held at NBHS.**

The Chair reported that representatives from the Senior Management Team at the High School, the Council, the PE department, and representatives from the parent councils of NBHS, Law PS and the nursery had attended. She described it as a helpful initial meeting and first contact with ELC on this matter. Chair read out an extract from report send to PC members via email (please see attached). This was echoed by E Revell who had attended on behalf of Law Primary who supported the need for Lauren Taylor (a neighbour and nursery parent) to ideally attend any future meetings as she is a Landscape Architect who already has prepared and submitted some proposed ideas/drawings for the whole triangle to NB Trust directly.

This is the first meeting or discussion between the schools and ELC on the subject of the pump track, which is proposed on land next to the school that is designated for educational expansion in the local plan. It was helpful but many questions from NBHS and the parent councils remain unanswered, and ELC officers will address these queries at a further meeting to be arranged.

There had been a recent communication from ELC suggesting the creation of a short-life working group on the Education Triangle, and the Chair had been asked to identify a PC member to take part. She summarised the purpose of this group, noting that NB Trust would also be included, and she would seek clarification as to whether the North Berwick Community Pump Track Group (NBCPTG) would be included in discussions. Noted that local residents also have an interest.

Agreed that either the Chair or K Duncan would be on this group. E Revell would not attend any future meetings as he declared a conflict of interest as he has been asked to help the NBCPTG with their planning application. Chair will put Chair of Law Primary/previous attendees on notice of this pending meeting but M Moore thinks this will be communicated directly via ELC to Primary HT.

PC is hopeful that the purpose of this group will be to develop the whole area of the triangle in a co-ordinated way, and with reference to the proposed new playing fields and safe routes to school. ELC do not have this overview at present.

Action - Chair

5. Playing Fields recent communications

A letter had been sent to ELC seeking clarification, and a disappointing response had been received, with no engagement with the School directly regarding the hard standing court area despite the reference in Nicola McDowell's letter. Chair forwarded Nicola's reply on to all the recipients that were omitted from her email. PC not yet sent a reply to Nicola directly as Chair was awaiting this meeting. Their view was that the AGM had been a consultation event with parents, but this took the format of a presentation, not a consultation.

Paul McLennan MSP had been approached and hoped to arrange a meeting with ELC and other invitees. PC members agreed for Chair to acknowledge the response letter, express PC disappointment, outline inaccuracies surrounding guidance/class timings, state that we are encouraged on hard court aspect and confirm we were continuing to seek Paul's support on gaining the information, detail and dialogue pre-planning.

It would be necessary to communicate with the wider parent body on the position: however there was an acknowledgment that the use of the hardcore area had been raised by the Council as a point of discussion

The general feeling was that there were a lot of unanswered questions.

The Head Teacher explained that the School's preferred priority was extra indoor sports provision, but the school was not yet at a sufficient roll level to provide this, and budget for this remained a key consideration. M Moore sought support from PC on this. Chair outlining that as stated at AGM by ELC officers the increased role is the trigger for this and it was confirmed that no ring-fenced funds exist. ELC will therefore, sadly, not consider this now but happy to put on agenda for next meeting to see how PC can take this forwards.

A positive was that Nicola McDowell, indicated that a hard court area could be considered and that a ELC officer would contact the School to discuss this. Chair checked with M Moore who confirmed that this has not happened yet and that the school management team hadn't pursued this with the PE department or with ELC. The Head Teacher informed the meeting that she would discuss the proposed hardcourt with her senior management team and the PE department.

Action – M Moore

Many questions were asked including: how to communicate with the wider parent body on this issue, and what information should be available; whether the existing hedge would be replanted; would an environmental assessment be done as part of the planning process. It was also queried by J Massie why there was no risk assessment document regarding the line of sight issue by ELC or the school. Concern was that if PC does nothing and waits until planning then it is too late to get ELC to look at the detail or amend the plans. Chair put it to PC that one option is to do nothing and wait. PC members voted against this. PC agreed that their constitutional role is to represent the parent forum's views. Currently the PC are not doing that. The PC had hoped to see clarity and detail from ELC but as this is not forthcoming either directly or via local councillors the PC needs to share what we have now. Voted and agreed by all members.

T Heal suggested it would be good to have an in person meeting with parents and seek their views, after initial information has been shared to bring parents up to speed

A Clark offered to put a one page document together as a starter to circulate to parents, with maps attached for guidance.

Action – A Clark

6. North Berwick Community Council meeting of 3 January

The Chair had attended and had advised of the letter submitted by the Parent Council concerning the playing fields and ELC's response. The Community Council would contact ELC to reiterate concerns about plans not to scale and essential information not being provided prior to planning stage. J Cottrell advised that the Community Council was seeking the views of the School on the playing fields before taking a stance on the issue.

Noted that Cllr Findlay had followed this up and had been told that no detailed plans were yet available by Eamon John @ ELC

The Chair also noted that G Millar, Courier Reporter, had attended the open public online meeting and had advised the Chair that he was already preparing two articles, one on the Pump Track and one on the Playing Fields. Chair tried to ensure that these were accurate.

There is an Area Partnership meeting on Tues 24th Jan which Chair and G Milne will attend. Ali will be attending on behalf of NB Environment & Heritage Trust and Euan Revell for Law Primary, safe routes subgroup. NBHS PC have voting rights at these meetings and important to attend especially when matters like the Local Development Plan renewal are raised but there is also an agenda item for the proposed nursery safe routes to school which impacts on the playing fields.

Ali showed the PC the map sent from the Area Partnership. The PC concern is that a 1. a safe route to school will not be possible from Farquharson's Rest to the Old Haddington Road once the new pitches are created and fenced because there is not sufficient space. This route also impacts access to the triangle where the pump track is being proposed. 2. safe routes to school that skirts the existing pitches makes space for existing pitches very tight indeed, and on the plans this is not marked to go tight against the nursery boundary.

7. Head Teacher Update

Due to time constraints, this would be circulated after the meeting.

Action – Head Teacher

She would try and provide this in advance of the meeting in future, if time and workload permitted. The Head Teacher considered it important to explain key matters, rather than run the risk of written comments being taken out of context.

8. Parent Council Communications with Parent Forum

Agreed that the Facebook page was not best forum for parents to use generally and for sharing playing fields information (Chair confirmed currently only 371 followers) and the PC pages on the school website could be used more. PC can use Facebook page and Michelle's Newsletter to direct parents to the full documents on the website.

Noted that the minutes should be on the website quicker – at present they are not posted until approved but could be posted once the Chair and Head Teacher have agreed them and after PC members have considered them via email. They could then be posted in a 'draft' form pending official approval at the following meeting

Action – Clerk

9. Update on Trips

P Bekkers advised of slow restarting of trips. He had had a conversation with Mr Jones.

On a question of whether trips were value for money, the Head Teacher advised that this aspect had to be signed off by ELC but it was noted that parents would also have a view on this She advised that 130 pupils from 3rd year were attending the trip to Dalguise, and the School had been able to support 10 places, due to assistance from North Berwick Trust. Draft survey prepared by P Bekkers and kindly supported by F Hill has been circulated and agreed by all PC members prior to the meeting. Next step is to share with Robert Jones for his input. T Heal suggested using a google form as this would collate the anonymous data from response easily.

Action - P Bekkers

10. Local Development Plan (LDP) representation

The Chair advised that a consultation towards the new LDP would begin in 2023. A new approach of developing a Local Place Plan will be used to gather comments from local groups and individuals which will then inform the draft local plan which is due out for consultation in September 2023. Applications from groups who want to be involved in the Local Place Plan are sought by ELC by 27 January 2023., Chair was seeking confirmation from PC membership that the Parent Council wanted to be included in discussions, as well as the School. M Moore and PC agreed that they wanted

to be part of this discussion to retain the land as designated for educational expansion. J Cottrell will bring this up at NB Community Council meeting.

E Clark was the person who pulled together 2016 documents for last LDP plan. E Clark stated that given the new format of a Local Change Plan this time around it is imperative that not only does each school site have a voice but that their corresponding parent council/parent reps do too. Also that any discussions regarding the educational triangle should also highlight the remaining rectangle of land to the north near grange road as this falls outside of current lease but within current LDP designation for educational expansion.

E Clark has kindly sent the Chair the online link for the ELC survey (deadline 27th January 2023) and Chair will contact the Chair of Law Primary /nursery reps and also forward link to M Moore. M Moore confirms she will forward this on to Sally Penman for review by Primary/Nursery. Chair will complete the survey on behalf of NBHS PC so that we have a voice in creating the next Local Place Plan over the next few months.

Action - Chair & M Moore

11. AOCB - Membership

E Revell was proposed as a member of the Parent Council by T Heal, seconded by L Gurney, and agreed by all.

T Heal was proposed as Depute by A Clark, seconded by P Bekkers and agreed by all.

Chair thanking T Heal for stepping up to Vice Chair role and support which now allows her to take on Chair role. S

Wellwood was proposed by L Forrest, seconded by K Duncan and agreed by all.

J Massie advised that she was stepping down from membership of the Parent Council.

Date of Next Meetings - Wednesday 8 March, Thursday 25 May.

HT Update for NBHS PC meeting 16.1.23

Thank you

Thank you to Clare and Tristan for their support with recent recruitment – hugely appreciated.

Alice Clubb is now in post as permanent DHT leading on Learning and Teaching and linked to Craig and Law Houses.

Recruitment for permanent PT Mathematics and Numeracy underway - post closed on Sunday 15th and we have a healthy number of applicants.

Craig Burgess appointed as acting DHT job-sharing with Robert Jones Thurs/Fri. This DHT leads on Curriculum and Attainment. Recruitment for acting Principal Teacher (Pupil Support) Thurs/Fri underway.

Positive emails about end of term ethos events for young people have been coming in – these emails mean so much to staff at NBHS, especially when these events rely upon staff giving up their own time. These events also remind us why we are educators and we are so glad to be able to offer them to the young people of NBHS.

Virtual Parents' Evenings

NBHS remains committed to evaluating their efficacy. Survey went out following S4 VPE showed 65% of parent/carer respondents in favour of retaining online. Survey will go out to all S1 and S2 parents/carers shortly.

At present, a balance of in-school events and online efficiency is our model.

S3 Course Choice Information Evening- Monday 23rd January 6-7pm

S4/5 Course Choice Information Evening – Monday 23rd January 7-8pm

S2 Course Choice Information Evening tbc – current proposed date Tuesday 7th February 6-7pm

S3 Trip/D of E

Update from R. Jones shared with S. Wellwood – can be shared with PC members

Behaviour

Clarification that current focus on latecoming/attendance is not singular to NBHS and does not imply school is solely focusing on this single issue and ignoring others. ELC has a set of stretch aims for improvement including improving attendance – all schools looking at this as part of Scottish Government directive.

Across the system, it is fair to say that we have seen an increase in risk-taking behaviour, post-Covid. Some young people are communicating their anxieties/mental health issues/impact of trauma through their behaviour. NBHS staff are committed to supporting this small group of young people as a priority, which includes challenging their behaviour.

We are keen to ensure that this small minority maximise learning and support opportunities that are available to them and reduce opportunity to avoid class by spending periods of learning time in the main block toilets. Having additional toilet facilities in school in the new extension, and accessible toilets in almost all faculties that can be used if necessary, ensures young people have access to toilets at all times while allowing us, as a last resort, to enhance how we manage behaviour in the main block toilets by limiting access to them during class time. We did this before Christmas as a short-term intervention.

In school, we have seen a welcome reduction in duty calls to behavioural situations in class. Shared Classroom Experience (taking place as part of our Faculty Review programme Nov-Feb) provides evidence of calm, structured, well-pitched learning and teaching. Staff are skilled at managing behaviour, using restorative approaches, supporting one another peer:peer and middle and senior leaders are visible and proactive. Our NBHS Positive Behaviour Policy is reviewed regularly. We follow national guidance on Inclusion and the ELC suite of Included, Engaged and Involved policies as appropriate. We see exclusion as a last resort. Action is taken to combat challenging behaviour consistently and frequently.

A key and ongoing concern for us is the impact in school of what happens outside school, whether this is on social media or at the weekend/in the evenings. We spend a disproportionate amount of time unpicking relationship issues that are causing by posts on social media. Information encouraging parents to speak to their children about social media use and keeping themselves safe online has been sent by letter and through the weekly update.