

## **Meeting with Chairs of North West Sutherland ASG Parent Councils and Barry Northedge**

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 6.30pm, IT Room, Kinlochbervie High School**

**Present:** Barry Northedge – Quality Improvement Manager (BN); Graeme Smart – Acting HT KLB High School, Durness & KLB Primaries(GS); Heather Paterson – Acting DHT KLB High School (HP); Aileen MacDonald – Acting HT Scourie Primary School (AM); Katy Lee - Acting DHT KLB & Durness Primary Schools (KL); Christine Corbett – Chair of KLB High Parent Council (CC); Leanne McKee – Chair of Durness Primary Parent Council (LM); Carol-Anne Forsyth – Chair of Scourie Primary Parent Council (CF); Audrey Morrison – Chair of KLB Primary Parent Council (AMo); Stefanie Breckenridge – KLB Primary Parent Council (SB)

**Also present:** Paula Macleod – Admin Assistant – KLB High School to take minutes.

**Apologies:** Anne Morrison – KLB primary Parent Council

Barry Northedge opened the meeting with a welcome to all.

BN – the purpose of this meeting is to look at schools in the North West Sutherland ASG and how the ASG is going to move forward. At the time of this meeting nothing is pre-determined, there are lots of decisions to be made, these don't have to be made right now, tonight is to open up the discussion.

Past, Present & Future

The management system (cluster) with KLB HS, KLB PS & Durness PS came about by happenstance. A HT was needed for the two Primary Schools and Susan Robertson was put in place managing all three. Scourie was a stand-alone with an HT. In the most it was felt by Barry that this system had gone smoothly.

Susan Robertson has now retired.

CC & LM – the general feeling of the cluster structure was that it was too much for one person and it had not gone smoothly. Also, in general, parents felt that the retirement of Susan and the situation that went before required clarification. BN could not comment. Parents felt that trust needs to be rebuilt between the authority and the Parent body.

BN – with the HT retiring the authority felt it was important to have continuity in the schools which is how the current situation came about. Staff that were known and trusted by Parents stepped into the current roles, GS as Acting HT of KLB High, KLB PS & Durness PS, AM as Acting Head of Scourie PS, KL as Acting DHT of KLB & Durness PS and HP as Acting DHT of KLB HS. The Parents in attendance felt that the Parent body were happy with this situation at the moment. BN stated that the intention was to keep the status quo until the end of the 2016-2017 session in June. He also stated that the Authority was pleased with how the situation has been handled by the staff mentioned above and would like to offer his thanks to them. BN – they have done a remarkable job.

LM – Durness PS has had a lot of changes and feels they now need and deserve some calm.

BN – As previously stated this arrangement will carry on until next summer but we do not want another situation to carry on indefinitely due to happenstance. We need to look at what structure we can put in place for 2017-18 onwards. At the moment Highland have too many Head Teachers, too many vacant posts with a real struggle to recruit HTs, falling rolls in Highland and there are questions whether they can maintain all schools. Highland are currently looking at what can be done with their Management of Schools Programme. Meetings were held for HTs with Care & Learning Management to brain storm new ideas. GS and AM were part of this and came up with a proposal which they felt could work in their ASG, this idea was taken to Elected Members (Councillors) and they had no objections at that time. BN will meet with the Elected Members again tomorrow to take forward the views of those at this meeting tonight and will discuss the proposal:

\*Scourie & Durness Primary School remain open but without an HT

\*Principal Teacher (PT) posts in High School with Management Responsibilities

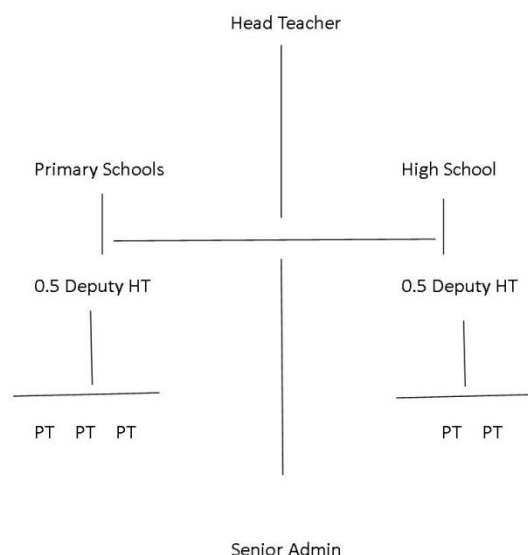
\*Principal Teacher posts in Primary Schools, jobs descriptions would change to include Management responsibilities

\*No class committed HTs (anywhere in Highland by the end of the next three years)

KL – likes the idea of one management structure and collective working (which they do a lot of in the ASG anyway)

LM to BN – have you already got a plan and are just paying us lip service? BN – No, a proposal, designed by GS and AM at the meeting mentioned previously.

BN – Proposal Structure looks like this:



BN – the HT of the four school would be supported by a Senior Admin post. That role will take on a lot of the data management, building etc. thus taking away some of the pressure on the HT.

GS – 0.5 DHT would mean some teaching and some management for the roles in the Primary and Secondary.

BN – we will be re-defining jobs; the new PTs would have some management responsibilities for their schools. There will be another post for Primaries – a General Assistant (roughly termed) which will include clerical, PSA hours etc. which will mean that the class teachers are never alone in the school.

So the new posts being created are PT Primary (Management Responsibility), Senior Admin and “General Assistant”.

Staffing formulas will still exist but this is not a money saving exercise.

CF – how will you staff these new posts when the council is having trouble recruiting? BN – no new staff are needed, all the staff are already here.

GS & AM – reminded the meeting that this proposal was what they came up with at the meeting discussed previously.

BN – the recruitment process for the new posts will be ring fenced to those already in the posts at the moment. However it will be a formal interview process. The jobs would be advertised only if the current people in the posts did not apply, which is not likely.

LM – what would be the HT commitment to Primary Schools / how much time would be spent on site? GS – nothing like that could be set in stone.

SB – we would need to re-evaluate what Head Teacher means.

BN – HTs will be in charge of their own schools and diaries.

GS – I would trust the judgement of my DHTs and PTs and only get involved when asked or I felt there was a need to. Discussion would take place regularly on what is needed.

BN – this proposal is what was discussed, nothing has been agreed. BN will take this proposal to Elected Members tomorrow.

You as Parents Council representatives should think about what you want and any questions you may have. We will meet again and we will also meet with the wider parent body once BN has agreement from the Elected Members.

CF – have you got a Plan B? BN & GS – The Status Quo (which apart from the Scourie HT is almost as new proposal). The new proposal will also have a clear career path which in small rural schools is not always possible.

CF – If Elected Members agree when will you let us know? BN – I will let Graeme know tomorrow. Ultimately we would like this in place by August next year. GS – I would like it in place by the Timetable change in May.

LM – if this goes ahead will this be just the start or an end to the upheaval / changes in our ASG?  
BN – this will hopefully be it and will secure the future of education in the North West for at least the next 10 years.

CC – does it secure the Primary Schools from closing? BN if numbers allow (5 pupils and above).

GS – one of the questions asked was will Durness & Scourie primary Schools stay open with this proposal? BN - I can't promise to keep a school open but will not close if the numbers are viable.

CF – what happens in the teaching structure if the numbers go up?

BN – another teacher would be employed under the PT and CCR time would still be in place. However staff in all four schools could be fluid if needed. This could also help create full time posts in the High School by using some of that time in the Primary Schools making jobs more attractive to applicants.

BN – at this moment in time I would be grateful if you didn't share this information with other parents, at least until the end of the week and I have spoken to the Elected Members. Please remember if you are talking to anyone to stipulate that this is just a proposal at this time.

We will meet again as a group, I will then meet with staff and finally with the wider parent body, hopefully all before the Christmas break.

CC – is the 4.5 day week still planned? GS – yes, it makes sense for this to happen at the Timetable change. CF – primary schools also? GS – yes, as transport will be changing to accommodate this. This will however all go to consultation with parents. SB – will they get lunch on a Friday? GS – yes, the primary pupils will get a normal lunch and it's likely that High School pupils will have a "Grab & Go" lunch.

BN – I'm not hearing great dissension around the table for the new structure proposal?

SB – it's reassuring that this proposal came from GS & AM

GS – please go away and think about it and please ask questions to myself, Aileen or Katy should you have any. Also, if anyone has a better idea then please let us know!

LM – I feel a bit uncomfortable not speaking about this to the parents if I'm asked. BN – this is why we will meet with the wider parent body and then they can ask me questions.

GS – it may be that we have one school, three campuses – change the name, uniform etc. A new start.

LM – it is felt that Durness is on the outside and the high School need to be more pro-active at including Durness and holding meetings / events up there also.

CF – I believe that Scourie parents will be happy with the proposal.

LM – I don't really want to speak for everyone so I can't comment

BN – Thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 7.55pm.