

Hutchesons' Grammar School Association
Minute of the meeting held in The Founders' Room on 8th May 2017

Draft Minute

Present

Kenneth Ritchie (KR) (Chairman)	P2 – Lizette Craig (LC)
P1 – Ingrid Jauhar (IJ)	P6 – Audrey Mathers (AM)
P3 – Julia Lavelle (JL)	P7 – Karen Nolland (KN)
S1 – Roy Amner (RA)	S2 – Mark Toma (MT)
S5 – Faiza Khan (FK)	S4 Susan Redpath (SR)

In Attendance

Brian MacBride (FP)	The Rector (CG)
Fiona MacPhail (FM)	Mr Martin –Depute (MM)
Katy Chisholm (KC)	Kathryn Storrie (KS)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor B. Williams (BW), The Chairman of the Board of Governors, The Bursar (IK), Dr Khan S3, Mrs Sheikh P5 and Mr Campbell P4

2. Minutes from 27.02.17

The draft minute of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 was proposed by ?? seconded by ??

KR explained that the agenda had been altered for the sub-committees to report and to afford Miss Chisholm the opportunity to withdraw after making a report to the meeting on the success of the 4th Year Careers' Convention.

3. Sub Committee Reports

Careers Sub Committee

KC reported that another very successful Careers Convention took place on 23rd March. In respect of Pupil Feedback she noted that pupils had responded to a number of questions as follows

- 98% found the event "useful"
- 78% felt it helped them make decisions about their future
- 45% used "My Careers" Profile to select consultants with whom they had conversations
- 76% found the booklet providing information about the range of consultants useful.

Pupils noted that the evening was a good way to find out about a variety of careers and many had commented that they found the consultants approachable and informative

Some had reflected that they had found the evening was a bit rushed

There had been some organizational changes for this year's event and KC noted that these had been reviewed and it was noted that there was a small number of pupils who had not attended as the convention coincide with a concert by the bad "Drake".

In particular, the earlier starting time appeared to have caused no problems.

Placing three consultants per room appeared to have realised the anticipated benefit of reduced time taken for pupils to move between rooms.

The greater use of The Assembly Hall appeared successful with most pupils happy with numbers and layout and the concentration of consultants although there was a minor reservation that those in The Assembly Hall couldn't hear the bell indicating the conclusion of each conversation. KC noted that this will be addressed prior to next year's event. She opined that combining PR & Advertising had proved successful and should be considered for next year's event.

KC proposed a provisional date of Wednesday 7th March 2018 noting that the previous desire to have the event sufficiently beyond the date of the February school holiday to allow for a committee meeting to take place between the holiday week and the Careers Convention would be achievable. She advised that only one amongst the consultants participating in this year's event had declined to participate in 2018.

It was suggested it might be better to combine Zoology and Marine Biology in light of the feedback received on the night

It was noted that it has always been a struggle to secure an appropriate consultant for music and KC suggested that in 2018 it may, perhaps, be better to stop offering this rather than disappoint the expectations of pupils who choose this option.

Constitutional Sub Committee

BM noted that there remained nothing to report and he was still awaiting an invitation to meet with The Rector and The Chairman of The Board. The Rector advised that he had discussed this with The Bursar and Mr Martin who were considering the proposed Constitution and that he will revert to BM with suggested dates for a meeting.

Social Sub Committee

Mr Khan reported that minimum numbers now reached for the forthcoming dinner on 3rd June 2017 Mrs Khan extended an invitation to The Rector and Mrs. Gambles to attend this event as guests of the H.G.S.A.

In addition it was agreed two more tickets would also be offered free of charge to encourage staff to attend. F.K. suggested that staff who wished to attend could have their names placed in a ballot for these two additional tickets.

The evening will include a raffle to raise money for The School's chosen charity for this year and the SR noted that she was confident a range of prizes could be sourced from a variety of sponsors.

It is planned to show photographs of the Leavers' year group on a screen within the hall during the course of the evening and the hotel had indicated that it would provide a projector and screen for this purpose.

It was noted that the dress code for the event was Casual

KR asked for confirmation from amongst the Committee members about their own attendance and noted that even if not attending it was hoped elected representatives could encourage parents from their respective year groups to attend.

4. Items of Business Raised by Elected Members

School Fees

A Significant number of parental views from amongst a range of year groups had been expressed regarding the content of the “Fee Letter” sent out by Professor Williams on behalf of The Board of Governors.

KR noted that this was not a matter properly, solely a matter for the Rector as it was The Board which determined the level of fees at its annual meeting in March . He assured The Committee that most of the individual points raised in the correspondence received and passed to The Rector and BW had been debated and discussed at The Board meeting and prior to that in its Finance Committee. He asked that The Committee accept that this was not promulgated thoughtlessly and noted that of thirteen governors who participated in the meeting, five were parents who would pay these fees in the forthcoming academic year. He reminded The Committee that when BW had attended and advertised The proposed sports’ strategy that this had been welcomed enthusiastically and that fees required to make a contribution towards the costs of capital projects identified.

RA noted that amongst numerous comments made to him a theme developed that some parents felt the reasons enumerated as justification seemed to have only limited significance and asked if that level of detail was necessary and appropriate. The Rector responded he had been advised that on a previous occasion criticism had been made of a fee letter because of the paucity of reasons afforded by way of explanation.

[FM & MM intrant]

This notwithstanding, it was noted that there remained matters contained in the letter which caused some confusion or appeared of only limited significance.

Inflation over the last 12 months had been at a published rate of 2.3%. Therefore the 3.7% increase is therefore not ‘slightly above the rate’ as stated in the letter from the Board.

One parent had submitted an observation that in this letter The school had presented the independent staff settlement agreement as a significant justification for fee increases without affording clarity as to the impact this will have on the salary line in the accounts. In previous years this parent had been told that this was a five year settlement package and there would be a reduction on its impact to the fees once the current settlement period passed and wished to question why, once again, this was presented as a justification for a substantial increase in the fees despite the conclusion of the five year period.

KR noted that whilst The school did not provide any specific details of the budget the Board had passed to justify the increase in fees this would not have been expected or accepted practice and that the budget documents do not form part of the published accounts provided annually to O.S.C.R.

RA noted that “Brexit” is based on an anticipated two year timetable, when the Board set its budget Article 50 hadn’t even been triggered and this didn’t appear to have any significance in respect of the day to day trading of The School which made reference to this appear artificial. In the same way the risk of a second independence referendum does not present a day to day trading risk on the school and this would only, possibly be significant after a vote and dependent upon its outcome neither of these being factors of significance in the period covered by the current annual budget.

Further, citing increased costs such as energy bills. Following a remarkably mild winter and made it difficult to discern the source of increased costs?

RA asked if The School had plans to invest in renewable energy such as solar panels over the roof of the main hall or Sport Hall, and therefore offset the cost of electricity going forward which seemed a logical corollary of achieving the flag of an Eco School.

The Rector explained that food purchase costs had increased but it was questioned how this would be of significance as a justification for increased fees. unless food is subsidised at the school.

It was suggested that discounts available to those who paid fees in advance, 1% if paid annually and 2% if five years paid in advance has an impact on those of us who can't fund the fees this way.

The Rector noted that this had been considered by The Board during its deliberations and that these discounts were to be reduced.

KR and The Rector undertook to transmit all these views to Board and advised that any parent representative who had specific questions could make contact with The Bursar, Mr Keter, directly to clarify any points.

KR noted in particular that these comments would be passed to BW and to his successor who would assume chairmanship later this year for consideration in advance of similar correspondence this time next year.

KN opined that parents might be unhappy at simply being told that the fees were to increase but would quickly get over it.

Primary School

In response to a question about team selection for athletics in the Primary School FM noted that children are assessed at various events during year including House events where they may win medals but when the consolidated results are reviewed they may not be selected for team as other Houses may have better results.

The parent had also noted a lack of response from a member of the P.E. department and F.M. advised that this email had been passed to Mr Lang who responded directly to parent.

FM explained that facilitating a distinct and discrete Maths. appointment at Parents' nights especially in P6 and P7 would not be easy to arrange and questioned the need for such as maths. was not a specialised subject.

LC advised that there must be some way of doing this especially before the children leave Primary School as it is an important element of the curriculum and asked if FM could look at a solution. It was agreed that FM would consider this and advise of a solution at next meeting.

School Holidays

In response to a request that The school publish its term dates to allow families to take advantage of holiday offers The Rector advised the School is awaiting dates from Glasgow City Council and East Renfrewshire Council for 2018/2019 to ensure consistency if practicable with local authority schools as some members of staff have children at local authority schools. He opined there may be a delay in councils approving holidays because of the local government elections.

Emergency communication procedures will be addressed at in service day at start of Aug and then cascaded to parents. KR noted that this was an element of the forthcoming themed discussion on communication.

5. Rectors Report

The Rector advised The Committee he hope to keep his report brief and simply to highlight the most important activities in The School since the previous H.G.S.A. meeting. He noted that The School has been very busy over the past few months.

The P7 show, 2 Aladdin” was excellent and enjoyed by all who had attended.

A successful Erasmus exchange has taken place.

Rachel Drake has been appointed to the Art Department/

Advertising for P/Time Art and P/Time Modern Language teachers at Kingarth Street.

A new bursar has been appointed. Mr John McColgan is at present The Bursar at Wellington School and would soon be coming to the School to spend some time with Mr Keter in advance of his quitting The School.

In the Trust Office Kim Deary has been replaced by Kerry McCrossan who has a son in Primary 1 and whose brother John McCrossan teaches in Kingarth Street.

It was noted that former depute Rector Sandy Strand sadly passed away after a short illness. The Rector noted this news had occasioned a significant amount of online activity reflecting an out pouring of grief from across the Hutchesons’ Community and advised The Committee that Mr Strang’s funeral will take place in Sherbrooke St. Gilbert’s Church on 10/5/17.

6. Primary Report

FM reported a very busy term with lots of Educational Visits taking place.

P2 enjoyed a new trip this year to Vikingar in Largs.

A Technology Club for pupils in primaries 6 and 7 has started and is proving popular. The children have made bicycle racks for in advance of the cycling proficiency this term.

P7 pupils are visiting Beaton Road for the afternoon to the Technical Department which she opined was a welcome addition to the process of transition between the primary and secondary departments of The School.

Third year pupils have organised a sports and activity event at Auldhouse for P6 and P7 which will take place in May

Political Education has started for P6 pupils who have been introduced to the concept of democracy with assistance being provided by The Scottish Government Outreach team which is scheduled to visit Kingarth Street.

FM advised that a new staff member would assume responsibility for heading up the Eco Committee , Mrs Le Good

She has organised a “ragbag collection”.

All pupils will have the opportunity to participate in a “Day of Dance”

P6L who take the lead in organizing recycling will visit the recycling plant at Polmadie.

AM suggested that it may not appear particularly Eco friendly to run two half empty buses from Kingarth Street to Beaton road at the end of The School Day and that tall the children could have been transported on one.

MM speculated that this might be because the buses had different destinations and it avoided the need for primary pupils to change buses at Beaton Road. He advised that the bus schedules were managed by Mrs Peterkin and that he would confirm the arrangements at present were necessary and appropriate.

7. **Governors Remarks-** The Chairman of The Board of Governors had submitted his apologies for the meeting and no remarks had been intimated for transmission to The Committee.

8. 1957 Group

Ks noted that The Primary School Sports' Day is scheduled for 3rd June but a decision will be made the week before on a food offering for the event depending on weather forecasts to try to minimise potential waste.

The annual uniform sale will take place on Saturday 17th June between 9a.m. & 10.30a.m.

Unfortunately no winter Fayre will take place again this year but the 1957 Committee members are considering organizing an Afternoon Tea and shopping event on Saturday 2nd December in school. It is hoped that there will be a selection of stalls which can be encouraged to participate in such an event and KS noted she would be grateful for any practical support which the members of H.G.S.A. might afford.

9. FP Remarks

Whilst there was no particular FP business to report BM made a moving tribute to Sandy Strang who had recently passed away. He reminded The Committee that Mr Strang had been a successful pupil at Hucheson's before attending Cambridge University. On his return to The School he had been a teacher described by many pupils as inspirational and had been outstanding as The School's Depute Rector.

BM was very pleased that Mr Strang had been able to speak at the recent FP Dinner on 10th December and commended to The Committee a video on VIMEO in which Mr Strang describes what is essential in a Huchesonian.

10. Communication

KR reminded The Committee that when it met in March it had been noted that a range of the items members wished to raise and discuss could be grouped under the title "Communication". Serendipitously, The Rector had then asked that a discussion might take place on communication and in particular how any perceived failings and frustrations on the part of parents might be addressed.

The Rector explained that it was for the purpose of advancing this discussion that he had asked Mr Martin to attend this evening as he had assigned to him the task of co-ordinating a general survey of parents to identify those areas of communication which might be improved and developing a strategy for improved communication and in particular better use of digital communication.

As a start to this process he sought the views of the year representatives to help identify the priorities which should then form part of the more general survey.

MM noted The School website has been recently redesigned and other areas of communication are in contemplation such as e-mails to particular parent groups, the introduction of a parental portal to the Firefly system which he opined enriches the curriculum for pupils and noted that the system was intuitive for the pupils.

IJ asked at what stage pupils are afforded access to this system and FM replied that this begins at present in P.5. MM added that the use of Firefly for parents in younger classes is one amongst a range of extended uses in contemplation.

MM noted that it was important to consider what parents would see about the pupils if afforded access to the system

AM noted that at present parents can check on the work of their own children to which mm added the further comment that one of the benefits of the system was improving pupils' independence and that parental access should not be allowed to compromise this.

Mr Martin asked if every parent representative could canvass their respective year groups and email him a note of areas of concern areas of concern.

MM asked if those present made use of the website and, if so, is it useful? In what ways could it be more "user friendly"? MM noted that the previous website had approximately 1000 pages and that the revision and redesign had reduced this to approximately 100 main pages.

KN noted that she was happy with the website and further opined that e-mail and twitter communications seemed to work well.

LC noted a concern that often the paper notifications sent home with younger pupils don't necessarily find their way timeously to the parents and this can be awkward when trying to arrange to attend events such as the small concerts held in The Primary School.

This concern was echoed by JL who cited the example of one child attending the concert but not properly prepared partially due to a lack of notice being received and asked if this might be something which could be significantly improved by timeous, electronic communication.

MM acknowledged that this was a good example of where small change might precipitate instant and appreciable benefit.

Ra opined that at the highest level of generality the lack of consistency in the medium of communication and rules in respect of what is anticipated of staff when a response is expected by a parent.

MM noted that Mr Bagnall, one of the Depute Rectors, has sent information to staff on this topic.

The question was posed as to whether the use of email is a good way to disseminate information to which The Rector opined that some caution had to be present in this and such communication should be compatible with the expectation and requirements of G.D.P.R.

MM suggested that areas The Committee might consider could include Pastoral email updates and what should be included in these. He opined that key dates and events should be easy to put onto Firefly and that he would welcome comments on Sports arrangements for fixtures and consequent results and where these might be best placed. He asked if e-newsletters might be of use and interest to parents He noted that whilst school reports are completed electronically by staff these are then despatched as paper copies? It was noted that there was likely to be a mixed reaction to moving exclusively to digital report cards.

KR reminded all present that once each representative has gathered the views of their year group can they please email Mr Martin directly on martinm@hutchesons.org He asked that these responses could be copied to him for information.

This will then form the basis of parental survey for general distribution.

AOCB

LC asked if it might be possible to arrange the “Meet the Teacher” evenings to take place at the end of the summer term rather than at the start of the autumn term

AM asked if it might be possible to re-institute the parents’ evenings with peripatetic music staff. MM undertook to examine the possibility of this and the implications in respect of the contractual and external obligations of these staff.

It was suggested that at a forthcoming Committee meeting a discussion might take place around what is available for pupils in Sixth Year and how this “S6 Experience” adds value particularly for the children who have already achieved their required qualifications for tertiary education

11. Date of next meetings – KR thanked The Committee for its participation in the evening’s discussions, extended his good wishes for an enjoyable summer holiday to those not attending the H.G.S.A. Dinner or the forthcoming Production of “Iolanthe” and reminded all that the next meeting of The Committee is scheduled for

Monday 28th August 2017 at 7pm