

# Meeting Minutes

## South Morningside Parent Council Meeting

22 January 2024 at 7pm in person at Comiston Road

### PC Voting Members – Attending

Louisa Dall	Thom Kenrick
Angela Robinson	Dan Farthing
Bobby Pathak	Gordon Brown
Ellie Maizels	Lizzi Kenrick
Andrew Leiper	
Sarah Whitty	

### PC Voting Members – Not attending

Helena Castro	Elisabeth Quinn
Jack Bruck	Helen New
Brendan Hyland	Claire Forsman
Stuart Herring	

### PC Non-Voting Members – Attending

Grant Gillies	Maureen Murray
Elaine Jones	

### Councillors – Attending

N/A	
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### Attending Parents/Carers/ Guests

Jessika Cirkus Ross	Minhee Yun
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Neale Dutton	Abby White
Craig Fraser	Naomi Steven
Maggie Dwyer	Hannah Oertel
Johana Reilly	Kate Liversidge

## Welcome, attendees and apologies - Louisa Dall (Co-chair)

- Louisa Dall introduced the meeting and read out the apologies: Jack Bruck, Cllr Daniel Johnson and Helena Castro.

## Review/approval of previous meeting notes - Sarah Whitty (Secretary)

- The meeting minutes from November 6th were approved, with an appeal for any parents who were not previously included on the attendee list to let Sarah know directly.

## Chairs update - Ange Robinson (Co-chair)

- Ange: As a council, we've talked previously about having (and pushing the council for) meetings to discuss the P1 and P2 transitions and accommodation situation. We held this meeting just before Christmas with the Council, Canaan Lane Parent Council, Canaan Lane leadership team & Grant Gillies. Still nothing resolved, and still discussing options. Ange passed to Grant for further details.
- Grant:
  - Toilets
    - It was the first time the council has committed to money = £250k for toilet block improvements. Still waiting for written confirmation from CEC.
  - P1s and P2s coming back to SMPS
    - Still working through the best options for SMPC children. There are a few options available and the school are working with CEC and Canaan Lane
  - Care Inspector report
    - This is still pending from the Council - we hope to have the outcome/report soon.
- Ange: There has been a suggestion from Grant to have a local business providing coffees and hot drinks out of the janitor's room to encourage parental engagement and form a revenue stream for the Parent Council. Meeting to be held with the potential company. More information on that when there might be more to say.
- Discussions about the Parent Council becoming an SCIO. Further information below.

## Headteacher's update - Grant Gillies (Headteacher)

- We had Steve from Learning Through Landscapes (LTL) attend the school with input from kids and staff to find ways for everyone to be happy and safe on the playground. Grant presented some of the outcomes of the LTL report, providing the start of a

vision for the development of the playground. The kids have shared bits that they like from the playground, bits that they use, bits that they don't like, etc. There are some really simple things to do, and we will try to get some of them done and move the process along/move out of a consultation stage.

- Phase one has seen the construction of the board game hut, and it has already been used by about 40 children. We are looking for more parent volunteers to help with utilisation of the hut to run some clubs, such as chess.
- We are going to put a trim trail the length of the mural. The parent council will fund the equipment and installation of the trim trail as phase two of the refurbishment.
- Grant has funding in place to replace the smart boards in every classroom and replace teacher laptops.
- Further development plans:
  - Kids have identified the football pitch. About  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the kids play football. They want astroturf at a cost of around £70k. Could it be a community funded initiative? There would need to be discussions about it being open for weekend usage as it is not currently used on the weekend.
  - We'd make a separate infant playground w/ freeflow access to the playground.
  - We'd like a greenhouse growing area, where children can see things grow. Currently we have the grandparents gardening project - however all things come with the need for upkeep. These could be Parent Council projects as part of the wider playground refurbishment.
- We continue to seek opportunities to provide more lunch time clubs. Current offerings are nature club, hockey, boys & girls football, garage band club and dungeons and dragons. It would be great to get parents / families involved in running lunchtime clubs as when PSA's step away from playground monitoring, there tends to be more incidents in the playground (currently 16 PSA's who spend most of their time at lunch and breaks outside).
- Toilet plans - disabled toilets would go in the cloak room and the other toilets would be refitted. Andrew mentioned the crack in the toilet wall and thinks it is growing. This should be inspected prior to / as part of the refit.
- P1s and P2s in the building would not impact the toilet works - but there are two suggestions on how to expand access to make it suitable if they were relocated to the main school building.

## Playground and accommodation update - Andrew Leiper

- As Grant mentioned, Steve did a great job. The next step is to submit materials. There was a workshop with P5s - the aim was for the children and teachers to work together to make a vision document which can be used as part of fundraising, strategy, etc.
- We need more consultation with the kids. Plan is to do a full school consultation.
- Andrew: The brief is important. There is an opportunity to revamp the sports area with an all weather pitch suitable for various sports including football, basketball and hockey. There are different proposals and we want to secure it to have a bit of an enclosure.
- Ange: We probably wouldn't get grant funding if it isn't community use.
- Andrew: It's not a standard pitch size - and would be great for PE.
- Louisa: Could be used for Friday Night football.
- Andrew: We'd need planning permission, floodlights, use in winter, etc. Learning Through Landscapes would review it. Steve went through each space, assessed how they'll be used, how they can be improved.
- Putting the document together and some costs.

- Louisa: It would be great if we could work from a combination of school and Andrew's numbered list, agreeing what the priority order and then put some costs down beside each of them.
- We need to have the input of the kids to put some options to the kids. What can we do? What's easy? What could we do?
- Question around kids hiding in the greenery/foxes dens - is there an issue?
- Grant: You can't stop foxes from coming in. The Janitor goes around in the morning
- Question - it seems though that they are not allowed? Is it the PSAs telling them they can't go into it? Elaine will liaise with the PSA's to advise that children are allowed to use the bushes area for play.
- Ange: You've talked about more greenery - how do we go about doing that? How do we extend that area w/out digging out the whole playground?
- Andrew: Another consideration is the tarmac bit in front of the whole school - how could we make green boundaries. Steve didn't cover that. We can get the kids out there to chat through bits and do the strategy, once we have a plan we get a graphic designer to get a plan.
- Ange: That would help with fundraising.
- Gordon: Could we look at getting more trees planted, putting something to help with noise pollution and regular pollution? For example bamboo tressels.
- Lizzie: Bamboo could block sunlight?
- There was a small discussion about the bamboo fencing at Canaan Lane which we/the school maintain and not the council.
- Question around adding more greenery in time for spring - however if we are going to move them is there an issue. What is a realistic timeline?
- Maureen: We are putting in flowers to attract insects.
- Ange: Potential to move the seating area as people don't use it. It would be better by the wall with the sunlight.
- Grant: With the trim trail, it has been difficult to find space for it. Planters were just repaired at a cost of £3k. They were originally plywood and at risk of collapsing so we filled them with concrete.
- GENERAL REQUEST for more parental engagement with the Playground project (e.g. as project manager) please let Andrew know if you want to be included.
- Grant: Painting the toilet wall was transformative - great to have had that momentum from Elaine and team. Creates momentum overall and kids suddenly know they can do things.

## SCVO Model SCIO Constitution - Ange Robinson (Co-chair)

- This proposal is for the SMPC to become a registered charity in Scotland. Opens up a variety of questions, and Paul Reddish has done a lot of work here. He's looked at our constitution and made it into what it would look like if we were an SCIO.
- Given Louisa and Ange are coming to the end of their chair stewardship, and that this makes the SMPC more formal in some ways, we don't want to put this forward just yet if we don't have new chairs.
- Talked through changes to membership structure and how Paul had ensured we could maintain flexibility. Would need membership, and then a small number of members who are trustees. You'd need to ensure a quorum of meetings and decisions.
- If someone was on the PC and didn't make meetings or take part, then opportunity to confirm whether they want to continue as well as powers to remove. This would be helpful to ensure more people have a chance to be engaged.
- There is also a consideration around people requesting special meetings or virtual meetings. Potentially we should look at hybrid meetings however we don't think this requires us to actually hold these (vs just requiring us to think about having them). •

Thom: Trustees would be chair and secretary, and you'd need a minimum of three trustees.

- It doesn't change how we work - just makes things more formalised. For example at the AGM accounts need to be presented (and audited) and chairs voted in each AGM.
- There is an action for the Chairs to go to the PC and ask everyone to consider it. Vote on it to have the next succession in place. It would be useful to have Jack and Craig's input. We'd just have to answer to the charity regulator, and this would not bring any personal liability.
- Ellie: purpose as drafted, one thing to be cautious of is the clarity of what the purpose is. We wouldn't be able to vote to change the purpose. Rather you have to have permission to change the purpose. At the moment it includes "things not usually funded by the council" so if we ever wanted to change purpose, we need to be mindful that we want to have a purpose that is flexible enough and future proof things. Advice is to try and make our purpose as wide as possible
- Neale: You could have the PC and a charitable body.
- Thom: Yes, I think Davidson's Mains primary school does this.
- Louisa has contacts there and can pick this up with Davidson Mains
- Thom: An example with Scouts is to have policies but also minimal office bearers. Would need written policies and governance.
- We could then do normal business with PC and specially funded projects (such as MUGA) through the Charity.

## Delay Smartphones Campaign – Hannah Oertel

- Hannah presented her campaign Delay Smartphones (<https://delaysmartphones.co.uk/>) which proposes delaying smartphone purchases for children until the age of 14.
- Hannah spent the last six months digging into the research, and found it quite horrifying and is now working to get the information out. The hope is that we can all do this together. This doesn't mean kids not having phones (there are other alternatives) but just not going from not having a phone to instantly having a smartphone.
- Research
  - Study of the first generation of kids who received smartphones – 30k in total – and their mental health is the worst we've seen.
  - Exposure to content online and the behaviour that comes with that. Sexual content is so easily accessible – 84% have violence in them. This is what kids are seeing and have easy access to other harmful content (e.g. choking game, buying drugs via TikTok).
  - Children pressured into sending nude images. She's spoken to children who have left Boroughmuir and found it was normalised to be asked to share nude photos. This is easy to do when they all have smartphones.
  - It is bad for their emotional and mental health – cyberbullying, loneliness, increase in self harm which becomes trauma for the whole family.
  - They are poor for physical health – e.g. pressure on spine and looking down. Contributes to obesity, going out less. Kids are in their rooms alone, keeping one point of focus and not getting enough sleep.
  - Social development is impacted – e.g. empathy, communication. Phones are incredibly addictive and they create "tiny little addicts".
- Understand that we are in a world where kids need phones, but there are ones that are much more suitable e.g. explorer watches, Nokia phones. Know they want independence, but don't buy them a luxury car as their first choice. It's about being more intentional and what is the best possible choice for our children. There has to

be a point where our knowledge changes. We see the ramifications with this first generation – moved from a childhood based on play vs childhoods based on phones.

- So we can make a choice – all of us delay smart phones until the age of 14. Give them an alternative. 200 families are currently committing to delaying.
- There are workarounds too – for example accessing Whatsapp on an ipad at home.
- Question – what about phones in lessons at Boroughmuir?
- This is changing due to the council ipads and policy changes. Hannah is contacting the Education Secretary on new policies.
- Ange: at the moment you've targeted P6 parents.
- Hannah: Yes, also in the process of setting up SCIO. Want to get media over this year, build the campaign across all of Edinburgh and all over the country. Would love an ambassador at each school.
- Grant: currently there is a no mobile phones policy in school, and has asked Hannah to advocate to the parents vs kids as it is the parents who make the decisions.
- Hannah: Let's keep them kids as long as we can.

## Subgroups updates

### Comms – Ellie Maizels

- No updates, aside from the fact that we sent out a newsletter after the last meeting and will do so again after this meeting.

### Clubs – Louisa Dall

- Looking for help with clubs admin.
- Held a meeting with Carolyn (SMPS' business manager) and Grant. This was really helpful and really welcome from the clubs - helped give details on protection, health and safety, contact details, etc. Useful process/info on what happens if a parent doesn't pick their kid up from a club, who to phone, etc. We got sheets to take away for all the clubs from that meeting.
- All in all the clubs are running well.

### Fundraising - Kate Liversidge

- Winter fair was a big success - Jack is still counting money.
- Ange: The fair made about £3k - good news is that the card machines are now fully operational.
- What's next? Summer Fair - two dates proposed: 25th May (Bank holiday weekend) or 8th June. PLEASE NOTE THE CARD ACQUIRING MACHINES ARE NOW FULLY OPERATIONAL
- Preference from Grant and the SMPS leadership team is for 8th June and to avoid a bank holiday.

### Finance - Jack Bruck

- No update due to illness

### Transport - Thom Kenrick / Gordon Brown

- Thanks to Grant and Elaine for escorting kids across the road on Greenbank Drive
- Tomorrow children should use the longer route as there is no space on the pavement.

- Everyone is in shock that no one informed the school. We need to ensure that schools are appropriately advised of roadworks in their areas impacting crossings on school routes
- Gordon works with transport planners in his day job and they are all in shock too.
- We have been trying to keep Canaan Lane closed to through traffic since it was closed for the construction of the flats. All the councillors agreed but the consideration of the quiet route means it is likely to take c2 years, which is too long.
- General frustrations about the processes which mean roads can be closed quickly for construction and longer when it comes to child safety. Assume the road will close for the building of the hotel so why risk child safety in the interim.
- General thanks to the transport team for all their efforts, despite frustrations.
- Thom: Transport planners at council say Comiston Road is a “trunk road” and the council therefore considers traffic flow as the most important priority

## AOB

- P1 & P2 pick up times seem to have settled - how is that all going?
- Grant, Elaine and Mrs Lambie working on a plan to get the P2's up to Comiston Road more ahead of moving in the next academic year
- Neale Dutton was voted in as a voting member (proposed by Louisa and seconded by Ange).
- Search for new chairs - we need people with younger children to get involved in the Parent Council. We need to proactively reach out to P1 and P2 parents and get them involved. Grant will look for a slot - perhaps when Burns poetry is being read? While we won't likely get co chairs out of that group, it is good to get more people involved. Being a chair is not onerous - it's as much as you can do as we all have other jobs and commitments.
- Bobby has volunteered to help drum up interest from P1s/P2s.
- Louisa - we should send something separate from the school around the playground, etc. This could drum up interest.
- Hybrid PC meetings - Ange and Louisa will pick this up with Grant on what's possible.
- Hannah has fliers if anyone wants one to find out more/have a look on the website.
- Louisa closed the meeting at 20:19.