

## **Newtown School Board of Trustees**

### **Meeting minutes**

Wednesday 26 April 2017, 6.15 pm, school staffroom

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Present: Mark Brown; Annette Gittos; Julie Bennett; Kelvin Harper; Victoria Esson; Daniel Petersen; Lucy Kebbell; Karen O’Leary; Kim Narsi and Kini Mitipelo (for items 1 - 3); Eflamm Allain, Sondra Bacharach, Kim Rooke and Lisa Reynolds (for items 1 - 5); and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: none

#### **1. Introduction and Karakia**

Board members and parents in attendance introduced themselves.

Daniel conducted the karakia.

#### **2. Previous Minutes and Actions**

Minutes of the 22 March 2017 Board meeting were approved with a minor amendment, and the action items were discussed and updated.

#### **3. Proposed enrolment scheme and French bilingual unit update**

By 3 April 2017, when the six week consultation on the proposed enrolment scheme and French bilingual unit finished, a total of 185 submissions were received, including 23 submissions from staff.

Mt Cook BOT had hand-delivered a submission (dated 2 April 2017), and two early childhood centres also provided a submission.

Around 7 parents that made submission either identified that they were from Mt Cook, or this could be inferred from the comments in their submissions. The Board is aware that other submissions have been received from people outside the Newtown school community, including from the French-speaking community. A group of Somali parents were brought together to discuss the proposals, and some made submissions. Daniel reported that Ngati Kotahitanga whanau had discussed the proposals and were broadly supportive.

The consultation followed the Ministry’s guidelines, including informal consultation (where neighbouring schools were notified that Newtown School was looking at introducing an enrolment scheme), and a formal process (where all parents were provided with a hard-copy of the proposal, and submissions could be received online, via email, or hand-delivered). All

responses were collated into a surveymonkey document.

Annette and Mark had met and double checked that all the hard copy submissions had been entered into the surveymonkey document. A small number of comments in written submissions still need to be included.

Annette had prepared a document that summarised the key preliminary findings. In terms of the **proposed enrolment zone**:

- The majority of submitters (137, plus 22 staff submitters) agreed with prioritising local students.
- 114 submitters (70%), plus 20 staff (87% of staff submitters) agreed with proposed boundaries for the enrolment zone.
- 7 submitters expressed concern about the overlap with Mt Cook's zone. These submitters were mainly concerned about losing students to Newtown School, splitting their community. About 90 students from Mt Cook School come from the overlap area. Annette pointed out that all the proposal does is maintain a choice for families within the overlap area, which continues the status quo for these families. Four options were subsequently provided to the Mt Cook School Board of Trustees (Option 1 is the option that was consulted on, Options 2 and 3 include adjustments to the original proposal to lessen the area of overlap, and Option 4 involves no overlap with the Mt Cook zone) - the Mt Cook School Board indicated that it only accepts Option 4.
- Only two submitters commented on the Southern Boundary. Berhampore School and Newtown School are comfortable with any possible overlap (Berhampore School doesn't yet have an enrolment zone).
- 11 submitters expressed concern about the ballot priorities for out of zone students. These priorities are set out in the Education Act.

Following discussion of the issues raised through the consultation process, the Board agreed unanimously to apply to the Ministry of Education to:

1. enact an enrolment scheme
2. apply a Newtown School home boundary as defined in the consultation document [Option 1 in the Annex to the preliminary finding report that was tabled at the Board meeting]
3. operate the Maori immersion unit Ngati Kotahitanga as a special programme

The Board then discussed the **proposal to establish a French bilingual unit**. Annette summarised the background to the proposal, the decision to consult on the proposal, and the summary of the responses received:

- Submissions on the French bilingual unit were polarised.
- 82 submitters (53%), plus 3 staff submitters (9%) - a total of 85 (48%) did not support the opening of the unit.
- 73 submitters (47%) plus 20 staff (91%) - a total of 93 (52%) supported the unit opening. 26 submitters supporting the unit did not identify themselves, 5 could be identified as not being part of the current Newtown School community.
- 107 submitters made comments on the proposal.
- Submitters expressed a number of concerns about opening the unit, which can be summarised in some broad themes (including that French is not a common language spoken at Newtown school, the increased traffic congestion with out-of-zone students commuting to the school, that priority should be directed towards current students, or students with specific needs for example students with learning or

behavioural needs, concerns about the physical space that is available in the school, that although there are some positives with the proposal now is not the right time to progress it, the lack of added value for the wider school, and the financial and resource burden or risk to the school).

- Half of the 73 submitters in support did not offer reasons for that support. Of those who did cite reasons, these can also be grouped into some broad themes (including that the proposed unit promotes language, supports multiculturalism, reflects a modern school etc).
- Annette tabled a letter dated 24 April 2017 in support of the proposal from the French ambassador in New Zealand.

The Board observed that the staff's views differed from the majority of the school community - Kelvin indicated that the staff may have had access to more information about the proposal, including that the proposed unit would not be a burden on the school in terms of funding, and that there is the space available. The staff were possibly more open to the idea as they can see the value the unit could add (for example, by promoting other cultures in the school).

The Board discussed the possible costs involved in establishing and running the proposed bilingual unit. Annette noted that there had not been a budget presented by school management on the costs of running the unit. She estimated that it could cost around \$80,000 - \$100,000. Mark clarified that he has spoken to the two schools that currently operate these units - most of the costs are the general costs of running a school which are paid for by the Ministry of Education. Mark also clarified that if the unit is adopted as a special programme, the students will be "in-zone". Mark further clarified that there is space available in the school for the unit.

Daniel observed that the whanau of Ngati Kotahitanga are in support of the proposed French bilingual unit, as it promotes language.

A letter of concern had been received by the Board about the integrity of the consultation process, especially as it related to the French bilingual unit proposal (this has been responded to).

The Board were invited to share their views. Mark commented that:

- he supports students learning their native languages
- the unit would add value to our school (not only to students from the French community)
- the unit wouldn't take away from our core business of addressing the current and emerging needs of students in Newtown School
- infrastructure issues (including space, funding etc) can be managed
- our school changes all the time. New programmes are introduced - a bilingual unit would be one element in this dynamic environment
- there is strong support from the school leadership to the proposed unit, and from within the French community

Other Board members discussed the issues raised and their individual views, many of which reflected the diverse views expressed in the submissions. While there was general support for, and appreciation of, the French community's desire for a bilingual unit, some Board members were of the view that the timing was not right for Newtown School, given the

rebuild process currently underway, the needs of current students, the fact that there is not a large number of French-speaking students at the school and that there was a strong opposition to the proposal from a large number of submitters.

A motion that the Newtown School Board of Trustees applies to the Ministry of Education to open a French bilingual unit as a special programme was not carried forward (3 Board members were in favour, 5 were opposed).

The Board discussed the need to communicate these decisions to the school community, and to respond to questions which were raised in the submissions. Lucy offered to draft some material that would summarise the reasons for the decisions. Staff have a teacher-only day on Friday (28 April 2017). Board members (Lucy, Annette, Karen) could attend later in the afternoon - around 4 pm - to inform the staff of the outcome of the consultation process. Annette and Mark will pull together in google drive the questions where submitters indicated that they wanted an answer.

**ACTION:** Lucy to draft a summary of the reasons for the Board's decisions on the school enrolment scheme and proposed French bilingual unit.

**ACTION:** Board members who are available can attend the teacher-only day on 28 April 2017 to inform staff of the outcome of the consultation process.

**ACTION:** Annette and Mark to work on identifying (and answering) questions raised by submitters as part of the consultation process.

#### 4. Finance and Property

The Board noted the expenditure for the month of February 2017 of \$57,899. Year-to-date (YTD) income is at 21% of budget. There is a negative variance in income against budget during February (because of the shorter month and timing of grants payments). YTD expenditure is 12% of budget.

The financial management reports prepared by Education Services for the month of February 2017 were tabled.

Statement of uncommitted funds - Victoria noted that the Board would need to discuss this issue at a future meeting.

Property update - the quote for the additional strengthening work on the pool had been received. Mark will email this to Board members. The quote was considerably higher than expected, so further discussions are needed with the property sub-committee members. The WCC Project manager has indicated that he would like to attend a further Board meeting to discuss the project.

**ACTION:** Mark to email Board members with the quote for additional strengthening work to the pool.

Other items briefly mentioned included: a low-cost roof on bike cage will be installed; a sub-committee of FANS members is looking into public outdoor art project; garden maintenance is being undertaken by a groundsperson employed for 20 hours a week; a

parent community group has been established around planting of fruit trees; rubbish management is under control (although still an issue about rubbish being left in the grounds after school hours).

#### **5. School Annual Plan 2017**

Some comments have been received on the annual plan. Mark noted that there was a suggestion that a working group be established around supporting students with English as a second language. He didn't think this was necessary as six staff have recently been on an ESL course, and this work will be an ongoing focus for teaching staff.

The Board approved the 2017 Annual Plan (moved Lucy, seconded Daniel)

#### **6. Principal's report**

Mark's report was tabled.

#### **7. New Build**

The piling is now completed, and the soft soil inside the building pad has been remedied. The additional foundation work has come at extra cost - the Ministry and building contractor are working through these budget issues.

#### **8. Correspondence**

Annette noted to the board she had received an email from Katrina Sutich. Her concerns were about her class not having a teacher last term - behaviour management was a problem and the kids are very unsettled and probably behind. Lucy also noted that four parents (Katrina was one of them) had independently come to her to express concern over Waitangi Papa class. Lucy had directed them to see Mark.

Mark noted that he would be looking to support the new teacher as they commence in week three. Mark also said that he will be moving some students to another class to help change the dynamics. Mark will continue to monitor the class and he would welcome your feedback as the term progresses.

#### **9. In-Committee**

The Board moved into committee at 9:02 pm to discuss personnel and other matters, and moved out of committee at 9:12 pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday 24 May 2017 at 6.15 pm (TBC)

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5

