

Dullatur Community Council

Secretary

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Minutes of Public Meeting held on 1st November 2007, in Dullatur Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present Margaret Smillie DCC, Gordon Wright, Chair Westerwood Community Council, Cathy Craigie MSP and 10 residents of Dullatur and one child.

Apologies J McLean, Chair DCC; M Kennedy, DCC; E Watson, DCC, P Chard DCC; Mr & Mrs. Flynn, C Devlin, Mr & Mrs. McCann, Cllr Barry McCulloch; It appears that Cllrs Gordon Murray, Alan O'Brien & Bob Chadha did not receive their e-mail invitation sent on 19th October.

Margaret Smillie opened the meeting at 7.40pm by saying the purpose of the meeting was to address three points of concern only; These were, the hut accommodation, lunch time facilities and the size of the school in respect of the proposed 562 houses to be built within the school catchment area.

The Community Council had no issue with the administration or excellent teaching standard within both schools and agreed the Head teachers, staff and assistants were doing an outstanding job in difficult circumstances.

It was agreed by all that no names of residents and the pupil would be used in this minute.

Pupil was introduced and told of his typical year in the "huts".

MSP: Asked how long he had been in the huts.

Pupil: Two years out of four at St Andrews Primary School.

Parent: With possibly a third as he is in a composite class.

Parent: It is disappointing that a pupil is in hut accommodation for 2 out of 4 years in a seemingly flagship school, what hope is there for younger pupils coming up through the school. How long will they have to wait for decent accommodation?

MSP: Asked the conditions in the summer/ winter.

Pupil: Very hot in summer and when the windows were open flies would come in. In the winter there were leaks, some had been repaired but a few leaks came back. It is very hot and steamy in cold wet days.

MSP: What about the flies?

Pupil: They were just annoying.

MSP: Where do you go in bad weather / winter?

Pupil: We have places to read, play games etc. with teachers or classroom assistants with us.

MSP: What about the toilets?

Pupil: They are very smelly, and water and paper is lying on the floor

M S, DCC: Do you see at any time school cleaners cleaning the toilets.

Pupil: No, the teachers and pupils clear up the paper and help clean the class rooms.

MSP: Pupils may not necessarily see cleaners.

GW,WWCC: How many classes are in the huts.

Pupil: In the "huts", there are three class rooms, including a toilet and cloakroom

GW, WWCC: Asked P to draw a plan of the toilets / cloakroom in relation to classrooms.

MSP: Any good points about the huts.

Pupil: Yes, they are much quieter the main school, you are not disturbed with the noise from other classes.

GW WWCC: Corrected his error in his letter by saying there were 8 new classrooms instead of 4 as first stated in the original letter. Cumbernauld Primary School had spaces available, the pupil accommodation problem lay with St Andrews Primary School

MSP: Can you tell us about the lunch times? How are you called to lunch?

Pupil: They are very busy, sometimes you can sit at tables. There are 3 bells for lunch.

MSP: If you cannot get a table where do you sit?

Pupil: Packed lunches are better, but just as busy. No tables, we sit on benches or chairs but we have to put our lunch box on the floor to eat from it.

Parent: Stated he was a pupil in Kildrum Primary School, thirty years ago and he ate from a table and thought it was unacceptable in this day and age that a "flagship" school should not have sufficient tables for pupils to sit in comfortable surroundings.

Parent: Get extra tables.

MS, DCC: I did hear from a parent that tables were purchased, or an offer had been made to supply tables. It cannot be substantiated, if they were indeed purchased and were not put out.

MSP: Do you have enough time to eat your lunch?

Pupil: Yes, I eat my lunch quickly to get out to play, but others don't. At the third bell, sometimes pupils are still waiting to be served lunch and sometimes food has run out.

GW, WWCC: This was acceptable, as a good choice on the day could result in a particular shortage on the school dinner menu side.

MSP, MS, DCC and Parents: Agreed.

Parents: Stated their younger children came home with barely eaten lunch boxes, they had not sufficient time to eat their lunch. This had been reported to the school.

MSP: Were children forced to hurry their lunch.

Pupil: They were asked to hurry up, usually by older ones.

MSP: Do you have a pupil council representative for each class.

Pupil: Yes.

MSP: Thanked P and suggested to the child that if he had any future problems they should be taken to the "Pupil Council".

Pupil: Agreed.

MS, DCC: Thanked P for giving us his insight into his school time.

MSP: The overall problem of lunch times seems to be the management of the number of pupils from both schools taking packed lunches and meals. The hut accommodation is not satisfactory.

Parents: Stated that they had taken the problems last year to the Parent Council / PTA and they were told that the problems of the school had nothing to do with the respective Community Councils. Both Parents disagreed and stated they will still bring their problems to the Community Council.

MSP: Suggested that any future problems should be taken to the Parent Council.

MS, DCC: The Community Council will still deal with school issues and forward concerns to The Parent Council, NLC Councilors and MSP.

Parents: Said this had been taken directly to the school, and the former PTA / Parent Council last year and no significant improvements were seen this year.

Parent: Suggested an Open Forum for parents.

MSP: Thought this was a good idea.

Parent: Or a "tick the box" questionnaire that was given out at parent's night, as this would get the maximum feedback from the parents.

Parent: It was the general impression that parents were keeping quiet as they did not wish a knock on effect on the children, but car park gossip was rife. This is one of the main reasons that Parent Council meetings have a poor attendance. It takes the parents back to pupil days and when a question was asked, no answer was forthcoming. A questionnaire is a great idea, although parents may not put their names to it.

Parent: It would appear to the parents of St Andrews Primary pupils that Cumbernauld Primary School has a priority to improvements due to its greater number of pupils. It had 8 new classrooms built, 2 are used for infant lunch facilities.

MSP: Cumbernauld Primary & St Andrews Primary have the highest number of pupils in the whole of North Lanarkshire with a total of under 1,000 pupils (actual number C P 601 pupils, St A's 226 for the 2007/08 session).

MS,DCC: Taken from St Andrew's schools web site. "Both schools have the best of facilities and resources to meet the needs of the 5-14 curriculum and to allow both pupils and staff to work in pleasant and appropriate surroundings." There is no mention of "huts" or temporary accommodation in their mission statement.

A general discussion took place about the size of the school and the effect of the proposed 562 houses on the school in the Draft of the Local Plan. Cathy Craigie, as already stated did not think another extension was an option and stated the land ear marked for the former Carrickstone School site should be revisited and another school built, as the 500 + houses will more than fill it.

GW.WWCC: At the original Public Hearing for the new school 8 years ago everyone present told Cllr Gray that with the number of homes being built in Dullatur, Westerwood, Carrickstone and Craigmarloch, all within the school catchment area, before a brick was laid the school would be too small.

MSP, MS, DCC & Parent: All agreed, as they all were present at the meeting.

MS, DCC: Families who purchased homes particularly in Carrickstone, within walking distance to the school were bussed to St Mary's.

GW, WWCC: Agreed, as his daughter was in that situation.

Parent: Was seriously concerned at the number of buses that would be in the pick up area in the future if the developments go ahead. At present private cars are not allowed in the school turning areas but are causing a serious hazard elsewhere in the areas adjacent to the school. Parents are turning up at the school as early as 2.30pm to get a parking space. A serious accident is just waiting to happen.

GW, WWCC: He could envisage 8 double deckers on a daily basis.

Parent: Why were there a disproportionate number of classes allocated to Cumbernauld Primary School

MSP: Cumbernauld Primary was a known quantity of around 600 pupils at the time of the transfer, this has not varied much over the years. When St Andrews Primary opened they had nothing

to compare and had very small classes, averaging 8 - 10 per class so they had room to spare, in present times the pupil uptake had gone through the roof.

Parent: Asked if anyone could tell him the dimensions of the playground as to his eye it was narrow, surely for that amount of pupils running around, playing football and the likes, this could be a potential health and safety issue.

MSP: Will look into it.

Parent: This was a concern for many parents.

Parent: At the end of the day it is the Education Dept. and Planning Depts. who have the ultimate say in school development within the area. The teachers, parents and pupils are the people who are suffering.

Parent: Is it possible that another extension could be built to the rear of the school.

GW, WWCC: They have not finished clearing away the debris from the last extension; the huge mound of earth is still lying where the contractors left it. At least they could grass it and make it less of an eye sore.

MSP: Did not think it was an option and repeated a new school is required.

GW, WWCC: This is why you must sign the Draft Representation Form for the North Lanarkshire Local Plan. At least you will have your say in your objection to the plan affecting this area.

Parent: The forms should have been sent to every resident and not left to Community Councils to distribute them.

MSP: It was posted on NLC's website and in the local press, a public meeting was held last week.

MS, DC: That is easily overlooked, as I would imagine not many residents would buy the local paper. Particularly in this area and the present school situation it would have gone unheard, if not for Community Councils, Forums etc. bringing to the public domain.

MSP: Agreed.

GW, WWCC: That is the very reason we are now in this situation with the school issues, it was brought up at Westerwood Community Council's meeting to address the Local Plan where 50 people attended.

MSP: Agreed.

Parent: We are in a fitness age, why do we not have a direct safe walking or cycling path to the school. The only route option we have is crossing an increasingly busy Eastfield Road and route that meanders through housing estates and underpasses.

Parent: Some parents would rather risk walking on the grass verge, than use a route that more than doubles the journey.

MSP: The path and underpass scheme was inherited from the Cumbernauld Development Corporation design for Cumbernauld, where the public did not come in contact with roads or traffic. It is possible that alternatives could be looked at.

Parent: I would not use an underpass.

GW, WWCC: There is also a ballot system in place for nursery places, names are put into the hat in January and the unlucky children are placed in the other local nurseries. There is an exception if a sibling attends the school.

This was confirmed by the parents.

In closing the meeting;

GW, WWCC: Stated that a meeting with Mr McIver, Councilors and the Heads of both schools had been held recently and only 5 of the 6 points raised from the meeting with Westerwood Community Council had been discussed.

Margaret Smillie thanked everyone present and closed the meeting at 9.40pm. It was agreed it was an informative meeting and it is hoped that it will have some effect on improving conditions within the school and perhaps Cathy Craigie and the NLC Councilors will lobby to have some real changes made.

