

## **Aberdeen Grammar School Parent Council Minutes of Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

Present; Alasdair Stevenson (Chair), Graham Legge (Rector), Alan Cassie (Parent Member), Neill Renton (Parent Member), Abeer Helmi (Parent Member), Sheila Wallace (Parent Member), Joyce Tease (Staff Member), Gill Graham (FP Representative)

Apologies; Councillor Bill Cormie, Councillor Jenny Laing, Councillor Jennifer Stewart, Anna Bokedal (Parent Member), Ray Riddoch (Parent Member), Euan Mearns

### **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

In the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011, Ray Riddoch was shown as having been absent but he had, in fact, been present. Subject to this correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 were proposed by Neil Renton and seconded by Alan Cassie.

### **Actions from the Last Meeting**

There were no specific actions from the last meeting. The Chair was sure that anything carried forward from the last meeting would be picked up as the items on the agenda were discussed.

### **Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)**

A. Stevenson stated that CfE appeared to have polarised parents not only at Aberdeen Grammar School but across the city. There appeared to be very little middle ground – parents were either very much in favour of it or very much against it. At the moment there appeared to be a lot of concern about the choices being made by S1 pupils who were moving into S2 but he thought that there would be concerns at other stages in future as the first pupils to follow CfE moved through the school.

The Rector felt that the majority of parents at the Grammar were in favour of CfE and that it was a vocal minority who opposed it. It was important to bear in mind that the Grammar was implementing CfE in such a way that it would benefit the majority of the pupils.

### **Parental Involvement**

It appeared that Aberdeen City Council was beginning to move slowly towards having parental representation on the Education, Culture & Sport Committee and a paper on this would be put forward to either the next meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June or the following one. A. Stevenson who is also Chair of the Aberdeen City Parent Councils Forum said that, although this was good news, it would probably be some time before a parent was a member of the committee because several councillors were very much against it.

### **ACC Budget Cuts**

A. Stevenson reported that the Aberdeen City Parent Councils Forum had held a meeting with Councillors Callum McCaig, Jenny Laing, Mairi Boulton and Jim Farquharson on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to discuss various issues relating to education in Aberdeen.

One of the items which was discussed was the reduction in PSAs in schools. Initial plans had been to reduce PSAs by an average of 50% across the city but after considering it again ACC had decided to make the reduction an average of 33% across the city. All of the members of the ACPCF were against the reduction and had asked Councillor McCaig to reconsider it – he had

agreed to do so but had said that he did not think that anything could be done because the savings had to be made somewhere.

A. Stevenson commented that the PSA reductions were more severe in some schools than others and that some schools, particularly those in deprived areas, had hardly suffered at all. G. Legge stated that AGS had suffered a 68% reduction in PSA provision which had previously been 160 hours. He was currently going through the Redundancy Assessment Procedure with the staff who were affected. There would also be a 30% reduction in ASN teachers, i.e. there would be one teacher for every ten pupils in the ASN base instead of the one teacher for every seven pupils at present.

The school was required to make a saving of £27,000 from its administration budget and had been left with the choice of either making its Support Services Manager redundant or being left with an undermanned office which it felt was unworkable. It had had no alternative but to make its Support Services Manager redundant. This meant that senior staff in the school would once again have to take responsibility for matters such as Health & Safety.

The positions of the main teachers were safe at the moment, although they had seen class sizes increase and would probably continue to do so.

A. Stevenson stated that Councillor Callum McCaig had expressed an interest in getting to know the schools across the city and suggested that it might be worthwhile inviting to him to the next meeting. Everyone agreed that this would be helpful and A. Stevenson, therefore, undertook to send an invitation to him. **Action: A. Stevenson**

### **Rector's Report**

The school had been successful in obtaining funding for extra-curricular activities from the Amenities Fund.

The school had also received a donation of £3,000 from the estate of a former pupil which had to be used for coaching cricket via the FP Club.

Four of the five sixth-year pupils who were undertaking the Open University YASS Scheme had passed. The remaining pupil was still working through it. This gave them a Level 1 Open University qualification. The subjects which could be studied were Film Studies, Law and Maths for Medicine.

Next year sixth-year pupils would be given the opportunity to study under the Aberdeen University Distance & Flexible Learning in Science programme. Ellon Academy had been offering the programme to its sixth-year pupils this year but Aberdeen Grammar School would be the only school in the city offering it.

Under the programme, pupils would be able to study one or more science subjects using distance learning. By studying a science subject at Advanced Higher level and under the programme, a pupil would gain a first-year University credit and this could possibly mean that they would be able to miss out the first year at University.

The credit could be transferred to any Scottish university. Practical courses would be held at Aberdeen University on a Saturday.

In the first year that the programme had been introduced at Ellon Academy, five or six sixth-year pupils had taken part in it. However, next year there would be twenty sixth-year pupils from Ellon Academy taking part.

When they joined the programme, pupils became fully-matriculated students. The programme could be seen as part of a move towards blended learning at schools and universities.

All of the Parents Information Evenings had now been held with the S1 into S2 and S5 into S6 ones being held recently.

All pupils had been successful in getting either their first or second subject choices.

The draft timetable was now out with the faculty heads for consultation.

The school had successfully staged a production of Hamlet, which had been produced entirely by sixth-year pupils, in the school hall on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March.

The intake from the Grammar's feeder primary schools for 2011-12 would be 140 pupils.

However, ACC had, again, capped the intake at 210 pupils and this would allow 70 out-of-zone pupils to gain admission to the school.

The school had two new chaplains, Rev. Diane Hobson of St. Marks and Rev. Graham Taylor of St. Mary's.

Interviews had taken place on 31<sup>st</sup> March for a Principal Teacher for the Faculty of Science. Mr. Mark Stage had been appointed and would be taking up his post at the beginning of the new session in August 2011.

There had been a serious fire in the groundsman's hut at the Rubislaw Field. A tractor and a considerable amount of sports kit had been destroyed, including cricket kit, rugby kit and football nets, some of it belonging to the FP Club. It appeared that the tractor was insured because it was classed as a vehicle – however, none of the sports kit was insured because ACC was unable to obtain cover at economical rates. Early indications were that ACC did not have a budget allocation with which to replace the lost sports kit. This was unfortunate because the cricket season had just begun and the school cricket team had been left without any kit.

The Senior Boys' Football Team had won two trophies – the J B Low Trophy and the Senior Football Trophy.

The school had held a music concert on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and it had been very well attended.

The Concert Band had won a gold award at the National Concert Band Festival which was held at the RSAMD in Glasgow on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

David McCreath had been selected to be a member of the Scottish team in the World Schools Debating Championships which would be held in Dundee in July.

There were proposals for fifth and sixth-year pupils from other schools across the city to attend Aberdeen Grammar School and Harlaw Academy for one afternoon per week to take subjects which their own schools were unable to offer. This would help the Grammar to preserve its relatively wide range of subjects and help preserve teaching posts.

### **Treasurer's Report**

A. Stevenson reported that the Bank of Scotland had now opened a bank account in the name of the Parent Council. He had provided the bank account details to Aberdeen City Council and had received an e-mail from them advising him that they had paid £1,078.35 in respect of the 2010-11 funding into the account on 5<sup>th</sup> April. He had not yet received a bank statement which showed the amount being credited to the account but was confident that the funds had been transferred.

### **AOCB**

- Aberdeen City Council would be holding a Family Fun Day at the Beach Ballroom on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May. There would be sessions on CfE, etc. for parents in the morning, a picnic at lunchtime and discounted entry to the Leisure Centre, etc. in the afternoon.

- For some time now, the Harlaw Academy Parent Council had been suggesting a joint meeting with them to discuss common issues. It was agreed that A. Stevenson should liaise with them to find a suitable date for a meeting. **Action: A. Stevenson**
- A. Stevenson reminded everyone that he had circulated the most recent electronic copy of Backchat on 19<sup>th</sup> March and had drawn attention to two interesting articles on changes in HMIe inspections and Scottish Borders Council trialling a 33-period week in order to maintain wide subject choice and maximise teacher contact time.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2011. This will be the final meeting of the current school year.