

Glen Urquhart High School

Parent Council meeting

19th April 2023. 7pm

Present: Donald MacRae DM Head Teacher

Alan Hood AH Chairperson

Deirdre Hart DH Secretary

Jill Hodge JH Treasurer

Brad Garrison BG

Dave Cooper DC

Susanna Edwards SE

Katie Keating KK

Lorraine Young LY

Grainne Ballantyne GB

Wendy Urwin WU

Amanda Graham AG

Debbie MacKinnon DMK

Anne Dyce AD

1. Welcome

AH welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received from Amanda Luscombe Smith, Karen Simpson and Gillian Denovan.

2. Approval of minutes of 15th February 2023 meeting.

AH proposed the minutes and LY seconded.

3. Matters arising.

AH raised various matters arising.

DM confirmed review of bus monitor protocol was ongoing.

DM confirmed evaluation of school show had been carried out and the response was largely positive. Details are to be decided with discussion with relevant staff this term. DH noted auditions are usually held in June and main cast roles awarded before the summer break so the details would need to be agreed soon. AH stressed how important the show is to the whole community as well as for the school. DM advised timing of the show would be discussed. DH and

AG commented that they understood the timing had always been early December so as to avoid the busy Christmas period and the exam terms.

AG confirmed they are still waiting for a price from Loch Ness Inn for the Leavers' meal .

JH confirmed we are still to arrange to add Amanda Luscombe Smith as a cheque signatory.

4. Correspondence

DH noted email correspondence AH has had with Highland Council re the Head Teacher post, which we will discuss later in the agenda. HPCP has also shared generic information about the HT recruitment process and a training webinar was available on the interview process. It is understood a recorded version of the webinar would be made available.

5. Treasurer's report.

JH presented the report as follows:

GUHS – Parent Council

Treasurer Update 19th April 2023

Opening Balance (Feb 2023) £3576.78

Receipts

2023 Leavers Fundraising from S6 (Mar): £174.88

Highland Council Parent Council Grant (Feb): £230.60

Payments Made

TO Tesco (DH) – Eggs for School Easter Run (Mar): £111.00

Closing Balance (Feb 2023) £3871.26

Payments Due

Less monies being held for 2023 Leavers: £966.82

Less monies being held from 2020 leavers fundraising: £338.44

Less monies due for Drama (Grant) for school: £490.00

Account balance available to Parent Council £2076.00

DH noted that a small donation towards the Easter eggs for the cross country run was made through the Tesco Community Champion.

Amanda LS has priced some benches for drama at approximately £70 each.

6. Grants.

AH noted we would need to carry forward the study bus grant and check the remaining budget and give feedback.

Re the Soirbheas Duke of Edinburgh award grant, AH advised equipment was being purchased and receipts would be needed and feedback to be given.

7. Head Teacher's report.

Headteacher Report

It continues to be a pleasure in leading our school. I am continuing to build relationships and connections with the community and partners as we prepare for another busy and important term and year ahead.

Staffing

Unfortunately, Mr Pearson (Physics & Science) and Mr McAndrew (PE) are moving on after the summer. Mr McMillan comes to the end of his probationer period with us this summer. All three teachers have contributed a great deal to the school, not just in the classroom but in the wider activities offered to our young people - they will be greatly missed. Steps are already in place to recruit replacements.

Looking back

During the first part of March all S2 students took part in 'Hill to Grill' a novel collaboration between the school, Glen Affric Estate, NTS and other partners, supported by Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).

As part of supporting our community, we were able to contribute provisions to the local food larder.

We have worked with universities to look at how we can strengthen our partnerships, the result is that we can now look at enhancing our offer to students.

I attend my first Parent information evening for S4-6. This was well attended and thanks to the Parent Council for serving teas/coffees. Evaluation of the event was very positive with over 90% saying they

felt the event was informative; that staff knew the students as individuals and school reports were informative. Areas for improvement will include looking at developing homework along with supporting home learning; consideration for a timer between appointments and to review support.

We held a couple of information sessions on subject choices, with one focussing on the wide array of course offers available to those in S4-6. Both formed part of our Subject options process – an evaluation of this is going out shortly.

In March we welcomed a Scottish Government advisor to support our continual work on school improvement, particularly around school-based data. This will help to better inform us on our review of the curricular model for Glenurquhart High School.

Student Success

The school continues to celebrate student successes both in and out of school. I was pleased that this was also recognised during the last Highland Council Education Committee.

In March, students took part in football, basketball and volleyball games with Millburn and Dingwall Academies. I am pleased to say that we won against Dingwall.

At the end of term I had the pleasure in joining a number of parents in our Easter Concert and Art display, this was a lovely opportunity to listen to our incredibly talented students.

We continue to celebrate our success through our social media channels and now, I hope, my monthly Newsletter.

Looking Forward

The summer term is a vital term for our senior phase students as they finalise assessments and sit final SQA examinations. Preparations are well underway, and we are thankful to all our invigilators for supporting our young people. Timetables and rooming sheets have been shared with all students. Students will continue to be supported through what can be a challenging time.

A wide range of school trips will take place this year, including trips to Spain, Germany, Paris and London. Preparations for activities week for those in S1-3 in late May is well underway. Following these trips, we will review and evaluate the impact they have.

Work has already started in evaluating our progression with this session's School Improvement Plan (SIP) and along with conversations and discussions with young people, staff, parents, and school partners we will draw together the SIP for session 23/24.

I mentioned in my last report that I felt that we need to review our curricular offer. From speaking with our young people, parents, and staff, along with analysing our performance data, we need to continue this journey. This term I intend to hold a series of 'big conversations' to discuss what changes, if any, should be made to further build on our student success. Critically, we must ensure that we retain what is working well for our students. Ultimately, we want to create 'The Glen Urquhart Offer' for all our students.

There followed general discussion on staffing and replacements, the Reach project, the rurality consideration in a pathway to university.

8. Routine maintenance of theatre and planning.

DH noted an understanding that the Mitie contract for school maintenance was due to end in the next year or so and that the theatre, and particularly the lighting, was in need of upgrading and replacement of parts, and there was concern to have this done before Mitie's responsibility ended. DM confirmed the Mitie contract has been extended, he thinks until 2027. Work has already begun on the handover as it will take a number of years. Mitie must leave the building fully operational. DM keen to work with other users. He is already arranging for sound equipment to be repaired.

There was agreement it was essential to retain the status of the community theatre, having it helps the school have interaction with the community, as well as the benefit to the pupils of having a proper performance space .

9. Senior phase subject choices and school's approaches and aims.

KK spoke of her concern and disappointment at the limited subject choice for senior phase pupils. The school is losing pupils because of this, pupils who contribute greatly to the school, not just academically but in many other areas. KK spoke from her knowledge and experience as a Head of Department in an Inverness school. It is possible to have mixed classes with several different levels in class at once. It is possible to offer a variety of courses, especially with all the resources available online. She shared charts and plans to show what can be achieved.

DH, AD and DMK all commented that their children have or are still struggling to get the subjects they want and others concurred. The final column of the choices seems to be particularly problematic.

DM confirmed this was the first issue he identified in the school as needing to be addressed. He is passionate about learner pathways and he wants to make changes to the curriculum to ensure pathways for all. Curricular change is a massive operation and requires conversation and engagement with pupils, staff and community. DC asked how we compare with other schools of a similar size. DM has highlighted other schools for staff to have "good practice visits". He has ingathered option forms from other schools. It was acknowledged there are of course limitations in smaller schools, with fewer staff and resources. It was recognised we have resources within our community to engage with to offer a broader curriculum. KK and Amanda LS for example. To move forward, DM would like to get a group of parents and staff together and we must recognise needs are changing. DM was pleased to hear this issue being discussed. KK believes with creative thinking there is potential for a much wider subject choice to be offered.

10. Schoolwear made easy.

DH explained she has been contacted by the school office about the "Direct to school" ordering option for school uniforms. DH contacted Schoolwear made easy for more information, but no price list was available yet. The "Direct to school" option would mean school collates

orders and payments and bulk stock is delivered back to school for distribution. It can be cheaper for parents and can be a fundraiser for the school. AG confirmed they use this system in Cannich and it does raise funds. It was agreed we should carry this forward pending a review of the dress code/uniform policy in the school.

11. Update re HT post.

AH confirmed the terms of email correspondence from HC and it was agreed this was unsatisfactory, from the point of view of content and communication. The post is being readvertised with a closing date of 1st May and any applications already received deemed suitable would be carried forward. There was uncertainty as to what this might mean. AG explained it is possible applications may not have fully met the criteria for being a HT but passage of time might allow those to qualify to be put forward. BG expressed disappointment that AH is continually having to chase HC for updates and responses and noted we still have no clarification (*as at the time of the meeting*) re the Deputy HT post. It was unsatisfactory for the school to have acting posts in senior management positions and shows a lack of professionalism from HC. AH has been focussed on getting clarity re the HT post. It was thought HC would want to have HT post confirmed before appointing Deputy HT. AD confirmed concern re uncertainty in the staffing generally with acting posts and vacancies in the science department.

HC should be asked what assurances they can offer Parent Council.

12. A.O.B

Leavers' event: Amanda LS and Karen Simpson were going to take over from AG but Karen can no longer do it. AD offered to help. They have done a lot of fundraising. AG needs to know the number of pupils leaving.

AH noted this is Lorraine's last meeting and thanked her for her contributions and help.

BG asked re fundraising generally. We did used to have a fundraising schedule which we looked at and updated each meeting. AH advised it was generally thought if the balance was around the £2000 mark we were okay and did not need to fundraise...however there is often a social element to fundraising aswell which is important for the school community. We would put it on the agenda for the next meeting and discuss any particular needs the school might have and what we could do to fundraise.

DH noted PC insurance renewal used be sent out in April to the school, although renewal may now be July so again we can check at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting 14th June 2023.

