



MINUTES

Avoch Primary School Parent Council

9th September 2020 | 7.00PM

In Attendance by Zoom

Ruth Edmonds (Chair), Inga Ballantyne, Phoebe McDaid, Claire Weaver, Jacqui Dingwall, Asia Kucharczyk, Fiona Whyte, Kirsty Cameron, Wanda Clark and Lorna Sim.

Apologies

Debbie du Preez, Ingrid Robertson

Minutes from last meeting

The remedial works to the playground have been completed, though the standard is not high.

Lorna notes that Philip Wilson has passed on our concerns from the last meeting to his managers in the HC Estates Team and they are now discussing issues directly (and without input from Lorna) hopefully to resolve all the issues raised.

All the paperwork is in place for the start of the Playground Project and this just needs to be reviewed by Wanda and sent to HC on our behalf. We can ringfence some funds now which will allow for 7 years of maintenance – though this is assuming that we don't need to supply a welfare unit for the installation team. The timeframe is too tight now for this to happen in the October holidays, so we are now looking at installation following the completion of the nursery build (hopefully Easter 2021). Inga will step down from the committee this year and the committee extended their grateful thanks to her for all her hard work leading this project.

£300 has been secured for the polycrub from a donation from the Fortrose Care Home. Additional meetings linking with the polycrub project are proposed with Littleburn and Avoch Orchard and a possible link-up with Highland Good Food and Muir of Ord Community Fridge, via the AKCC.

Report from the School, Lorna Sim

The school as an institution of around 300 children and 40+ adults in one building is one of the largest gatherings allowed in Highland in the current situation. Lorna noted an encouraging attendance of 99.7% on the first day back as the highest in Highland and that, despite some concerns raised, she has had a lot of positive feedback regarding the measures being taken to keep everyone safe.

A few additional issues were raised by the committee for clarification and these are summarised below:

- Access to drinking water: Children who forget to bring their water bottle will always still have access to water. A disposable paper cup can be supplied as required for use by an individual who will keep it for the whole day. Refilling water bottles is also encouraged and parents/carers are asked to help 'train' the children to do this without touching the tap.
- Time for lunches: There has to be limited time for eating lunches to allow the teachers to get their 45-minute legal break. Concerns were raised that this was not enough time for all the children to finish. Taking unfinished food into the playground also cannot be permitted as there would be no supervision of what may be a choking-hazard, especially for the little ones. The younger children are already losing a little bit of teaching time to allow them to start eating slightly earlier. Mrs Sim agreed that this was a difficult issue that had been discussed

amongst the teachers and concluded that, on balance, all children are managing to eat enough to get them through the rest of the school day (even if the whole lunch is not eaten).

- Jackets: All children are told to get their jackets on the way out to play but there is a problem with those who forget or who come back in to use the toilet and leave them behind. At the moment the children are not permitted back into the classrooms to collect a jacket. The school will carry on reminding the children and parents/carers are encouraged to do the same.
- Singing: Claire noted that it's a shame that the children, especially the little ones and the nursery are not allowed to sing together and asked if the school would consider making an autonomous decision on this as at the moment this is only government *guidance*, rather than being mandatory. Lorna confirmed that the school will always follow the guidance given as diverging from this would leave her personally liable.
- Wanda confirmed that playdoh, sand and water play is still allowed, but is restricted to small groups/bubbles and that all toys are deep-cleaned every week.
- Hand-washing is always preferred over using sanitiser (where possible). All nursery children have bubbles for using the toilet and washing and time is already taken out of the teaching time across the school to allow for hand-washing.

Lorna wanted to provide clarity on what would happen in the case of staff illness as ideally this should not come as a surprise to parents/carers. There is no option at the moment to double-up classes if a member of staff is absent. If two or more staff members are ill, and a supply teacher cannot be provided, then the school would need to close. If the school closed, this would be a last-minute decision – similar to a cold-weather closure and would be announced via the usual channels on the morning before the start of school. Parents/carers should be made aware of the measures being put in place at school and the importance of sticking to them is to minimise the risk of having to shut down the school temporarily. This will be made clear in the next newsletter. Every school is in the same position.

Treasurer's Report and Fundraising, Claire

Our funds are looking healthy at the moment, but we have no events now planned for the rest of this year. The full report is provided as an appendix to this minute. Jacquie proposed a lottery for fundraising, similar to a 100 Club, where parent/carers pay something every month in advance of a prize draw (using some of the funds raised and the APC keeps the rest).

Claire suggested a Zoom disco, as was done successfully for last years P7 Leavers. Asia has already made enquiries in this regard.

Action:

Claire to check with bank whether BACS donation is possible.

Jacqui (with Claire/Ruth) to investigate her fundraising idea to see how it works for other PCs.

Claire/Asia to look into Zoom disco possibility.

Construction Site

There have been ongoing problems with the site opposite the school, particularly with noise, vibration and traffic. Lorna has been talking directly to those on site for specific problems but there is also a bigger issue regarding compensation which is being pushed, together with Avoch and Killen Community Council (AKCC). The school was not consulted or even notified of the traffic restrictions (three-way lights) that have caused chaos for buses and school drop off/collection over the past few weeks. Lorna has confirmed that they must now engage with the school when something like this happens and that particularly noisy works are scheduled for outwith school times. HC are aware of this as a problem. We have been encouraged to pursue this through elected council members and Ruth will be speaking to Jennifer Barclay in the first instance to open up the discussion. It is hoped that a meeting with AKCC, APC, Jennifer Barclay and the construction company will follow. The school must take a step back from this as there is a conflict of interest.

Claire noted disappointment that although there were funds required to be provided as part of the initial planning consent, these go into a wider HC pot and we don't see any of them (though the community council can apply for specific funding from this fund). The construction company had visited the school last year and garnered positive PR for themselves out of this visit, but we have yet to see any benefit directly for the school.

Drainage of the pitch was raised again as a possible compensation measure though Lorna speculated that the water table in that area may be too high for drainage to be successful. This would need looked at by HC in more detail to confirm either way. The provision of a MUGA pitch would require £50k+ and may be beyond the scope of compensation, though HC have been funding these for other schools across the area should the committee like to take this forward.

Action:

Ruth to contact councillors re. construction site and good will gesture. Also to open up lines of communication more generally with councils and invite them to meetings.

Active Travel and Safer Routes to Schools

Ruth met with Helen of AKCC recently to discuss the options for improving the problematic Braehead crossing. The community council have an interest in sorting out the cycle path and hoped that APC could input into the process. It is agreed that a crossing at the end of Braehead would not work and that it is preferable to put a new crossing slightly uphill, opposite Mackay Terrace instead. Fiona noted that there is already a path that extends from the current end of the old railway path, running behind the house and coming out at the point opposite MacKay Terrace. This would seem like a good option for using to link the cycle path to the MacKay Terrace crossing site. There was agreement that it would not be appropriate to light the whole railway route or to tarmac it (as it is a woodland trail with multiple users, not just cyclists) but that it would benefit from drainage and perhaps some surface repairs. AKCC will look into getting a consultant to produce a drainage improvement plan. Ruth noted that perhaps Velocity could help with funding applications too. Ruth has also been notified that Velocity would like to talk directly to Lorna as they are handling the £1m pot for funding (for Active Travel/Safer Routes via Sustrans) and are able to help follow up on Lorna's expression of interest for some of this funding.

Velocity had distributed information on how to encourage active travel and one suggestion was for a ¼ mile exclusion zone around the school. Fiona asked if this would be an option to consider. Lorna confirmed that this was not something she could make a decision on; it would have to come from higher up in the council. Lorna praised the parents/carers for changing habits already this year as many more were avoiding the car park and walking a distance to school, akin to a 'Park and Stride' scheme although the parking options for this to happen in Avoch remain poor. Velocity will also provide information about how to support a more official 'Bike Bus' which would require a rota of volunteers. Fiona will look into this.

Wanda said there had been a low take up on 'Go For It' so far and was hoping for more confirmation slips to be returned. In the past, all children were automatically entered, but consent is now required. Lorna noted that there was already a lot more walking to school than ever before and welcomed this change.

The APC leaflets on cycling and bike maintenance are being finalised now and will be distributed via Facebook and the school soon. This should time well with the 'Go For It' initiative.

We are again hoping to provide Bikeability for the P6s in 20121, though this is likely to require a new, non-school, venue if it is to be held in Term 1 or 2. Suggestions are welcomed for a venue. Failing this, it will be held in Term 3 or 4, restrictions permitting.

Action:

Ruth to look into whether other schools have used a ¼ mile exclusion zone initiate

Ruth to liaise with Velocity re. sustrans funding

Fiona / Ruth to follow up on Bike Bus information.

Fiona to explore Bikeability options at this time.

AOB

Claire will be following up with AKCC on various new projects including an Avoch community orchard (past the old schoolhouse) and a proposed Community Larder. Funding is already in place to get the larder set up in a similar fashion to that of Muir of Ord.

Ruth hopes to see more involvement from our three elected members in APC meetings and activities. Other APCs routinely invite their members to meetings. Ruth had a useful discussion with Di Agnew (our HC Ward Manager) recently and was advised to start extending invitations to our meetings or at least to share the Minute with councilors afterwards. The councilors themselves (across Highland) had already raised this as they thought it could be beneficial. Lorna agreed that this would certainly be useful for tricky situations like the one we have currently with the construction site. There was support for this idea amongst the committee and Ruth will follow this up with Jennifer Barclay and other councillors.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is our AGM and will be on Monday 5th October, via Google Meet.

Appendix 1 – TREASURER'S REPORT

AVOCH PARENT COUNCIL

TREASURER REPORT

9th Sept 2020

Opening balance as at 27th May 2020

£17,271.80

Income

P7 School trip deposit refund (holding)

£1,100.00

£1,100.00 Total Income

Expenditure

Resources packs - support in lockdown

£446.99

Unicycle - plastic boxes

£35.00

P7 leavers hoodie

£16.95

£498.94 Total Expenditure

Closing balance as at 20th July 2020

£17,872.86

£13,037.23 (Play equipment fund)

£1,100.00 (P7 Trip Deposit Refund)

£3,735.63 Net Total

Outstanding Items:

	Income	Expenditure
Cheque – Kate		£80.00
		<u>£80.00</u> Total

£3,655.63 Net Total

Playground equipment funds	
Funder	Total
APC	£5,000.00
Raddery Trust	£5,000.00
BIG Stall	£454.01
Envoy	£250.00
Ross-shire Engineering	£250.00
Avoch Harbour Chippy	£60.00
Tullochs	£500.00
Christmas Raffles	£1,523.22
Total	13037.23