



<b>MINUTES OF THE PARENT COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2008</b>	<b>Action By</b>
<p><b><u>Present:</u></b>, Gilly Innes, Dawn Fernie, Andrew Zimmerman, Pippa Walls, Aileen Mackay, Marian Ward, Michelle Stewart, Vivienne Seeley, Gill Howard, Philip Lunts, Fiona McHoul, Elsa Patterson, Kerry Clark (clerk), Karen Jamieson, Gemma Hedridge, Christine Proudfoot, Britta Kalkreuter, Will Broome, Lesley Watters, Cllrs David Parker, Nicholas Watson, John Paton-Day</p> <p><b><u>Apologies:</u></b> Janice Douglas</p> <p>Introductions made</p>	
<p><b>TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b></p> <p>MS/GH – document difficult to understand, PC have questions for clarification: process for consultation – timescale 27 October with SBC councillors making decision 1 month later, how can it be done if there are major issues?</p> <p><i>JPD – Not fixed for November. Information/objections are being collated now – nothing yet set in stone, process still to be decided.</i></p> <p>MS/GH – Information missing for Parent Council to make decisions. Financial information was to be available July/Aug still not on website yet. The language of the document is a concern, uses professional content. Summary does not give a clear picture. Worries that people have to be of a certain educational level to even partly understand = discrimination. Not everyone has access to computer. Many people have no spare time to look into matter.</p> <p><i>DP – The education dept knew that services needed reviewed, due to budget restraints both now and in the future. This document was written for unions/parents/professional bodies. Cllr Parker will ask Glen Rodger to come along to answer any queries that the councillors cannot answer.</i></p> <p>MS – Information is required for Melrose Primary School before the Parent Council can assess the impact of proposed cuts and until we fully understand what's involved.</p> <p><i>DP – Consultation normally given 12 weeks. Transforming Children's Services has been given 20 weeks. Education Dept to have report so it can be presented to councillors in November. Delays are possible if further consultation is necessary.</i></p> <p><i>JPD – SBC looking to improve the method of education.</i></p> <p>GH – Appears to be budget cuts v changes.</p> <p>EP – How can losing Principal Teachers with all their skills and leadership qualities be better?</p> <p><i>DP – There is no issue of the quality and ability of Principal Teachers. Structure has other areas for PTs. Director of Education cannot afford Principal Teachers. Other authorities have seen no effect on pupil's education.</i></p> <p>MS – Melrose Primary School will have no permanent staff at PT level. How</p>	

much will this effect management and pupils if the proposals for 9 PTs are stretched over 15 schools?

*DP – The Director does not believe quality will be compromised.*

GH – Melrose is predicted to be the biggest primary school in the Borders by 2010 – is the expanding school role being taken into account?

*DP- Yes*

MS – Why are SBC using the old boundaries?

*DP – Unsure, will ask GR to respond.*

MS/GH – Many concerns at Melrose Primary School. Will we have a shared headship after 2010?

*JPD – Continual discussions at SBC level. Does not necessarily mean that changes will be automatically accepted.*

*DP – 2010 unlikely to be any changes regarding satellites etc. Permanent head teacher at Melrose. Presently there are shared headships due to problems in appointing head teachers.*

EP – Will removing PTs cause problems for getting DHTs and HTs in the future?

*DP – Education Dept feel strongly regarding the recommended PT cuts. Even if not having to make budget cuts would it still happen? Glen Rodger's professional judgement states they are unaffordable and not necessary.*

GH – Rural schools cost to SBC cannot be equal (per pupil ratio) to large schools? Surely economies of scale and better use of resources/curriculum must be seen by SBC?

*DP – SBC cannot alter the number of rural school due to the National Government policy.*

EP – Can Glen Rodger provide information as to which authorities he is basing his decisions on? Are they similar to us with some large and many rural schools eg Highland?

MS – Use of Borders Deprivation Index for calculating the Additional Needs budget. We need figures for comparison between current and future proposals. We want to make direct request for figures. Likely that Melrose will loose out. Councillors asked their opinions on BDI.

*NW – Less worried about this part of TCS than other areas. Budget will be split into thirds: school's need/learning community/central.*

MS – Social & Economic factors will not play a part for some of the additional needs of pupils eg Autistic.

*DP – It is to be a positive change for schools.*

MS – Understand that 3 year basis for allocation of funding will give stability, however if new pupils enrol with additional needs during that period are we stuck with the original budget?

*DP – Yes, budgets will be set to give people who work in this area more stability.*

MS – Introduction of the new Curriculum, not much information on Secondary Education. O Grades/Highers gone? However the new method of assessment has not yet been decided. Will video conferencing be used for lessons? View: too much to cope with – new curriculum, new structure, new budgets. Would one thing at a time not be better?

<p><i>NW – Yes, too much at once. Learning experience – will it be improved? SBC finding it hard to find good teachers now, will these changes make things less attractive for teaching in the Borders?</i></p> <p>MS – Decisions should be made for the right reasons, not just for budgets!</p> <p>EP – Could SBC increase council tax and use this increase for education only?</p> <p><i>DP – SBC only receive £460,000 in council tax. Increase required would be too large to justify.</i></p> <p><i>DP – Will try to ask staff at the Education Dept to meet with Melrose Parents/Parent Council.</i></p> <p><i>JPD – Some councillors are already stating that they will not agree to further cuts in DSM.</i></p> <p>PL – The Director’s feeling on the consultation will be presented to the full Council in November, when he will give his professional recommendation. The councillors will then have to decide whether to agree or not.</p> <p>Councillors Parker &amp; Paton- Day left at 7.30pm.</p> <p>Pippa thanked Michelle, Gill and Elsa for their time in pulling together the information and questions for tonight’s meeting.</p> <p><u>Where to we go now?</u></p> <p>Try to encourage parents to write themselves or use a draft letter. Get this out to parents this week. Send to councillors by email/post or contact them by phone with concerns. Maximum impact required for concerns to be heard. Time critical!</p>	
<p><b>CHANGES IN TIMING OF THE SCHOOL DAY</b></p> <p>Lessons learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Room for improvement in consultations</li> <li>• Agendas in advance of meetings so parents know ahead what will be discussed</li> <li>• Avoid Festival Week/Holiday periods, or provide longer periods if time frame is unavoidable.</li> <li>• Follow recommendations by SBC, school bag drop ok, possible use of Groupcall to highlight.</li> </ul> <p>Concerns from parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size of the letter</li> <li>• Timing – end of summer term (P7 switch off /nursery – new P1s)</li> <li>• Consultation process was not a consultation.</li> <li>• No response from School, Parent Council, or Scottish Borders Council to letter of concern. Councillor Parker only person who sent reply.</li> <li>• Points on letters not being addressed.</li> <li>• Working parents do not feel considered. That their feelings have “no voice” and they are “not being heard”</li> </ul>	

Consultations in schools to be given 28 days or 56 days over a holiday period. Leona Bendall provided Pippa with information. Gilly sought advice from Leona regarding process.

The proposal was made at the end of a long meeting and not given full consideration or discussion (due to discussion on budget cuts). This should have had fuller discussion before going out to parents. A policy must be drawn up so this does not happen again.

Communication from the Parent Council to parents appeared as a “done deal”. First letter didn’t give implication of a consultation. Second letter (4 days later) extended the consultation period to the end of August. There was no information on the school website or a newsletter reminder. Were the parents comments presented at the time of the vote? Are school management happy with a 32% response rate? What do you do about non responses? Letter of concerns from KJ to be circulated to Parent Council for comments. A meeting with parents should have been called at the outset.

Parents with issues have had discussions with the school management team, some issues have been resolved. Parents stated that some other people may not come forward as they do not want to upset the school or friends on the Parent Council.

Lunch hour structure – are parents aware of the procedures? Playground is the key reason for the changes (Yvonne McCracken, SBC). The older children will get the same amount of time as the younger ones. The children will also be given an additional break in the afternoon, though not all at the same time – inform parents of this.

Gilly has carried out research with other schools within SBC who have changed their hours, available to all. The School wishes to go ahead with the changes as agreed after the October holidays. More confusion would be caused if the decision was reversed with only 2 weeks to go. Many families have already made alterations to their arrangements to allow for the changing of the school day.

The Parent Council agreed that this would now be too difficult to reverse, but proposed a review in 6 months with opinions being sought from

- Pupils
- Teachers
- Parents
- Parent Council
- After School Clubs

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Wednesday 8 October 2008 at 6.30pm