

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting of Dalry School Council**  
**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Present: Jane McQueen, Kevin Wilson-Smith, Stewart Gibson, Sarah Ade, Claire Johnston, Lorraine Ishak, Ian Johnston, Andrea Ramsay,

In attendance: Lorraine Gillies, Paul Scrimshaw

1. Attendance & Apologies: Chair welcomed those present.
2. Minutes of 2018 AGM: minutes were proposed by L Ishak and seconded by I Johnston
3. Chair's Report: Apologies were given from chair for lack of frequency of meetings during the last year due to various circumstances. Meeting times need to be revised to suit new PC as time of meetings seems to have been an issue. PC acknowledged regret at death of David Finlay and wish to note their condolences and appreciation of his service to the School Council over many year.
4. Membership: Anne McEwan is stepping down. Melinda McGaw, Susan Bielinski and Kelly Frank no longer have children at either school and are therefore ineligible. Stewart Gibson, Kevin Wilson-Smith, Claire Johnston and Jane McQueen, joined Ian Johnston, Sara Ade, Lorraine Ishak, Richard Kiernon, Katy Nash and Andrea Ramsay (until summer 2020) as the 2019-20 School Council.
5. Appointment of Office Bearers: Ian Johnston was re-appointed as chair. Discussion was had over finding a clerk for minutes and accounts/treasurer duties. Three members put themselves forward as signatories for the bank account - A Ramsay will supply the necessary paperwork.
6. A Ramsay noted the need for more frequent meetings.

## **AGM closed and Business Meeting started**

7. Primary head teacher's report: P Scrimshaw gave head teacher's report for Dalry Primary (see accompanying sheet)
8. Secondary head teacher's report: L Gillies gave head teacher's report for Dalry Secondary (see accompanying sheet). L Gillies noted Dalry's SQA results were excellent; L Ishak asked if they were better in comparison to CD. L Gillies replied CD did well too and it was hard to compare as Dalry's numbers are so small.
9. FoDS fundraising report: funding has been applied for and received from the Glenkens Community Shop and Natural Power Consultants Ltd for a traversing wall on the school playing field and a secondary Geography field trip. Funding has been applied for and received for a climbing structure, from Blackcraig Windfarm.
10. Council budget proposals and transformation project: Chair noted Dalry secondary is expensive. The council could save around £800k a year if they closed Dalry (see attached sheets).

L Ishak gave feedback/overview from council education budget cuts meeting regarding school estates in October which she attended along with S Ade and P Scrimshaw. She said parents and teachers alike were saying there is an obvious need for consolidation. Speculated that there is an intention to half the number of schools in D&G. P Scrimshaw stated that he heard comments directly suggesting closing Dalry as when you see a list of schools and their cost per pupil Dalry secondary stands out as very expensive, so on paper seems the obvious choice to close. L Ishak noted the response of speakers at the meeting to a comment on amalgamating Kirkcudbright Academy and CDHS; they seemed very loath to answer anything directly regarding this potential.

Chair noted that the council tried to close eight schools last year but were only successful in closing five; Ae, Garlieston and Sorbie were kept open through parents opposition of the proposed closure. Also chair commented that we need to create good links with other parent forums to allow people to understand why our school is so expensive, so they are in sympathy with us. A Ramsay asked if we are still on the deprivation index and K Wilson-Smith responded that Dalry is on the index.

*Note JJ has checked since the meeting and Glenkens East and West are on the 5th and 6th SIMD deciles respectively*

Chair asked L Gillies and P Scrimshaw the impact on Dalry if cuts proposed are implemented. L Gillies commented that the change to minimum class size could impact hugely on subjects with lower uptake, which are often the creative subjects. Chair asked L Gillies if pressure could be put on Dalry to run only up to S3, as this had been suggested previously by the education board. L Gillies didn't know. She said schools don't like to share teachers due to the logistics of this but in theory the contracts they are employed under would allow this. P Scrimshaw noted that full-time primary school teachers have 2.5 hours non-classroom prep time allowed per week and felt that through juggling their hours, the council may be able to save by reducing their hours and so cutting this time. He also commented that learning support has been substantially reduced and he feels that potentially they may change the structure so that there are specialist teachers focussing on specific learning needs who work across the area and so schools would have to bid for their time. This would all add to stress levels in the classroom and for teachers. This is all speculation at present but look like very real potentials.

Chair entreated parents to go to meetings and voice their concerns as much as they can – make our voices heard. L Ishak noted that the council's hand is being forced with these cuts and they are trying to do their best from their perspective. We need to make sure our perspective is noted also.

Chair reminded committee of plan to create a promotional brochure for the secondary school to encourage Glenkens parents to send their children to Dalry rather than CDHS and also encourage parents from outwith the catchment to send their children to Dalry secondary. A Ramsay suggested that running more than six Nat 5s would attract more parents. L Gillies commented that other schools who offer seven Nat 5s offer PE as compulsory.

A Ramsay continued, stating that we need to offer something better or more than other schools to encourage more students. To highlight what makes us different in a positive way. C Johnston stated that people just don't know about it, and it needs to be promoted better. P Scrimshaw stated that the Kells primary promotional brochure worked as often

there is a lack of information or misinformation, such as estate agents stating on their property details for local properties that the local school is x miles away when it was in fact next door to the house.

Chair noted that the council are getting stricter on placing requests at non-catchment schools, both primary and secondary. However, Dalry secondary has a lot of time before it is at capacity and so there is little risk that encouraging more pupils will become a problem any time soon. L Gillies noted that classes could increase from their current average of eight pupils up to 20 without issue.

Chair stated that he will attend the next budget cut meeting on 11 November in Dalbeattie. Asked for feedback to give on form council had sent out to PCs. K Wilson-Smith noted a concern that council don't give evidence of impact of savings they are suggesting. Not enough testable evidence on proposals to make informed decisions. Utility equation – figure alone isn't enough to warrant changes. Chair noted that if there is a need to make £20million savings over the next three years, the education changes/cuts the council has noted only make a saving of £12million, so they are still hugely under target.

Chair commented that the structure of education in D&G was created when there was a large rurally dispersed population, and therefore many small schools scattered around the countryside. These are no longer a practical educational solution due to rural depopulation, and now needs to be addressed. A new all-through school for the Glenkens has been suggested in the past.

K Wilson-Smith commented that consultation should be lead by teaching experts, and raised concerns over hasty and ill-conceived changes just to save money. Chair noted that it was 10 years since the forced closure of Corsock primary school (the council sold the school building within months of closing it, presumably to ensure it couldn't re-open) and since then the shop and pub have also closed – the school closing was the death-knell for the village. This was one of the last schools to be closed by council decree as changes to policy mean that now they can't close without parent and community support. Today there are enough children in the village for a school to run and they have to travel out to CD or other schools outwith the village. It was noted that what we really need in the region is more rural schools funding from the Scottish government.

Chair commented that Western Isles Council have closed five small secondary schools in Scotland recently and we can request feedback on the impact of this.

Discussion ensued on how to access windfarm money for the school. Can't be used for something that is considered a statutory requirement which should be funded by the council. Ideas offered were clubs running in the school could apply for repairs and improvements in the school building. FoDS can be used as a medium to apply for funding for the school.

11. Improving parent engagement: C Johnston noted that the problem was the same at Lockerbie school where she previously worked, so not unique to small schools – people have so little time and assume someone else will go along to meetings, etc. K Wilson-Smith suggested voting systems on Fb were very easy. Also potential for electronic screen situated outside the school where people could easily leave comments, as seen in large department stores, etc.

Action – K Wilson-Smith agreed to put some proposals together for engaging the parent forum through social media methods.

C Johnston suggested school could engage parents by posting more info on their Fb page, such as pupil achievements, etc, as done by other schools.

Chair asked L Gillies if there is an event for prospective parents to come along and visit Dalry secondary and, if so, whether the PC can be present perhaps offering tea and biscuits and showing a friendly, engaging face. L Gillies said they would welcome this. It was noted that this year there was one p7 pupil at Kells and they were planning to go to CDHS, and seven or eight p7 pupils at Dalry, not noted which secondary they were planning to attend.

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 6pm.** It was agreed to invite Kells PCto discuss effects of school budget cuts on wider Glenkens education and how we can work together.