



MINUTES

Avoch Primary School Parent Council

Monday, 22nd June 2020 | 7.00PM

In Attendance by Zoom

Ruth Edmonds (Chair), Inga Ballantyne, Phoebe Dickinson, Claire Weaver, Jacqui Dingwall, Asia Kucharczyk, Fiona Whyte, Debbie du Preez, Ingrid Robertson, Wendy Lambie, Kirsty Cameron, Wanda Clark and Lorna Sim.

Philip Wilson, Estates Co-Ordinator, Highland Council

Apologies

Rebeca Rawlinson, Stef Rankine.

Minutes from last meeting

The Minutes were covered rapidly (and then only partially) to allow Philip from Highland Council to join in discussion regarding the playground update.

Inga confirmed that the Wicksteed quote for the playground equipment still stands and now has a breakdown of what is covered by the guarantee. Wicksteed can offer an annual inspection for £60pa or an accompanied inspection.

Nursery Build and School Grounds: Update from Philip Wilson, Highland Council

Remedial Works to Playground

Philip confirmed that the green light had now been given for William Gray Ltd to start work on remedial works to the disturbed area in the playground at the front of the school. This will include the removal of hard core and stones before laying new topsoil and turf and will allow a (tight) six weeks growing period before school resumes in August. The finished surface will be suitable for children to play on as would be expected in school grounds. The HC Facilities Management (FM) Team are aware of the problem and have confirmed that all such future works will now require a permit of works. Ruth noted the frustration and concerns of APC over this matter.

Flooding and waterlogging

Other issues regarding the school grounds were then raised. Ingrid and Fiona noted that water and sediment are running from the building site across the road, down the hill and impacting the school grounds, particularly the pitch and the path. Philip was asked if the council had a plan as to how this could be remedied. Ruth noted that some parent/carers have flagged this issue with her and that as the pitch is already waterlogged, it was not acceptable. Ingrid noted the serious issue of the ongoing flooding of the pitch area and wider school grounds. This needs resolved as a priority and Ingrid asked PW if the council would provide drainage to remedy this. It was noted that the council must address the issue of drainage across the pitch as it is unusable for most of the school year and there is limited space in the playground for outside play. This will be even more important once the nursery construction starts and further reduces the available play space. PW confirmed that he had seen the pitch and was aware of the problem. Philip was asked whether this could be funded by compensation for the problems with the construction site and if he could help with this issue. Ruth stressed the need for answers with regard to compensation and for the wider disruption. PW noted that it would have been expected that the planning consent for the new housing would

include sufficient drainage to ensure that this was not happening, and he agreed to look into the problem and think of a strategy to tackle both the general waterlogging and the water run-off. He agreed that some of the problems were not just from the construction, but the negotiation about any 'compensation' for the school which should have happened during the planning application process for it to be captured as a stipulation in the planning consent. Ultimately, the WGC submitted all necessary plans and these were signed off by THC's planning department and have been followed. However, the consent and access agreement may not have cascaded all the way down to local Estates / the school. The new permit to work scheme will help ensure this doesn't happen again. PW agreed to come back to discuss further, especially with regard to a compensation strategy. However, he wasn't clear if wider drainage issues across the pitch would fall under the councils Capital Works budget or the ELC budget (ELC = 'Early Learning and Childcare Capital Budget', i.e. Nursery Builds). Although this is a grey area, Philip agreed to push for it to be included as ELC. He will look at costs and pursue a resolution. This may include speaking to other council teams, such as the THC Community Services Team who deal with soft landscaping issues and might be able to advise.

Nursery

This was to have been completed by December 2020, however it has been delayed and the 24-week construction schedule will begin in January 2021. PW confirmed that this remains a high-priority project and the delay was made under the guidance of Lorna Sim as the original schedule was not compatible with the start of school and the arrangements that were being made for Covid19-related physical-distancing, etc. This would result in the new nursery opening in August 2021. There is a requirement associated with the planning consent to improve the car-park - with the ownership also reverting to the Highland Council (it has been leased to the Sea Scouts). The improved surface will be a mix of tarmac and gravel (as it can't be fully tarmacked because of drainage issues). Ruth asked that PW also looks at including improved lighting in the car park.

Playground project

This had been scheduled for installation following the nursery build and Inga enquired if this could be brought forward in light of the revised nursery schedule. Would it be possible to install the play equipment in the October holidays and before the nursery construction started? PW indicated that this may be an option and he would investigate further. He notes that it would require a permit for works from the FM team.

Inga confirmed that the funding for this is now all in place. The APC now need to write a proposal and check list which Wanda will review and send off to the Highland Council. There was a slight query regarding the installation as Wicksteed are not on the council's (approved contractor) framework, but this can hopefully be worked-around. PW will confirm the correct route for the final sign-off. Further discussion on this matter will be required in due course.

(The above discussions ended when Philip's connection became unstable and he could no longer participate).

Actions:

Inga to write a proposal for a revised play equipment installation schedule. PW will advise.

Ruth to pursue the discussions on compensation and drainage with Lorna

Philip to respond re. points of follow up above.

Report from the School, Lorna Sim

At the time of the meeting, Plan A was to be a part-return to school with two 'bubbles' and pupils attending two longer days a week to achieve around 50% of teacher-time and 50% home-learning. However, this was expected to change imminently. Government guidance had been changing continually and the school, especially Lorna, have been working hard to formulate a successful and safe return to learning.

All information about the return to school, classes, staggered times, bubbles, buses, teachers and classrooms will be sent out later this week. This will be accompanied by a Q+A booklet for the school and the Nursery covering the expected main issues and queries from parents/carers. There are two Google Meetings planned the following week so that Lorna could respond directly to queries from parents/carers.

(Limited additional discussion followed that was based on predicted or speculative guidance and this was not minuted at Lorna's request).

Claire thanked Lorna on behalf of APC for all her work to resolve this increasingly complex issue.

Polycrub project, Ingrid

Ingrid is leading on this project and summarised the proposal and the work carried out so far. A polycrub is a robust hybrid of a greenhouse and a polytunnel and would provide an opportunity to have covered outdoor space for growing food and for other outdoor activities / use as an alternative learning space. Any food grown would be offered to the wider school community for consumption. It is hoped that use of this feature would become an integral part of curricular activities. The location is tentatively proposed for the flatter area near the Sea-Scout building. A resolution to the pitch-flooding issues in this regard is also necessary.

Funding is being sought and will start with an application to Foundation Scotland in July and another to the Co-op and then to the Pebble Trust in due course. The costs for a 4m x 12m Polycrub and for kitting it out are expected to be at least £5.7k. Wanda is the school lead on this matter and Ingrid asked for additional volunteers to help with the funding applications and to suggest alternative funding bodies where a tailored application could be made.

Action: Ruth to share the draft proposal.

Unicycle Scheme, Ruth

The Unicycle scheme will be taken on by Carrie Mudge on behalf of APC. It is proposed that it is promoted principally as having excellent green credentials. Carrie has written a User Guide (which was reviewed by Ruth and Fiona and approved by committee) and an order form was also proposed. Promotion will be via the Unicycle facebook page and the Avoch Primary School (Parent Council) page. It's a great resource and more should be made of it.

Action: Unicycle to be promoted on Facebook during the holidays so that donated items are ready to be sent out before the start of term.

Treasurer's Report and Fundraising discussion, Claire

Our funds are looking healthy at the moment, but it is important to note that our usual fundraising opportunities are not possible this year. The Summer Fair will not be happening and there remains the possibility that there will be no discos or even a Christmas fair this year. Although we have now covered the playground project costs and the ongoing costs for this,, there is not much wiggle room for anything else. A fundraising committee was proposed, though this will be better left till the next meeting. It was noted that the pandemic lockdown will have a significant impact in this regard as priorities will have changed and acquiring funds will be more competitive.

Some ideas were discussed briefly such as not running any fundraising events and simply asking upfront if anyone was able and willing to make a contribution. Claire will check whether we have an option for someone to make a donation via BACS. Additionally, it may be an idea to ask for a donation (not a set price) for Unicycle items. However as there is a uniform policy at school, should we be providing Unicycle as a free service? It was noted that other schools have raised a good income this way. Further discussion will be required as consensus was not reached in this regard.

Action:

Claire to check with bank whether BACS donation is possible.

Debbie to consider wording for fundraising to add to Unicycle Guide - if this is to be pursued.
All to consider ideas for fundraising for 2020.

AOB

Iona MacMillan has stepped down from the committee and Phoebe will now replace her as the APC social media officer.

Lorna has applied for funding from the Safer Routes to Schools to help with an Avoch cyclepath.

Next Meeting

Venue and date of the next meeting will be confirmed once the new school routine has settled in (whatever that may be).

Appendix 1 – TREASURER’S REPORT

AVOCH PARENT COUNCIL		TREASURER REPORT		22nd June 2020	
Opening balance as at 20th March 2020				£16,939.23	
<u>Income</u>					
The Giving Machine			£17.57		
Bauer Radio Cash (MFR)			£315.00	£332.57	Total Income
<u>Expenditure</u>					
				£0.00	Total Expenditure
Closing balance as at 27th May 2020				£17,271.80	
				£13,037.23	(Play equipment fund)
				£4,234.57	Net Total
Outstanding Items:					
	Income	Expenditure			
Cheque – Kate		£80.00			
Cheque - Fiona		£446.99			
Cheque - Gilmour Sports		£16.95			
Cheque - Catherine		£35.00			
		£578.94	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