

NOTES FROM OPEN MEETING AT AVANTI HOUSE SECONDARY SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2014

ATTENDANCE: Core Committee members - Nish Patel (Chairman), Ajay Chauhan (Vice Chairman), Mina Vekria Raghavani (Treasurer), Anji Patel (Secretary), Upendra Kalan (Finance Director for Avanti House School) + several primary/secondary parents

APOLOGIES: Rupa, Paresh P, Sandeep, Nikita, Sanjay, Paresh V, Vikura, Paresh R, Sunita & Daksha

Minutes approval – Notes from last meeting was approved by all who attended.

The Chairman mentioned how successful the last Navratri Event was which raised £856.00. The event was well attended by 150 people including the Mayor of Harrow, Mark Bennison & his family and some teachers. Nish conveyed his thanks to Paresh, Sandeep & Rupa who were the lead members for this event and also to Bhumika who did an excellent job with the decorations of the venue and to all who provided the donations.

The Chairman explained that all future events have been allocated lead members; however, all members of the committee are always there to assist. Nish conveyed his thanks to all members as organising events is not easy and takes up everyone's time and would not be feasible without the Volunteers.

It was pointed out that the Core Committee and Wider Committee were confusing. The Chairman explained the Core Committee consists of The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and the Secretary. The Wider Committee are those who have joined the FOAH to assist with events and fundraising. It was suggested these members should be may be called Volunteers to avoid future confusion.

The Treasurer confirmed the Committee have up to date raised £6,954.02. The only expenditure is £226.00 which was given to the primary site for their Christmas party last year and £96 for PTA UK membership.

The Treasurer mentioned that all bank statements/receipts are available to view by anyone who wishes to do so.

The Chairman confirmed that no funds are spent without the consent of the wider committee. When such a request is provided to The Chairman, this is discussed at the meeting to seek suggestions and approval from the wider committee. Recently, Ms Kahn, Head of Philosophy, Religion & Ethics at the Secondary site has sent an email asking the Committee for funds to start a Kirtan Club.

This has not yet been agreed and once again will be discussed with the wider committee before any decision is made. One parent mentioned we should try and get donations first before spending funds.

Some parents were concerned more funds would be given to one site more than the other; The Chairman pointed out this would always be the case as the school is split. There was a suggestion of may be splitting the currents funds 50/50 across both sites to make it a fair process but this is not practical.

One parent asked if FOAH is PTA registered, the Treasurer confirmed it is. It is not setup as a charitable status. This may be something we should be looking to do then match funding comes into action.

Mr Kalan mentioned that a minimum sum of £5,000 has to be in the account before a charitable status can be registered and the total has only just exceeded this amount after the Dinner & Dance event in March.

A parent mentioned that you can register FOAH through HMRC as by doing this you do not have to be a registered charity. The Chairman confirmed this has been looked into and can be taken forward by the new Committee when elections are held next year and the account can be transferred to the charity status once this has been set up.

FOAH confirmed that a member of staff from the school makes up this group, at present Mr Kalan is the school representative.

The Chairman outlined the role of the FOAH. This group is purely to raise funds for the school. It is a way to bring parents together which is beneficial for our children and Avanti House School.

FOAH has no say in how the school is run or get involved in any school related issues. These need to be taken up directly with the school teacher or Mark Bennison. Once the new Advisory Group is set up, members of this group will be more involved with school matters.

The general feeling of most parents was the lack of communication from FOAH. Some parents had no knowledge that such a group exists and it may be a good idea to produce a flyer to put in packs that are sent out by the school which are sent to all new parents.

It was also felt that not enough notice is given when a meeting is to take place. For instance, the meeting which took place yesterday was only communicated on Monday this week. These points have been taken on board.

The Chairman confirmed that every year a social event is held which brings together all the parents so they can meet each other. This event is also attended by some of the teachers. The Chairman apologised that such an event has not taken place this year purely due to the fall of Navratri and Diwali.

The Chairman confirmed this event would take place in December; however, some parents were concerned that this is not a good month due to the approach of Christmas. The suggestion was to have it in January which gives parents a month's notice to attend.

The Chairman mentioned that with the growth of school years the venue to hold such an event would be challenging due to the numbers. Some parents suggested why not hold it at Mumbai Gardens as per last year as it has capacity to hold large numbers. The Langley in Watford was put forward as a venue, however, it was mentioned that this venue is pricey to hire.

The Chairman confirmed the next event after the Social will be the Fun Day/Picnic in April. The lead of this event will be Bhumika and Bhavesh.

The Summer Fair will be the final event of the year which will take place in June/July. The Chairman suggested possibly having this as a joint venture with Krishna Avanti Primary School. Mainly due to the lack of space that Avanti House have. Parents are more than welcome to put forward any ideas for events. These will be discussed at the meetings

The Chairman confirmed that he had a meeting with Mark Bennison earlier this week with regards to setting up a FOAH page on the current school website. This link will be set up within the next week which will outline the roles of the FOAH, minutes will be readily available, all events will be listed so parents can see at a glance what is coming up and will hold information about the dates of the meetings. There will also be an application form on the link for any parents who wish to volunteer to help in future events.

It was suggested that FOAH should have a separate website instead of a link. The Chairman mentioned that there is already an IT expert for the school and felt it should remain as a link mainly due to the management of the website as this can become a timely task.

One parent was more than happy to create a website for FOAH. Moving forward, The Chairman is more than happy to discuss this further, however, in the interim, the link will be put into place.

The Chairman mentioned the petition that was raised. Those who put this together had concerns about what funds had been raised and where the money was being spent. They also felt communication from

FOAH was poor as when meeting dates were set, they were cancelled and re-arranged without a lot of notice.

The Chairman reiterated that a Committee Meeting would be held on every first Monday of the month. It was suggested by a parent that may be an open meeting like the one taking place today should be held every 6 months so all parents can attend and get the chance to hear what is happening and see a copy of the accounts. This would clear any confusion and concerns by parents.

Some parents who attended the meeting felt there was a lot of tension between some parents and FOAH and felt these issues should have been dealt with separately in a closed room as the whole issue was confusing as not everyone knew about the petition.

The Chairman pointed out that at the end of the day we are all here for one thing and that is our children and the best way forward is to put these issues behind us and to work with each.

The Chairman suggested the appointment of 2 PTA Officers, one from each site so they could assist with communication between the parents and FOAH, i.e., promote events, or put forward suggestions for future events as they may not necessarily know how to get in touch with the Committee.

Parents felt this may conflict with the Advisory Group also being set up in the future. The Chairman made it clear that the 2 PTA Officers are purely for FOAH communications.

AOB

As members of the wider committee were present, the Chairman asked whether we should do a Christmas party for Primary children as we have done previously. Majority of the parents are in favour.

Date of next Meeting will be Monday 1st December, 2014 at the Stanmore site on Common Road.