**Bruntsfield Parent Council Meeting 6 February 2024**

**Attendees:**

**Parent Council Members (Office Bearers and Co-opts):** Jay Feeney (JF)(Parent Council Chair), Jenni Fuchs Madine (JFM), Kirsty McIntosh, Alison Redpath, Ali McCallum, Catriona Penny, Moria McQueen

**Ordinary Members:** Anna Docherty, Ana Miret Garcia, Anna Wojtczuk, Elma Charalampidou, Hamish Matheson, Jerome Veyret, Petros Wallden, Richard Szabo, Shanda Doherty, Valentina Guerrieri

**Parent forum members:** Louise Gourmelen, Fiona Galbraith, Simon Hope, Kathryn Hewitt, Colette Wooton, Ana Rita Pires, Tara, Janet Kirkwood, Frauke Mathes, Catrina Arbuckle, Carolyn Dineen, Shirley, Diana Mendes Ferreira, Ferooz, Emily Polack, John Carty, Victoria Lopez, Kenzo, Szymon Kowalczuk, Lina Hipigena (LH), Simon Wooton, Kristin Pedroja

**Staff:** Stephen Gilhooley (SG)

**External:** Daniel Johnson (MSP), Mandy Watt (Clr)

**Apologies:** Marilena Papadopoulou, Cindy Coleman, Stefan Santjer, Dan Gerrard, Lucy Henderson

1. **Opening (JF):**
* The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the agenda which included an overview of recent funding achievements, an update on events, the playground, clubs, an introduction to the new School mascot, an update from the Head Teacher and finally a discussion on education funding with Councillor Mandy Watt and Daniel Johnson MSP.
1. **Funding updates (JF):**
* The Playground Group have received £2,500 from the PC which will be spent on a forest cabin, benches and an extra planter for the playground. A huge thanks was given to Louise Gourmelen, Jon Rowe and the wider playground team for all their work. It was noted that BPS has a very old and challenging playground and that collectively we will be making a huge push to improve the playground.
* A new screen and projector system has recently been funded and this is expected to benefit the entire School.
* P6 Scottish Opera workshops have been funded for the third year in a row. All P6 pupils will benefit from the chance to work with Scottish Opera professionals. The workshops have had great feedback and the PC intend to continue funding these each year.
* The Nuture Room received just over £2,000 following the hugely successful Art Auction last Spring. The room has now been kitted out and is being well used.
* The Winter International Bake Sale raised over £1K for the playground, this was led by BPS pupils working with Lina Hipigena.
* Moving forward the PC plans to collectively review all funding applications at a single point in the year to ensure that all requirements can be considered collectively and prioritised.
* Finally, the Chair thanked all parents who volunteered at fundraising events and all those who come along to support.
* Anyone who would like to get involved or has ideas they’d like to share, was asked to get in touch.
1. **Events (AR):**
* A ‘School of Rock’ event is in the pipeline and due to take place in Spring.
* Lots of volunteers will be needed and more information will be follow soon.
* Anyone with ideas for other events, was asked to please come forward.
1. **Pupil-led events / School Mascot (LH)**
* Lina has been working with BPS Children for the last 12 months.
* Just before Christmas, the children organised and ran a bake sale themselves and they are keen to get involved with more events.
* A School Mascot called Brunzee, has recently been designed by one of the children at BPS and the mascot will be used for events and fundraising activities.
* JF added that he is keen to get sponsorship for Brunzee from a local business to help produce banners, posters and a costume. If anyone would like to take this project forward, please get in touch.
* Finally, LH noted that some of the P7s are concerned that they won’t benefit from funds that the PC has accrued via Clubs.
* JF confirmed that his intention is to distribute all available funds in the next year.
1. **Playground Project (LL and LG)**
* Lesley Lamond had prepared an update on the playground project, which was read in her absence.
* The Group were delighted to hear the application for £2500 of funding had been approved by the PC. A huge thanks to Louise Gourmelen who has dedicated a huge amount of time to this.
* Parents Emily Polack, Pippa Jayne and Chris Finden-Crofts are working on drawing up a planting timetable for our playground planters. Once in place, parent volunteers will be sought to come in on a regular basis to do gardening with groups of children across the school.
* In the Springtime the group plan to paint and improve the shelter space under the boys' toilets. Lesley and Jay have discussed the possibility of a crowd funding to pay for the paint. Many thanks to Ana Miret Garcia for doing measurements which will enable the team to estimate the amount of paint required. LL hopes that painting work can be done by a group of parents and staff volunteers over a couple of weekends.
* Two parents have approached Jay about the possibility of graffiti artist KMG working with pupils on murals as part of the playground improvements. A meeting will be arranged to discuss logistics and costs.
* Jon Rowe has kindly offered to put a briefing paper together which will be used when approaching a couple of landscape architects for quotes on drawing up a costed masterplan for the playground. This would then form the basis of fundraising projections over the next few years.
* Jon Rowe also hopes to meet with Lucy Henderson to explore grant applications, these would also help to fund our much-needed playground improvements.
* There is a teacher Outdoor Education/Sustainability Working Party. The teachers are currently developing ideas for making better use of the playground to deliver regular, stimulating and engaging outdoor learning experiences for all pupils.
* The next meeting will be held on Monday 4 March from 6-7pm in the staffroom. Anyone who would like to join is very welcome to attend.
* Louise Gourmelen added that she felt a shift in collaboration within the group and that within the group lots of people were bringing a lot of different skills to the mix.
* LG also highlighted that the consultation work previously carried out with BPS pupils was still being used as part of the baseline.
1. **Exhibition – ‘Comic book club’ and ‘Let’s draw something fun’ (Update read by JFM in Cassandra’s absence)**
* Cassandra Harrison teaches ‘Comic book club’ and ‘Let’s draw something fun’ classes as part of the Clubs offering at BPS. She also runs an adult version of ‘Let’s draw something fun.’
* Together the three groups will be having an exhibition at the Upright Gallery and each child attending Cassandra’s classes will have a work on display.
* The Kids’ preview is scheduled for 5-6pm on March 1.  That preview hour is open to anyone from the school who would like to see the exhibition.  7-9pm is the preview of the adult group with wine.
* The exhibition runs for just the weekend, 11am – 6pm Saturday and Sunday. All are welcome.
* If anyone would like to volunteer to support on Thursday / Sunday with hanging or taking down art, please let us know.

1. **Clubs (Update read by JFM in Stefan’s absence)**
* Our After School Clubs remain popular, with 482 club places booked in the current term over 18 different clubs, delivered in 53 individual club sessions with an average child to tutor ratio of 8-1.
* In addition, around 170 P1-P7 children regularly partake in our Saturday football sessions, with 7 BPS teams entering the Edinburgh Primary Schools Football Programme starting later this month.
* We welcome Netball back to BPS, a new active schools club which started last week. A big thank you to Sophie and Katie, students at Boroughmuir High School who are passing on their Netball skills to our children.
* An overview of all our after-school club activities as well as all current active schools clubs running this term, is available on our website: <https://bruntsfield.org/2024/01/22/pc-meeting-6-feb-2023/>
* On club finances, our current club account balance is £14,398 with £9k being kept as a reserve and c£5k ring fenced for club expenses. A more detailed breakdown is available on our website.
* Clubs continues to provide complimentary/75% discounted club places and this equates to 100 individual club places since the start of the current school year.
* Well done to our Badminton team, who held their own in the recent Lothian Championship. They will soon be in action again representing Bruntsfield at the annual Primary Quaich tournament.
* Finally, a big thank you to Cindy our Club Treasurer, who is stepping down from her role, as her child will be leaving Bruntsfield at the end of the school year and also to Ingrid Ramsey who has continued to teach our children skiing and also runs our school running club. Both their efforts will be sorely missed.
* Stefan will be catching up with those parents who have kindly put themselves forward to fill club roles over the next month with a new PC Club term due to be advertised in March.
* As always, if anyone has any questions please email bruntsfieldclubs@gmail.com.
1. **Choir pilot scheme**
* Stephen Gilhooly and Jay Feeney have been in discussion with Roccio who runs the BPS after school choir.
* Together the group have agreed to pilot 20 minute choir sessions during the School day with a professional choir tutor.
* The sessions will take place once per week and will initially take place with P5 pupils.
* The plan is to have a performance at the end of the School year to raise money which would make the scheme sustainable for the following year.
1. **Head teachers update:**
* Staff have been very busy learning more about enquiry and research, rights of the child and enhancing their digital skills and knowledge. The children have been benefitting from this learning during class time.
* January ended with a huge focus on Burns including poems, songs and rhymes. The School then held their annual show a couple of weeks ago with fantastic talent on show.
* Languages week was organised by Mrs Bell recently and was very successful, thanks to all the parent volunteers that came in and talked about their languages and culture.
* BPS are very excited to receive the recent influx of funding as previously set out.
* The new AV equipment will be beneficial and SG hopes to showcase it with a launch which might include a quiz.
* Scottish Opera is also particularly beneficial and includes lots of training that culminates in a fantastic performance. Evaluations have previously been very positive and SG is glad to continue it.
* SG is happy to welcome all the new outdoor projects and highlighted that the Nurture Room has been an on-going project. Parents as well as children have visited and benefitted from the space which gives extra support to children where needed and allows them to work on their social skills and interaction.
* Finally, SG commended that during one of the recent storms, part of a tree fell into the playground and took down part of the wall. Currently part of the playground is out of use whilst School wait for the forestry team to come and remove the tree. The playground is perfectly safe and SG hopes to have it back to full use shortly.
1. **Update on proposed funding cuts to education**
* HM attended the recent Education, Children and Families Committee council meeting where he made a deposition on behalf of BPS PC.
* HM opened by re-caping on the recent funding cuts to the education budget proposed by the City of Edinburgh council. The proposal included reducing planning time for Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers, removing PSAs from P1 and P2, removing Transition Teachers and cutting Schools budget.
* HM highlighted the vital role that Transition Teachers make during what is a major life event for children and the importance of PSAs and appropriate planning time.
* HM also raised concerns that a blanket cut to school budgets could easily become a pot of money that is continually chipped away at over time.
* During the committee meeting that HM attended, the cuts were robustly challenged by Schools and Unions.
* Following the Council meeting, ESM (Union) have advised that the council have pushed back the cuts to central council.

**Update from Councillor Mandy Watt**

* There were excellent deputations to the Children and Family Committee, with more deputations made at Finance committee. EIS (Union) also put up a strong case.
* Important for everyone to be aware that Council funding has been reduced year on year with a real terms cut to funding.
* The Council have avoided cuts to education for 14 years while cuts have been on-going, however, they cannot keep absorbing the cuts that the Scottish Government are making.
* Initially, the proposals for cuts to the education budget were due to be put forward in November. However the proposals didn’t reach the committee until January – this was considered too short notice to take forward.
* MW took the issue to the Finance and Resources committee within the Council and spoke with the Chief Financial Officer proposing alternative options, which the finance team have looked at and have agreed to consider.
* The funding cuts are now highly unlikely to go ahead this year, however they will be re-looked at next year, but the hope will be to try and avoid cuts to education.
* MW stated that no council tax freeze next year, would be helpful.

*MW was asked which budgets the funding cuts have come from, and whether another area of Education has been impacted.*

* MW confirmed this was not the case. She highlighted that within council accounts there are provisions around prudence that are reviewed at year end. That review has been brought forward and additionally other project funding has been considered. ML highlighted Corporate Services and potential one-off of sources of income. However, she emphasised that a solution would need to be found for next year.

**Update from Daniel Johnson**

* DJ highlighted that most of the council budget comes from central taxation rather than council tax.
* Given the Council Tax freeze the council has very little control over increasing their revenue.
* The IFS have produced a report, which states that when the council tax freeze is factored in, councils have had a 1.7% cut to budgets.
* DJ suggested that Edinburgh loses out on health, police and education funding because it is affluent in comparison to other parts of Scotland.
* DJ highlighted that there are tensions over the way funding is allocated to Edinburgh and also that there is a general trend for funding to be shifted towards health rather than education.
* The Scottish Government is in the middle of a budget process. They have published their proposals for the next financial year and COSLA are making representations for more funding for councils.
* The budget will be finalised just before Easter with the financial year starting in April. There is no magic bullet to this. DJ is in favour of multi-year funding for local authorities and would like to see reforms with the way the budget process works.

*Question: It's difficult to hear the council can find £2billion for a new tram extension but can't find resources for the children of council tax paying residents.*

* MW highlighted that trams are funded from tram receipts and are self-funding, so do not use council resources.
* It was then commented by another parent that the initial £90M investment was not self-funded and was contributed by the council.
* Another parent highlighted that profits from the tram would be better re-invested in council funds.
* MW suggested she would be happy to return with a colleague another week to discuss the tram project in more detail.

*Question:*

*What is the most useful thing we can do as individual parents, the parent council and school?*

* DJ suggested continuing to make representations to councillors and suggested working with other PCs as a network to pool resources.

**Close:**

* It was agreed that MW and DJ would be invited to return to another Parent Council meeting soon to discuss funding of BPS playground and other resources which are felt to be underfunded in comparison to other Schools with more modern buildings.