

Stromness Academy Parent Council Chair's Report

30th August 2023

This year for the Parent Council has focused mainly on re-establishing ourselves following the disruption of lockdown. At the start of the year no office bearers remained from the previous committee and therefore electing new ones was our first priority. We are very grateful to Gillian Ritch for taking on the role of Chair, to Thorfinn Johnston as Vice Chair, to Caroline Lourie as Treasurer and Fundraising Coordinator and to Sally McNeish as Secretary. We are also grateful to all Council members who have helped us get back on our feet this year.

Activities

We wanted a presence at the S1 and S2 parents evenings, and so we served drinks and sold baking, offering parents the chance to sign up either for the Parent Council or for occasional fundraising help. Although few signatures were added we felt it was important to have a presence there as it may take some parents a few years to feel ready to join. We did the same at the S4-6 Parents Evening, Careers Choice Evening and the Senior Phase Course Choice Evening. We didn't attend S3 but would like to be next year.

At the Spring Concert in March we organised refreshments and sold raffles.

Our largest fundraiser was the Christmas Fair which Caroline organised, selling tables to stallholders and providing refreshments and additional fundraising games/raffle. This raised a good amount of money but attendance could have been higher as there were events going on in Kirkwall and the West Mainland on the same day. We agreed that in future we would keep the stalls and refreshments all in the same space. A huge thank you to Caroline for an enormous amount of work on this.

Parent Council members formed a part of the selection panel for a new DHT and HT , the latter of which took more than one round of interview. A big thank you to Kate Shiner, Caroline Lourie, Thorfinn Johnston and Mark Summers for representing us several times at interviews and shortleeting meetings.

Plans to hold a curry and quiz night in the summer term were put on hold due to unavailability of our own members and the difficulty in finding a free date. We hope instead to have a substantial presence at the This is Their Time (Bandcomp) concert after the summer.

Finally, we supported the school with the Senior Phase Celebration Evening by joining in the planning, contributing to the cost of prizewinner vouchers, organising refreshments, setup and clear up. We took the opportunity of this evening to give our own award to Frances Sinclair in recognition of how much of her own time and resources she puts into making the library welcoming and inclusive for all pupils, and for the long running and popular D and D club.

Reviewing this year we have discussed a provisional fundraising plan for next year, which includes This is Their Moment, Stall at the Primary Winter Fair, Burns Night ceilidh/supper and summer event eg curry and quiz?

Funding Granted

We have granted a significant number of requests from staff this year, see attached summary sheet. Many of these have not yet been paid as we await receipts from school.

Besides these public events there has also been a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure that the administration of the Parent Council is up to date. We have rewritten our constitution, with thanks to Gillian Ritch, Sally McNeish and Thorfinn Johnston. This is available on the school website. We have also created a Data Protection policy as we hold contact details of parents. We will need to actively renew these permissions at the start of each school year.

We have closed down our facebook page, deciding instead to use the whole school facebook page if needed as it will reach more people. We now have a Whatsapp group which enables us to consult one another as needed between official meetings. This has worked well.

It has also taken a large part of our year to update our bank account with new signatories. Sally McNeish and Caroline Lourie are now established as signatories and can remain so going forward. We have just gained access to internet banking but have yet to make full use of it while we await school receipts. Thanks to Sally and Caroline for ongoing work behind the scenes on this.

In summary, we have moved a long way this year, from no committee to an active, established Council who have raised and donated significant sums of money and participated in the life of the school at key moments. We would like to find a way of raising our profile amongst parents and gathering more members as we remain hovering on the edge of viability, but are very grateful to all who have helped us remain active.

Sally McNeish (Chair)

