

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2007

DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR PARENT FORUM AND PARENT COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Education Committee for the draft Constitution for the Parent Council and Parent Forum.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive wish to improve parental involvement in children's education and a wide ranging consultation was carried out across Scotland in March-June 2005. The Scottish Executive produced a report on the consultation in July 2005 and, subsequently, the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 was approved by the Scottish Parliament. The Act requires education authorities to promote and support the engagement of parents within their children's education and learning; it also requires education authorities to promote and support the creation of Parent Councils in their schools.
- 2.2 Each school will have a parent body entitled the Parent Forum. All parents/carers/guardians will be a member of the Forum. Education authorities will be required to promote the Parent Forum and to promote parental involvement within schools. School Boards will cease from end-July 2007.
- 2.3 Each school will also create a Parent Council. The Parent Forum will decide upon the nature and type of Parent Council for their school and this will involve full consultation with all parents and interested bodies. The key aspects of the Parent Council are:
- The method of appointment to the Council will be decided by parents.
 - The Head Teacher has a right and duty attend.
 - The Head Teacher must make an annual report to the Council (and provide a summary to all parents).
 - An authority-developed constitution will be offered for consideration but will not be mandatory nor imposed.
 - The Council will be less restrictive or prescriptive as compared to the School Board.
- 2.4 The main functions and powers of the Parent Council will be as follows:
- Exercise functions with a view to raising standards and quality of education and to develop children's full potential.
 - Promote contact between school, parents and community and with parents of prospective pupils and others.
 - Ascertain views of parents on any matter of interest or concern and make representations to the Head Teacher or education authority (unresolved matters can be taken to Her Majesty's Inspector of Education).
 - To be involved in the appointment processes of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers.

3. IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN EAST AYRSHIRE

- 3.1** The authority consulted widely on the initial proposals in April and May 2005 and responded formally via the Education Committee. We also made a formal response on consultation regarding the appointment processes of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers at the appropriate stages.
- 3.2** A Parent Strategy Group has been formed to take forward the implementation of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. This Strategy Group has a wide ranging representation of parents and educational interests in order to fully support implementation of the Act. The main tasks of the Strategy Group are to develop the authority's strategy to promote the involvement of parents in their children's learning; to promote and support the formation of the Parent Forum and Parent Council in each school; to develop the draft Constitution for the Parent Council.
- 3.3** Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), on behalf of the Scottish Executive, are providing information, documentation and support to parents and education staff on the implementation of the Act. A number of events and activities have been run for parents and staff and we continue to work closely with LTS on this matter.
- 3.4** East Ayrshire Council has informed all parents/carers that they are now automatically members of the Parent Forum for their child's school. As a member of the Forum they will be informed about their child's learning and the ways in which they can become involved in the work of the school. All parents/carers have been issued with the Scottish Executive leaflet "*Making the Difference : A New Law to Support Parents*" which explains the main features of the Act in relation to the new Parent Forums and Parent Councils.
- 3.5** Every school within the authority held an open meeting for parents to raise awareness about the new Act and to promote parental involvement. These took place over the period October 2006 – January 2007. This consultation with parents has allowed each school to create its own working party to take forward implementation at school level; this has also confirmed that each establishment wishes to have a Parent Council for their school.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF PARENT COUNCIL AND CONSTITUTION

- 4.1** One of the first tasks to be carried out by the Parent Forum is to decide how to set up the school's Parent Council. To assist Parent Forums with this task, it is intended to distribute a draft Constitution for consideration and approval by parents.
- 4.2** The draft Constitution has been developed by the Parent Strategy Group in consultation with a wide range of interested parties. The intention is to provide support to the parents within each school in determining the nature of their Parent Council, while not imposing a standard model.
- 4.3** The draft Constitution is designed to assist parents/carers to establish a Parent Council for their school and to support their operation of the Parent Council. It sets out the objectives of the Parent Council and proposes a number of options for the operation of the Parent Council. These options should be discussed by parents within each school and their Constitution developed as they wish. The key points of the Constitution are as follows:
- A majority of parents (i.e the Parent Forum) must agree the format of the Constitution.

- The Constitution may be changed after obtaining consent from the annual meeting of the Parent Forum.
- The number of members of the Parent Council should be decided by parents in drawing up the Constitution.
- The number of co-opted members of the Parent Council should be decided by parents in drawing up the Constitution.
- The Parent Council must be chaired by a parent of a child attending the school.
- Meetings of the Parent Council will be open to the public, unless the Council is discussing an issue which it considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- The local elected member(s) for the ward in which the school is located have the right to attend and speak at any Parent Council or Parent Forum meeting.

The draft Constitution is attached as Appendix 1. To assist parents in this development, a leaflet outlining the key differences between School Boards and Parent Councils has been prepared and is being issued.

- 4.4** Each school will receive a copy of the draft Constitution and each working party will consider its adoption for their school. Consultation will then take place with all parents/carers for that school in order to approve the proposed Constitution. It is intended that each school will have adopted its Constitution by the end of April 2007.
- 4.5** Following the adoption of an appropriate Constitution for each school, the authority will inform parents/carers of the outcome of this process and for the arrangements for establishing a Parent Council. It is intended that the Parent Councils will commence operation from August 2007.

5. INTERIM PARENT COUNCIL

- 5.1** When two or more schools are being amalgamated an Interim Parent Forum and Interim Parent Council will be formed. The Interim Parent Forum will consist of all parents with children in attendance at the amalgamating schools. The Interim Parent Council will consist of the members of each Parent Council of the amalgamating schools. The Interim Parent Council will focus on relevant and competent matters related solely to the amalgamated school. The Interim Parent Council will commence working at an appropriate date (to be determined in discussion with the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services) prior to the physical amalgamation of the schools.

Following amalgamation of the schools, the constitution for the Parent Council of the amalgamated school will be agreed with the Parent Forum in accordance with the guidance set out in this paper. The new constitution will be agreed within three months of the amalgamated school opening. The new Parent Council will normally be in place within 6 months of the amalgamated school opening; the Interim Parent Council would continue to operate until this point.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1** It is proposed that East Ayrshire Council continue to support parental involvement and engagement through the Parent Forum and the Parent Council. The authority will also develop its parental involvement strategy and submit this for consideration by the Education Committee in due course.
- 6.2** Training and support for parents/carers will be put in place to assist and support Parent Councils to carry out their functions. The authority will work with national bodies such as LTS on these matters.

- 6.3** The Parents Steering Group will continue to operate at authority level and continue to involve as wide-ranging parental representation as possible from schools. The Steering Group will continue to take forward initiatives at authority level to support parents.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The developments outlined in this paper have been funded from the Scottish Executive 2006-07 funding allocated to local authorities to assist them in preparation for the implementation of the Parental Involvement Act. Additional funding for 2007-08 of £28,000 has been allocated to East Ayrshire to further support parental involvement.

8. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The draft Constitution is based on guidance issued by the Scottish Executive in line with the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of the draft Constitution.

9. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** These developments promote the themes of Community Learning and Improving Opportunities.

10. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** Nil.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1** It is recommended that members:

- (i) approve the draft Constitution for the Parent Council and Parent Forum
- (ii) approve the further steps proposed to promote parental involvement in schools, and
- (iii) otherwise, note the contents of this report

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/EO'N
2 March 2007

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Progress Report on Parental Involvement Bill – Education Committee, 31 January 2006.
2. Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 - Scottish Executive, September 2006

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service:
Schools Support (01563 576126) or Muriel Reid, Quality Improvement Officer (01563 555650)

Implementation Officer: John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL:
Department of Educational and Social Services

Name of School: _____ -

Parent Council Constitution

This draft Constitution is based on the guidance given in the Scottish Executive document 'Parents as Partners in their Children's learning Toolkit'

1. This is the constitution for *Anytown* School Parent¹ Council (or alternative name).
2. The Parent Forum will consist of all parents with children in attendance at *Anytown* School.
3. The objectives of the Parent Council are:
 - To work in partnership with the school to create a welcoming school which is inclusive for all parents
 - To promote partnership between the school, its pupils and all its parents
 - To develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of the pupils
 - To identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and other matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils
 - To ensure confidentiality is respected in relation to the individual pupil, staff and parent.
4. The membership will be a minimum of three parents of children attending the school plus the Headteacher (or her or his representative). The Headteacher has a duty and a right to attend and to act as an adviser to the Council. The maximum size is *[insert a figure according to size of school and as agreed by members of the Parent Forum]*. The meeting will be quorate with *[insert a figure according to size of school and as agreed by members of the Parent Forum]* members attending. Parent members must remain in the majority at all meetings.
5. Members of the Parent Council will be selected for a period of *[insert one/two/three school session (s)]*, after which they may put themselves forward for re-selection if they wish. All the parents of children at the school can take part in the selection by post, text or email. Parents will have *[insert figure agreed by Parent Forum]* weeks to select their representatives. The Parent Council will be in place by the end of August in all schools in East Ayrshire.

or

Any parents of a child at the school can volunteer to be a member of the Parent Council. In the event that the number of volunteers exceeds the number of places set out in the constitution, members will be selected by *[insert chosen method of selection]*. Anyone not selected to be a member of the Parent Council may be offered the opportunity to be part of any sub-groups set up by the Council. The Parent Council will be in place by the end of August in all schools in East Ayrshire.

The Parent Council will be made up of two representatives from each year group

¹ Throughout this Constitution the term "parent" is used as shorthand for all adults who have a caring role for children and who are responsible for a child's education.

who will be chosen by the parents of children in those year groups. The Parent Council will be in place by the end of August in all schools in East Ayrshire.

or

Any parents of a child at the school can volunteer to be a member of the Parent Council. The Parent Council will be made up of two representatives from each year group who will be chosen by the parents of children in those year groups. The Parent Council will be in place by the end of August in all schools in East Ayrshire. Places can be held for new parents in Primary 1/Secondary 1.

6. In respect of a denominational school, at least one member of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school is conducted will also serve on the Parent Council.
7. The Parent Council may co-opt up to *[insert figure as agreed by members of the Parent Forum*]* to assist it with carrying out its functions.

or

Two-thirds of the Parent Council will be made up of Parent Forum members and one-third of the membership will be reserved for other co-opted members including teaching and support staff in the school, pupils, young people, business representatives etc. The number of parent members on the Parent Council must always be greater than co-opted members.

Co-opted members will be invited to serve for a period of *[insert one/two/three year(s)]* after which time the Parent Council will review and consider requirements for co-opted membership.

8. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Council will be agreed by the Parent Council members immediately following its formation.

Office bearers will be re-selected by the Parent Council on an annual basis (at the annual meeting of the Parent Forum). The Parent Council will be chaired by a parent of a child attending Anytown School. If the child ceases to be a pupil, a new Chair will be agreed at the next meeting.

or

If the Parent Forum decides to have a Chair:

The Parent Council will be chaired by a parent of a child attending *Anytown* School. If the child ceases to be a pupil, a new Chair will be agreed at the next meeting.

or

If the child ceases to be a pupil, the role of the Chair will be rotated around the parent members of the Parent Council until a new Chair is appointed at the annual meeting.

9. The Parent Council is accountable to the Parent Forum for *Anytown* School and will

make a report to it at least once each year on its activities on behalf of all the parents.

If [x] number [or %] of members of the Parent Forum request a special general meeting to discuss issues falling within the Council's remit, the Parent Council shall arrange this. The Parent Council shall give all members of the Forum at least 2 weeks notice of the meeting and, at the same time circulate notice of the matter, or matters, to be discussed at the meeting.

- 10.** The annual meeting will be held in April/May/June of each year. The first Annual meeting will take place by end of June 2008. A notice of the meeting including, date, time, and place will be sent to all members of the Parent Forum at least 2 weeks in advance. The Act requires that the meeting will include:
- a report of the work of the Parent Council and its committee(s)
 - re-selection/confirmation of office bearers as appropriate
 - where appropriate, the selection of the new Parent Council members as required
 - discussion of issues that members of the Parent Forum may wish to raise
 - approval of the accounts and appointment of the auditor, where necessary.

- 11.** The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term.

Any two members of the Parent Council can request that an additional meeting be held, and all members of the parent Council will be given at least one week's notice of date, time and place of the meeting.

- 12.** Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each parent member at the meeting will have one vote², with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
- 13.** If a Parent Council member acts in a way that is considered by other members to undermine the objectives of the Parent Council, their membership of the Parent Council shall be terminated if the majority of parent members agree. Termination of membership would be confirmed in writing to the member.
- 14.** Copies of the minutes of all meetings will be available to all parents of children at *Anytown* School and to all staff at the school, and the local authority. Copies will be available from the Secretary of the Parent Council/Clerk to the Parent Council and from the school office, web sites etc.
- 15.** Meetings of the Parent Council shall normally be open to the public, unless the Parent Council is discussing an issue which is considered should be dealt with on a confidential basis. In such circumstances, only members of the Parent Council and the Headteacher, or his or her representative, can attend.
- 16.** The Treasurer will, if appropriate, open a bank or building society account in the name of the Parent Council for all Parent Council funds. Withdrawals will require the signature of the Treasurer and one other Parent Council member. The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all income and expenditure, and will provide a summary of this for each Parent Council meeting and a full account for the Annual Meeting. The Parent Council accounts will be audited by the auditor appointed at the previous Annual Meeting.

The Parent Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in

² If the Council wishes co-opted members to have a vote then this must be stated in the constitution
Draft Constitution for Parent Forum and Parent Council.doc/EO'N

accordance with the objectives of the Parent Council.

- 17.** The Parent Council may change its Constitution after obtaining consent from members of the Parent Forum (this may take place at the annual meeting). Members of the Parent Forum will be sent a copy of any proposed amendment and given reasonable time to respond to the proposal.
- 18.** Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school (or schools), where this continues.
- 19.** The Chair of the Education Committee or a representative and the local Elected Member(s) for the ward(s) of the school's catchment area have the right to attend and speak at any Parent Council or Parent Forum meeting.
- 20.** The Executive Director of Educational and Social Services or a representative has the right to attend and speak at any Parent Council or Parent Forum meeting.