

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE:	2nd June 2011
DIRECTOR:	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT:	Parent Involvement in Education – Inclusion of a parent representative on the committee responsible for education services.
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/11/036

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update members of the committee about the progress made following Councillor Cormack's original motion made to the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee on the 28th April 2009 and a number of subsequent reports which outlined activities to support and involve parents in their children's education; the development of the parental involvement strategy; the establishment of parent council's in each school and the Aberdeen City Parent Forum.

The Aberdeen City Parent Forum is now well established. It consists of twenty-four representatives, two drawn from each associated schools group (ASG). The forum has established its terms of reference, office bearers and has been fulfilling its representative role.

The committee (Nov 2009) instructed officers to bring back a report on the issues and changes necessary to allow parent representation on the Education, Culture and Sports Committee. At that time the newly established forum was of the view that it needed to establish itself more fully before taking on additional roles. Officers were asked to continue to liaise with the forum over this specific matter and report back to the committee at an appropriate time in the future.

The members of the forum are now of the view that they have the structures and support in place to enable them to appropriately represent the views of parents in the city and are requesting that Committee reconsider Councillor Cormack's notice of motion 'to promote further and continue to develop parental, guardian and carers involvement in the Council's decision making process and that a report is therefore produced with recommendations for including parents in the work of the main council committee with education responsibilities, relevant subcommittees and consultation processes.'

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the committee

- (i) acknowledge the progress made by the Aberdeen Parent Council Forum to establish its terms of reference and to effectively represent the views of the parent councils in local authority schools in the city; and
- (ii) request that officers prepare a report for the next cycle to enable the council to consider the most appropriate ways to including parents in the work of the main council committee with education responsibilities, relevant subcommittees and consultation processes. The report should include the following:
 - arrangements in other Scottish local authorities;
 - the implications of a voting/non-voting options for members taking account of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 Act;
 - outline the mechanism that the forum propose to take to appoint the parent representative,
 - detail any changes that may be needed to the committee composition should committee agree to a parent representative; and
 - provide advice on the formal processes required to secure a change in committee representation.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There may be implications for legal and democratic services as a result of this report. The council is currently required to have the 3 church representatives on the committee by virtue of the legislation, and the two teacher reps by virtue of the standing orders (this being at the discretion of each local authority). A decision to appoint a parent representative may require a change to standing orders.

5. BACKGROUND

5.1 The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires Scottish Ministers and education authorities to promote the involvement of parents in children's education at publicly funded schools. The purpose of the act is to help all parents to be:

- involved with their child's education and learning;
- welcomed as active participants in the life of the school;
- work in partnership with the school; and

- encourage them to express their views on school education more generally.
- 5.2 Committee approved the parent involvement strategy and action plan on the 2nd September 2009 and supported the development of parent forum and parent council in all local schools.
- 5.3 All parents are automatically members of the parent forum at their child's school. As a member of the parent forum they are encouraged to support events and activities at the school and to get involved in their child's learning. Each forum is encouraged to set up a parent council. They are expected to work in partnership with pupils, the head teacher and the local authority in the interests of their school.

The role of a parent council is to:

- support the school in its work with pupils;
 - represent the views of all parents;
 - encourage links between the school, parents, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community; and
 - report back to all the parents in the school (Parent Forum).
- 5.4 The authority also arranges meetings once a term with the parent council of all mainstream and special schools in the city. These meetings provide an opportunity for the authority to communicate effectively with all parent councils; allow us to identify parent council support and training needs; and enable us to engage in discussions with parents on city wide strategic issues. Parent councils have a small operating budget, have been given city council group wise email access to improve communication systems and are offered regular support and training.
- 5.5 Councillor Cormack submitted a motion to Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee 28 April 2009 asking the committee to consider the involvement of a parent representative on the committee with education responsibility. The agreed motion was as follows:

‘That this council agrees to promote further and continue to develop parental, guardian and carers involvement in the Council decision making process and that a report is therefore produced with recommendations for including parents in the work of the main council committee with education responsibilities, relevant subcommittees and consultation processes.’

- 5.6 As parents are customers of the education services in the city the committee were minded to consider the motion. As a result of our involvement in the Scottish Parent Involvement Officer Network meeting we are aware that other local authorities are exploring ways to involve parents in decisions about education services however at that point there were limited examples that representative arrangements had been established. They requested that officers continue to support the involvement of a city wide representative group which could eventually have effective systems in

place to represent the wide views of all parents. They requested that officers bring back reports on a regular basis to advise the committee of progress.

- 5.7 The Aberdeen City Parent Forum was established with two representatives from each associated schools group (ASG). The forum has been meeting regularly. It has established its terms of reference, office bearers and has been fulfilling its representative and communication role effectively with all parent councils.

6. IMPACT

- 6.1 Corporate - Developing and implementing ways of further enhancing parent involvement helps to support community engagement with local communities and to develop a strong partnership with parents. The new forum is a substantial development for enhancing “voice” of a key stakeholder group within Aberdeen.
- 6.2 Public - This report will be of interest to the general public but particularly parents, guardians and carers who have children of school age.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (i) Policy & Strategy (Education) Committee Report September 2008
(The Parental Involvement Strategy)
- (ii) Education, Culture & Sport Committee Report May, 2009
- (iii) Policy & Strategy (Education) Committee Report June 2009
(The Background Report)
- (iv) Education, Culture & Sport Committee Report November, 2009
- (v) Education Culture and Sport Committee November 2010.
- (vi) The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
- (vii) The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Sheila Sansbury
Service Manager (Families and Vulnerable Learners)
ssansbury@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 523882