

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	27 May 2010
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT	Parent Involvement in Education
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/10/047

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This Report serves to inform Committee of actions and progress following Councillor Cormack's Motion and previous reports. In particular, the report informs Committee of the arrangements that have been put in place to establish an Aberdeen City Parent Forum.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Committee endorses the work undertaken by parent council representatives and officers to establish the new Forum.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs for holding meetings of the new Forum will be met from current resources.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Developing and implementing ways of further enhancing parent involvement supports community engagement with local communities and helps to develop a strong partnership with parents.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

6. REPORT

Background

6.1. The last report in November to this Committee outlined background issues in detail. It set out in particular the meetings with parent councils to discuss the establishment of an Aberdeen City Parent Forum. Officers facilitated two face-to-face sessions with Parent Council Chairs and representatives on 16 September and 4 November to discuss representation and related matters. The meeting on

16 September set the scene, with the meeting on 4 November focusing exclusively on the issues to do with representation. The feedback from those sessions, particularly from the session on 4 November was included in the last report to Committee. The feedback demonstrated that there was a range of views about the Authority's idea for establishing a City Parent Forum. A main concern was that any new Forum would result in the Authority consulting only with the Forum. Officers gave reassurance that the Authority would continue to consult directly with all parent councils on key matters.

Setting up the new Forum

6.2 In order to take forward the formation of a City Parent Forum, a crucial matter had to do with how individuals were to be identified to serve on the Forum and the remit of the Forum. In order to focus on these issues explicitly, an additional meeting was arranged for 14 January, 2010. Ahead of that meeting, officers provided parent councils with a discussion paper setting out possible proposals for nomination and selection of representatives for the new Forum. That paper is attached as Appendix 1. Eighteen parent council representatives attended, representing 16 parent councils. In addition to issues about how to secure nominations, officers also discussed with parent council representatives the possible remit for the new Forum.

6.3 As a result of this meeting, it was agreed to circulate to all parent councils a pro-forma seeking their views on the appropriate mechanisms for identifying representatives to the Forum. Whilst three possible alternatives/models were set out in the officer paper sent to parent councils, representatives were invited to provide their views not only on the three officer proposals but also to suggest any other alternatives. The three proposals put forward by officers were:

- City-wide elections
- Each Associated School Group (ASG) to determine nominations
- Determine categories or communities of interest

and parent councils were asked to consider the pros and cons for each model as well as the practical issues involved in establishing each model (see Appendix 1).

6.4 It was further agreed that the next scheduled meeting on 22 February would focus on the feedback and views of parent councils, and through debate, determine the preferred arrangements for establishment of the Forum. It was acknowledged that this might not be straightforward to achieve because of the variety of opinion and views.

6.5 As part of the feedback and following the meeting in January, Walker Road School Parent Council Chair contacted officers with suggestions for vision/remit for the new Forum. The Chair from Airyhall School Parent Council also made some suggestions.

6.6 The meeting on 22 February was attended by thirteen representatives, representing nine parent councils. The Authority had received written feedback from two parent councils (Walker Road and Cults Academy) setting out the views of those two parent councils on the preferred mechanism for securing representatives to the new Forum. These, along with the views expressed by others during the meeting on 22 February, generated a debate that resulted in

those present agreeing, 10 votes to 3 to opt for ASG model of representation to the new Forum.

6.7 Those present also considered the issue of a remit for the Forum. Prior to the meeting officers had discussed with the chair of Walker Road School parent council the suggestions from Walker Road and (with a few agreed amendments) this was shared with parent council representatives, along with the suggestions from Airyhall. This draft remit is attached as Appendix 2. Those present agreed that the remit was very appropriate as a draft and recognised that the new Forum may wish to consider further refinement before adopting it.

6.8 Following the February meeting officers produced information, for consideration at the May meeting of parent councils, which set out the process for securing nominations to, and establishing the Forum. This is set out in the timeline at Appendix 3. This timeline plans for the first meeting of the new Forum to take place in the week commencing 21 June, 2010 with a preparation meeting scheduled on 16 June with officers. It will be at this meeting that the date of the first meeting of the Forum will be finalised. Roles and responsibilities, and the means by which the Forum will ensure wide representation, will be published following the constitution of the body.

6.9 The Director of Education, Culture & Sport wrote to each parental council encouraging attendance at the next meeting on 18 May and proposed that it might be possible to accelerate identification of the two nominees from each ASG by using the May meeting for this purpose. Officers will update Committee on the outcome from the May meeting.

7 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Sohail Faruqi
Strategist (Support for Children & Young people)
sfaruqi@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 522695

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (i) Policy & Strategy (Education) Committee Report June 2009
(The Background Report)
- (ii) Policy & Strategy (Education) Committee Report September 2008
(The Parental Involvement Strategy)

Appendix 1

Aberdeen City Council Meeting with Parent Council Representatives

Thursday 14 January 2010

ESTABLISHING THE ABERDEEN CITY PARENT FORUM

(Tentative name)

Nomination and selection process

Introduction

The Education, Culture & Sports Committee has now agreed to the establishment of an Aberdeen City Parent Forum. The key purposes in establishing an Aberdeen City Parent Forum are about enhancing parent voice and influence. Such a Forum has to be seen in the context of a clear desire on the part of Parent Councils in Aberdeen for the Education Authority to continue to liaise with **all** Parent Councils on important matters. An Aberdeen City Parent Forum adds value to the relationship of Parent Councils with the Education Authority and builds upon that relationship by helping to create a more focussed voice for parents.

In establishing a new Forum, it is essential that the Forum as a whole is (and is seen to be) a representative one. It is also important for the Forum not to be seen as a body or committee of the Education Authority. The role of the Education Authority is to support the establishment of the Forum and to support the on-going development of the Forum.

In establishing the Forum, there are a number of approaches for identifying individuals. However, it is important to minimise the bureaucracy that may be associated with any process; for the process to be inclusive; and for the process to be transparent. It is also important not to over complicate the process.

A key issue is one of the size of the Forum. The Committee report suggested a membership of 12-24 ie. one or two from each ASG. Given the desire expressed by Parent Councils for the Education Authority to continue to liaise with all parent councils, it may be best to consider the higher figure of 24 representatives. Whatever the number, it is also important to ensure a balance in the type of representative eg. special school, etc. The types of representative could include, **for example:**

- Primary schools – 12 nominations
- Secondary schools – 6 nominations
- Special schools – 1 nomination
- Additional supports needs – 4 nominations
- Black and minority ethnic – 1 nominations

Given the issues, it would be easy to overcomplicate the process for securing nominations.

Suggested way forward

Given the importance of this development, it would be inappropriate for the Authority solely to determine a process for establishing the new Forum. The purpose of the additional parent council meeting on 14 January, 2010 is for parent councils to consider the way or ways of establishing the new Forum of up to 24 members. The more obvious ways seem to be:

- City-wide elections
- Each ASG determines nominations to the new Forum
- Determine appropriate categories/communities of interest and numbers of nominations being sought from each such category. Each category/community of interest then to determine its nominations

There are pros and cons of each approach and also practical considerations eg. holding elections. As already highlighted, we need to ensure that the process is open and transparent and not overly complicated.

Timescales

We are hoping to be able to work through the issues with parent councils and to support the inaugural meeting of the new Forum in March. We have our next scheduled PC meeting on 22 February which will focus on the Forum as well.

What happens after the Forum is established?

Officers will work with the Forum to address a number of issues, such as:

- The Forum will need to establish its Terms of Reference
- The Forum, via its Terms of reference will need to determine its remit and ways of working eg agenda setting, etc
- A key aspect is communication with all parent councils
- Clarifying the support that the Forum will need from the Authority and also clarifying the relationship with the Authority
- Consider the practical issues in securing a representative on the Education, Culture & Sports Committee

This above is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but does highlight some of the key issues.

Appendix 2

Draft vision and aims for the new Forum

VISION: To represent the views of Aberdeen City parent councils at local and national level regarding matters that have relevance to all school categories.

AIMS: The Forum will:

- provide representation for Aberdeen schools at national forum level
- provide representation for Aberdeen schools at local council level on matters that have relevance to all
- provide the initial communication to its members regarding general ACC issues
- collate feedback from its members and present it to ACC
- provide feedback from ACC to its members
- monitor communication links with members

The Forum will not:

- become involved with the issues of individual schools unless there is relevance to all schools
- act in such a way that is detrimental to the interests of one or more individual schools

In addition the new Forum would also need to demonstrate an:

- Ability to network
- Ability to share good practice

Note.

The Forum has no basis in law and acts purely in an advisory capacity

Appendix 3

Establishing the Aberdeen City Parent Forum Timeline

Action	When
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Letter and Nomination Form sent to all parent council chairs.	20 May
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nomination Forms returned to the council.	28 May
<ul style="list-style-type: none">If there are more than two nominations from an ASG, officers will advise the nominees and ask them to liaise amongst themselves to resolve. Officers will facilitate this if requested.	31 May
<ul style="list-style-type: none">All parent council chairs advised of the names and email addresses of the final 24 representatives.	7 June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Induction and preparation meeting involving officers and the designate representatives. The purpose of this meeting is to confirm a number of operational matters eg. setting the agenda for first meeting, frequency of meetings, etc; as well as clarifying the responsibilities involved in acting as an ASG representative.	10, 14 or 15 June. At 7.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prior to the inaugural meeting, officers will, on behalf of the Parent Forum designate, send out a communication to all parent councils confirming date and agenda of first meeting, etc.	16 June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inaugural meeting of Aberdeen City Parent Forum, at which a Chair will be identified.	Week commencing 21 June. To be agreed at the induction meeting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Chair will send out to all parent councils a minute of the inaugural meeting.	Week commencing 28 June.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Second meeting of Parent Forum.	September, but details to be confirmed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meeting of Aberdeen City Council with all parent councils.	16 September