

DRAFT Minute of a General Meeting of the Dounby Community School Parent Group held on 16 May 2013

Present:	Jane Beckwith	Alex Clark (Chair)
	Lorraine Cormack	Anna Davidson
	Steve Durkin	Geraldine Ferguson (Clerk)
	Dawn Flett	Alastair Forsyth (Head Teacher)
	Katrina Gray	Michelle Hill
	Shenagh Leiper	Suzanne Lyon
	Tracey Miller	Margaret Sinclair
	Corina Taylor	

1. Chair's welcome and apologies

Apologies had been received from EmmaJane Rendall.

- 2.** The chair welcomed **Anne Harrison, Orkney Islands Council's Catering Manager**, who had been invited to talk about the thinking and procedures behind the school lunch menus. The invitation had come about because of a previous discussion on healthy weight issues. During that discussion, it had been mentioned that school meals were actively promoted by health professionals, teachers and local authority staff as a way of ensuring that children's nutritional needs were met and their appetites satisfied. This confidence in the benefits of school meals owed a lot to the strict regulation imposed by the new Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008. Parents had made the point that they did not know enough about the new rules and the way they were implemented within the school, and so the decision had been taken to invite Anne.

Anne began by explaining that she was not a dietician, and that she used a special nutritional analysis software programme to check that all of the school menus in Orkney complied with the 2008 Regulations. In practical terms, this meant ensuring that they 'balanced' nutritionally over the course of a week. The school meals staff would prepare the menus, based on their knowledge of the regulations, and Anne would pass the data through the programme to see if the particular combination of menu items proposed for each week met the standards.

Members were curious to hear more about the regulations, and in particular which foods were encouraged and which restricted. Anne explained that:

- Menus must not contain more than three deep-fried items in a single week (including chips). This includes products which are deep-fried in the manufacturing process, e.g. oven chips.
- Chips, if served, must be served as part of a meal.
- Additional salt cannot be provided.
- Condiments (if provided, e.g. ketchup) should be dispensed in no more than 10ml portions.
- Confectionery cannot be provided. This means that milk, plain and white chocolate, chocolate flakes, chocolate buttons and chocolate chips cannot be used in desserts, but only cocoa powder.
- No savoury snacks can be provided except savoury crackers, oatcakes or breadsticks.
- As regard drinks, the only drinks permitted in schools are:
 - Plain water
 - Skimmed, semi-skimmed milk and other lower fat milks
 - Milk drinks and drinking yoghurts
 - Fruit juices and vegetable juices (fruit juices have to have no added sugar, no more than 20g of sugar per portion size, and 50% or more fruit or vegetable juice)
 - Soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium

On a more positive note, a choice of at least two types of vegetables and two types of fruit (not including fruit juice) must be provided every day; oily fish has to be provided at least once every three weeks and children are to be encouraged to fill up on additional bread rather than on second portions of more calorific foods which might lead to obesity.

Anne also confirmed that budgets for school meals were set by the Council and that each school had its own budget and had to work within it. She also explained that the school meals services in each school were inspected as part of the normal school inspection process, with this role being carried out, not by the main school inspector, but by a lay inspector qualified in nutrition.

The closing discussion centred on the perennial problem that it was difficult to please all parents and all children. A pupil survey was due to be distributed to all schools the following day, which was to be completed by the children in the classroom. Anne assured parents that it was the aim of each school to come up with menus that catered for the tastes of as many children as possible, but the problem with choice was that children could not be forced to choose the healthiest options from, say, the salad bar. School meals staff were trained to encourage children to try new things by allowing them to taste things, and also to encourage children to 'eat up' items which tended to be left on plates. However, in the long run attitudes could only change through health promotion efforts by parents, teachers and school meals staff.

The chair thanked Anne for attending and for providing a very valuable insight into the level of thought and work which went into producing a termly menu.

The meeting proper continued after Anne Harrison's departure.

3. Approval of minute of last meeting (21 February 2012)

The clerk apologised for the fact that the minute gave the wrong dates for the birth and death of James Robert Smith.

Alastair referred to the first bullet point in the section on the New Anti-bullying Policy and invited members to consider whether the wording of the part in brackets was unfortunate in that it suggested that his only response to the issue raised by the parent had been to say that playground staff needed training. The clerk apologised for the wording and confirmed that in summarising the discussion she had inadvertently left out the first part of Alastair's response to the parent. It was agreed that Alastair had actually said that this was not the ideal way to report a bullying issue, and that while children should report bullying concerns to any member of staff, parents should raise concerns with the class-teacher in the first instance.

It was agreed that the minute should be amended to correct both these inaccuracies. Subject to these amendments, the minute was approved as an accurate record, proposed by Corina Taylor and seconded by Steve Durkin.

4. Matters arising from minute

Following on from the talk she gave at the previous meeting, Shenagh Leiper confirmed that the latest statistics for Orkney revealed that the county had the highest obesity levels for Primary Ones in Scotland. This led to a brief discussion on the method of measuring obesity levels, with some parents feeling that the BMI method was not the best way to do it and with concerns again being raised about the tone and content of the letter routinely sent out to inform parents of their child's levels. Shenagh explained that school nurses had put a lot of thought into the format of the letter but had not been able to come up with anything better. She suggested inviting school nurse, Vicky Anderson, to come along to speak to Parent Group, and it was felt that it might be useful to have parent input into the future wording of the letter.

At this point the group also discussed the way forward following the talk by Anne Harrison. It was agreed that a small sub-group would work with the school catering staff on producing a questionnaire for parents (with the survey possibly being done on Sports Day) in an attempt to see if there were any issues with the menus and promote the school meals service.

5. Correspondence received by chair

None to report.

6. Friends of Dounby School update

Nothing to report.

7. Matters arising from Head Teacher's Report for May 2013

Pupil numbers

Alastair confirmed that the best option for the school come August was two parallel, composite Primary 1/2 classes with Primary Three to Primary Seven being organised in single cohort classes. Even though this was the preferred option there was a financial issue at Council level that had still to be resolved. Alastair was hopeful that in the end the go ahead would be given for a new teacher to be recruited

A request had also been put in for two new support for learning assistant posts.

To the question of whether the new composite classes would stay composited all the way up through the school, Alastair responded that he would still not be able to answer that question until he knew whether the school would be getting an additional teacher.

8. Anti-bullying Policy for final approval

The policy was approved by the group.

9. Play Dounby – update on work of working group

The working group reported that there was one main question to be decided before any applications for funding could even be considered. This was the question of whether the group, in order to protect its members from financial exposure, would need to become a company limited by guarantee with all the advantages of Limited liability. The drawback with parent group remaining as an unincorporated organisation was that, in law, these kinds of association are seen as just groups of individuals. Therefore, if at any point the group ran into financial difficulties, the individual members of the association could become personally liable. If Parent Group were to decide to become a company limited by guarantee then:

- group members' liability would be limited to the sum which they would guarantee to pay if the company went into liquidation (normally £1)
- the company would be a clear legal entity, separate from the people involved in it and could therefore hold property, enter into leases and other contracts, employ people, etc. in its own name
- the new company might be regarded by funding bodies and public agencies as a more stable structure than an unincorporated parent group

Advice had been taken from Voluntary Action Orkney and it appeared that the advantages of leaving things the way they were might outweigh the disadvantages of becoming incorporated. Disadvantages included:

- formal registration procedures would have to be followed which would take time and might involve legal expenses
- there would be an ongoing requirement to notify a change in directors, a change in company secretary, or a change in the registered office, to Companies House
- annual accounts and returns would have to be filed with Companies House

- various statutory requirement in relation to members meetings and principles of company law would have to be met

It was felt that if Parent group (or, more precisely, those who would sign the applications on its behalf, i.e. the office bearers) were to go ahead with funding applications for the play park project, they were unlikely to have significant responsibilities, e.g. owning property, ongoing management of large amounts of money, employing staff, paying salaries or taking on legal service contracts. This was a one-off project and the group's main challenge would be to ensure that the requirements of the funders and conditions of funding were met and, very importantly, that cash flow was managed so that no purchases were made or work undertaken without the means to pay for them being in place. Alastair confirmed that the school should be able to take responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the play park once completed.

During the discussion that followed, the clerk pointed out to group members that the group's own constitution appeared to offer the group adequate protection from personal liability in the event of debt (without the need to go down the route of incorporation). She read out paragraph 4 of the Appendix to the Constitution which states: "The members of the Parent Council do not incur personal liability for anything done, or purportedly done, in the exercise of its statutory functions if it was done in good faith."

It was therefore agreed that the group did not wish to proceed down the incorporation route and that group members accepted the need for cautious and responsible exercise of the powers already given to them in the constitution, under the protection also given to them in the constitution.

A plan of the proposed revamped play park was circulated, but the sub-group advised that some considerable work was still to be done, including a survey/community consultation, quotations to be obtained, and background information to be gathered before any grant application forms could be sent off. It was agreed to continue to progress these things and to work towards completing grant application forms, if possible, during the summer holidays. Possible new sources of funding/help in kind mentioned were Scottish-Hydro-Electric, the Co-Op and local solicitors firms.

10. Agenda items for next meeting

Vicky Anderson to be invited to next meeting to discuss BMI testing for Primary Ones.

11. Any other competent business

A member reported that a parent had asked about whether lighting could be installed along the path that ran across the playing fields adjacent to the football pitch to make the pathway more accessible in the darker evenings. Alastair agreed to look into this.

A member asked whether the school accepted responsibility for children's safety in the playground on occasions when the school transport arrived at school before quarter to nine, the time from which the playground is officially supervised. Alastair agreed that this did happen on occasion and that he had brought it to the attention of the school transport officials at the Council. He also confirmed that the school would be deemed to be responsible for safety on these occasions, although the school could not be legally responsible for the safety of children dropped off by parents or carers when the playground was not officially supervised.

12. Date of next meeting

There being no other competent business the meeting concluded at 8.45 pm after it had been agreed that the next meeting would be held on 12 September 2013 at 7pm.