

## **Bruntsfield Parent Council Special Meeting 16 January 2023**

### **Attendees:**

**Parent Council Members (Office Bearers and Co-opts):** Dan Gerrard (Parent Council Chair), Jenni Fuchs Madine, Cindy Coleman, Kristin Pedroja, Kirsty McIntosh, Alison Redpath, Stefan Santjer, Ali McCallum, Jay Feeney, Shanda Doherty

**Ordinary Members:** Anna Docherty, Anna Wojtczuk, Louise Gourmelon, Elma Charalampidou, Victoria Lopez-Craig, Jerome Veyret

**Parent Forum Members:** Katy Bromberg, Catrina Arbuckle, Emily Polack, Kenzo Harper-Wang, Tamara Van Strijthem, Ros Claase, Jon Rowe, Svitlana Shepel, Linda Evans, Simon Wooton, Tara Luckhart, Anna Forsyth, Pippa Cochran, Steven West, Ana Miret, Corsino San Miguel

**Staff:** Stephen Gilhooley, Lesley Lamond, Mel McComb, Christine Fudge, Svetlana McBain, Ingrid Ramsey, Karolina Peterson (online), Julie Wosu (online), Donna English (online), Emma McLaughlin (online), Jenni Dobie (online), Gillian Knust (online), Soha El Hindawi (online)

**Bruntsfield St Oswalds:** David Urch, Fayaz Alibhai

**Apologies:** Marilena Papadopoulou

### **1. Opening:**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting the large turnout and emphasised that the meeting was being held to ensure the representation of as many views as possible with regards to the funding process and the applications received. Agenda for the evening:

- Explanation of how the PC has come to have surplus money
- SG to give an update on School position
- Discussion on the procedure to allocate amounts between small and larger applications
- Discussion of the two large funding applications that have been received (Playground Improvement and St Oswalds)

### **2. Clubs finances (SS):**

- SS outlined that the PC has two bank accounts; the events account and the clubs account.
- The club's account is used for the daily running of all BPS clubs.
- The club's account has a current balance of circa £58K of which £25K can be released to support funding applications. The remaining balance will be used to pay tutors and cover club expenses. A contingency of £5k will be kept in the account.

- The £25K surplus within the Clubs account is historical and was built up pre-pandemic (pre 2020).
- SS explained that clubs do not generate a significant surplus. The aim of clubs is to keep fees low, fund any club equipment and to provide free and discounted places to families in need.
- It is unlikely that such a large surplus will build up in the Clubs account in future.

### **3. Events finances (SD)**

- SD explained that funds within the events account are generated through fundraising activities and used to support funding applications, BPS community events and as a repository for ring-fenced commitments eg. Playground maintenance and Primrose Fund.
- SD proposed increasing the Primrose Fund as it has been fixed at £1,500 for some time. This was welcomed by many School staff.
- DU commented that there had been a desire to increase the Primrose Fund previously, however governance concerns had prevented it. It was agreed this would be picked up with SG at a later date.
- Fundraising has not been a focus post-pandemic, as the PC has been trying to bring the community back together in a way that is accessible to as many people as possible.
- The intention of the PC is to begin actively fundraising again; there is an abundance of talent and support within the wider parent community and the PC are confident they can raise large sums.

### **4. Discussion on the funding process**

- The robustness of the assessment criteria and scoring system used to determine which applications receive funding and which do not was questioned.
- DG replied that there were clear criteria set out within the PC website and on the Funding Application Form. Funding Applications must meet the criteria of being inclusive, enduring, progressive and aligned to the curriculum. SD added that the process of allocating funding is something that may be reviewed.
- Concerns were raised around the potential for bias within the PC when reviewing applications, particularly if they had a personal relationship with an applicant.
- JFM responded that the PC had a procedure in place and in such a case, the PC member would recuse themselves from voting on the application. However, JFM could not recall any application she had seen where bias had been an issue.
- It was mentioned that in years gone past, PCs simply fundraised and transferred all funds to Head Teachers to spend as they saw fit. It was suggested that this

saved school staff time having to fill in forms and was better all-round as parents do not understand the needs of the school in the same way as staff.

- LL raised that parent-led funding applications can be difficult, as the School may need to implement projects which do not fit within the curriculum or plans they have in place.
- LG stated that she found it stressful completing the Playground Improvement Project funding application because she was unaware how much money the PC had available to spend and had no insight into what other funding applications were in the pipeline.
- DG reiterated that the PC does not operate a bids system. Each funding application is considered in its own right. If the PC were to receive applications that exceeded its cash reserves the PC would go out and fundraise to meet those needs. Additionally, the PCs cash reserves have been communicated to both the current and previous Head Teachers. The up-to-date accounts were discussed at the recent AGM in September and the balance is available to view on the PC website. The PC works hard to ensure transparency and to maintain good communication with School and are happy to meet and chat to anyone who has questions or would simply like to find out more.
- SS highlighted that the PC regularly meets and asks School what their funding needs are and how best the PC can support.
- JF suggested one potential option would be to move towards a process where all funding applications are submitted together, these could then be discussed annually via a Special Meeting which would allow the opportunity to talk about them. All applications would then be assessed together through the process.

#### **5. Head Teacher's view (SG):**

- BPS needs a lot of investment.
- Lorna French (CEC Chief Education Officer) has communicated to Head Teachers that there is a black hole in the Schools budget and only essential spends should now be actioned.
- SG highlighted that we need an active, transparent fundraising system and clear processes.
- Important to remember that everyone here wants the best learning environment for our children and young people.
- SG meets with Dan (PC Chair) and others regularly and is very happy to meet with anyone over a coffee and touch base.
- A list of short terms spends were provided as follows:

- **Music trolleys** – one per floor. School currently has two, we need to buy one more and repair and replace some of the percussion. Approx £300.
  - **Audio equipment** – Ady Powers (parent) has confirmed that the audio equipment is 20 years old, but he has serviced it and it seems ok for now. We may need a bigger projector screen for the back of the stage. Approx £450
  - **iPads** - All children in P6 and P7 have received their iPads. School were given a 'gold stock' of 4 for children who join the school post roll out. Since November, 8 children have enrolled and the School will now need to buy an additional 4 iPads at £350 each.
  - **Promethian board** – A funding application for 1 promethian board has been sent to the PC, however there are likely to be another two that need replaced soon. £1,985 each
  - **Scottish Opera for Schools** – A funding application for P6 pupils to take part in a workshop and performance run by Scottish Opera has been put in. £1,080
  - **Back playground resurfacing** – removing the gravel and replacing with wet pour around the climbing frame. A quote has been given of £11K approx., however the gravel is much deeper than originally thought. Contractor is returning on Tuesday but is reluctant to take on such a big job. Additionally pipes under playground may have cracks, hence damp and drain overflow. No strategy as yet.
  - **School Camp** – P7 School camp this year is coming in at £460pp, a huge outlay for families. The Primrose Fund contributes £1,200 for families who cannot afford the full amount. PEF funding can also be used to support some children, but this is done through SIMD postcodes and not randomly. Essential that as many children as possible benefit from camp which can be the experience of a lifetime.
- Medium term spends highlighted included:
- **Parent / nurture / sensory room** – School has submitted planning for a new door at the end of the corridor to allow safe access to the building. Work due to start in Spring. School paying for the door, repainting the room but would like PC to support with resources and equipment for the room.
  - **New Resource Room** – Resources are scattered around school and staff would like everything in one place to help them plan efficiently. School will fund the physical changes, but may need to update some of the older resources eg. novels.
- It was also noted that in-catchment P1 registrations for August 2023 is circa 100 children and BPS will need to carefully consider how they resource this.

## **6. Bruntsfield St Oswalds funding application (DU)**

- The team have fundraised circa £700,000 in the last 4 years and this has allowed them to buy the building and almost complete phase 1 (making the building weather proof and safe).
- The next phase is essentially making the building shiny, new and fit for purpose.
- There is a plan to offer pre and after school childcare (doubling childcare provision for BPS) - historically, lack of Kidzcare places have been a major issue for parents and carers.
- St Oswalds could also be used as a venue for BPS clubs as well as hosting other activities for the wider community eg. drama, art, Guides etc.
- It could be used during the school day by BPS in whatever way suited the school.
- There is a plan to knock through the bike sheds and create a path directly from the playground to St Oswalds, making it easy and safe for children to pass between the two.
- To complete phase 1 of the project, there is an outstanding balance of £17K; St Oswalds are asking the PC for £15K.
- DU estimates that phase 2 will cost circa £500K - £700K, worth noting there is a lot of grant funding available for this phase of the work.
- It may be possible to have a staggered opening with some of the building open by the end of 2023 and the rest still undergoing works.

## **7. Discussion of St Oswalds funding application**

- LL said that the School were planning an Outdoor Classroom which will be located in the area of the bike sheds this will cause an issue for any knock-through to the playground.
  - o DU said that clearly there were some functional issues with the knock through and advised that if it's not possible, children can go out the gate and walk around.
- LL highlighted that there were pressing needs in the school including a kitchen that can be used by the children, sound proofing the library and setting up the sensory / nurture room. She would rather these projects were treated as priority than St Oswalds which is external to the School.
- DU was asked if he could give assurances or guarantees that the School would get access to the hall when it opens.
  - o DU advised that St Oswalds couldn't provide any guarantees at this stage of the project, but it was their intention.
- The issue of childcare was raised. There was a query around demand for childcare and what would happen to Kidzcare when St Oswalds opens.

- DU confirmed that there were still a lot of discussions to be had around pre and after school childcare. He acknowledged that the surveys conducted with parents regarding childcare needed to be re-freshed and that discussions needed to take place with the Care Inspectorate and Kidzcare. There are no plans in place as yet as to who will run the childcare operation in St Oswalds. If no external operator can be found, it may be that St Oswalds run it themselves.

### **Meeting close**

- The meeting was quickly brought to a close as School had to be vacated by 8.30pm.
- The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.
- It was agreed to reconvene on Thursday 19 January at 8PM for a zoom meeting to discuss the Playground Funding Application.