



Coiste na dTuismitheoirí

Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath

Na Clocha Liatha,

Co. Chill Mhaintáin

R-Phost: coiste.gscl@gmail.com

Idirlíon: <http://gscl.edublogs.org/>

Miontuairiscí EGM / EGM Minutes

8ú Márta 2018 / 8th March 2018

Attendees/I Láthair:	<p>Coiste Members: Louise Anderson, Feargal McKenna, Darren McGiolla Bhríde, Susan Grogan, Leonie Uí Bhroin, Fiona Roche, Louise Cahill, Karen O'Neill, Lindsay Miller, Emma Nolan, Edel Mitchell Mulholland, Julie Boyle (<i>Leithscéal - Lulu O'Mahony</i>)</p> <p>Bord Bainistíochta: Bernie Ní Ógáin, Dorothy O'Connell, June Prior, Daragh Reynolds, Róisín O'Connell</p> <p>Múinteoirí agus Foireann Scoile: P. Rita, M. Tuala, M. Louise, M. Sami, M. Eoin, M. Kerry, M. Tadhg, M. Emma, M. Aoife, M. Breandán, M. Fiona, Rúnaí Lisa</p> <p>Tuismitheoirí: Áine Ryan, Shane Will, Jill O'Herlihy, John Ryan, John Lawe, Erin Allen, Jane Baxter, Dave Murphy-Allen, Clarire Fahy, Hilery Junge, Tara D'Arcy, Eddie D'Arcy, Martin O'Dwyer, Liz Keogh, Dónal Deegan, Lyla Houlihan, Mark Evans, Andrea Dodd, Sheila Levi Hackett, Dawn Levi Lawlor, Kira Treacy, Robin Evans, Peter Brien, Mairead Davis, Anne-Marie Derhan, Elaine Mahon, Natalie Moran, Nessa McEniff, Sinead Mhic tSionnaigh, Amy Farrell, Tracey Anne Mulvey, Maeliosa Scarkoppil, Brian O'Culthain, Kirsty Kirkwood, Joanna Allen, Marlana Kamisl, Edward Johnston, Sarah Uí Dhuinn, Noel Morahan, Barra O'Fionnegán, Yvonne Mac Aodhagáin, Suzanne Behan, Elaine McPherson, Ray DeFaoite, Sara Best, Ann Teehan, Anthony Beecham, Rhoda Mulhall, Lynda Farrell, Alison Coghlan, Celine Murray, Aisling MacNamara, Grace Desmond, Tara Brady, Peter Harte, Olive Farrell, Andrew Maguire, Brian Purcell, Trish Harte, Fiona Rice, Colm Manning, Ceara McManus, Eoghan Byrne, Ian O'Donnell, Shaunna Ó'Gormáin, Amhlaoibh O'Tuama, Judith Devlin, Mirian Byrne, Orla Anderson, Lorraine O'Toole, Mark Hanlon, Simon Tuthil, Sylvia Kinsella, Ann Prendergast, Niall Byrne, Ronan Mellett, Aisling Becton.</p>
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EGM Background

A fire incident occurred at Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath on the night of Saturday 3rd March 2018.

A laptop caddy in an upstairs storage room caught fire. The fire was contained within the storage room and did not spread beyond the room.

An EGM was called by Coiste na dTuismitheoirí in response to demands from the general parent body, for information surrounding the fire incident itself and the subsequent occupancy of the

school and to dispel any mis-information that was circulating among the parent body and wider community.

The Coiste invited An Bord Bainistíochta to play an active role in the meeting in order to communicate the full facts of the incident to the school community. Our thanks to the members of the Bord Bainistíocht, all of whom attended the meeting. The teaching staff were also invited to the attend the meeting and again, our thanks go to the many members of the teaching staff who also attended the meeting.

The official record of the meeting contains the prepared statements read into the record and a summary of the Q and A that followed the prepared statements. As stated at the meeting, the identity of all who contributed to the Q and A session was recorded but is not published in the official record. Any statements that were ruled out of order by the Cathaoirleach at the meeting were recorded but are not published as part of this official record.

The meeting was chaired by Cathaoirleach Coiste na dTuismitheoirí, Louise Anderson.

Opening & Welcome (Louise Anderson)

Louise welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the EGM. She introduced the Coiste, members of the Bord Bainistíochta (BB), Priomhíde Rita, Múinteoirí and herself as Chair of the Coiste.

Special thanks were given to P. Rita and the members of the board for attending.

Louise stated that the coiste were acutely aware of all the hard work that had gone on behind the scenes while dealing with the day to day running of the school and all other commitments individuals have.

Louise then read the following statement:

“The fire at the weekend in the context of the existing fire safety issues shocked and alarmed everyone; parents, staff and board.

As a Coiste we are a link between parents and the school and board and as parents on the Coiste we could see that as the week went on and with media coverage, that speculation was increasing and parents wanted and needed to know the facts. Within the Coiste constitution, which is available on the Coiste website at <http://gscl.edublogs.org/bunreacht-choiste-na-dtuisti/>, there is a facility to call an EGM and so we decided to call an Extraordinary General Meeting (an EGM) to try to get all of the known facts out to parents sooner rather than later and to try where possible to get answers to some of the questions which parents have.

We realise how important it is for parents to feel they are being kept fully informed at a time like this and we want the school and board and parents to co-operate and work through this together.

The purpose of this EGM is to provide parents with all the latest available facts surrounding the fire and related fire safety issues including ongoing remedial works and fire drills. We will not be discussing any other matters at the EGM and if any other issues are brought up we cannot discuss them here and we will move on.

We understand that this is an extraordinary and difficult multi-layered situation to manage.

We all want the same outcome which is a safe school.

The questions are being asked to understand what happened and if mistakes have been made to see what lessons there are to be learned for the future, not to assign blame.

We ask everyone to be respectful of each other, to listen and for one person to speak at a time.

We met with the board and school earlier today and during this meeting we will go through the detail which was provided to us and then defer to the board to answer any questions not covered already.

We have asked many of the questions which parents have already, so hope that the detail we provide will answer many of those. There will be an opportunity to ask further questions at the end of the meeting.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

EGM Agenda

1. Welcome & purpose of EGM
2. Review of timeline and known facts surrounding the fire and subsequent related actions and events
3. Review of the status of remedial works
4. Review of fire drills
5. Q and A"

Louise explained that the situation is on-going and the EGM is designed to cover the main key points. Any further questions not covered tonight can be to be sent via email to the Coiste or the Board. She also stated that it has been agreed with P. Rita that a weekly update will be sent to parents to keep them informed as things progress.

Louise then handed over to Feargal to run through a timeline of events relating to the fire.

Timeline of events Saturday 3rd March – Wednesday 7th March (Feargal McKenna)

Saturday 3rd March 1:30am

- Merrion Security Alarms were alerted that the fire alarm was triggered.
- Merrion Security Alarms made contact with Key Holder 1.
- Based on 7 false alarms in past 4 weeks coupled with the weather (red alert) Key Holder 1 acknowledged call but decided to take no immediate action.

Saturday 3rd March 2pm

- Key Holder 1 contacted Key Holder 2 to alert them about the alarm.

- Due to the adverse weather (red alert) a decision was made to take no action.

It has been acknowledged by the board that the above demonstrated some wrong decisions and a key learning has been taken from this, with steps already in place and more to follow, to ensure this does not occur again. These include:

- 1) A change in key holders – this has already taken place
- 2) Procedure for key holders have changed such that, if a key holder is unable to visit the school immediately they must pass the call to the next key holder. If key holder 3 is unable to attend then the fire services will automatically be instructed to make entry by force.
- 3) Gardai to be contacted by the Key Holder on every intruder alarm trigger to ensure that a Key Holder does not attend the school by themselves.
- 4) The Coiste have recommended that the key holder responsibilities and procedures be documented in writing rather than relying on verbal procedures.

Sunday 4th March 1pm

- P. Rita received a text from a third party to say the school alarm was sounding.
- She responded immediately and contacted Key Holder 2. Informed them she was snowed in and asked them to attend.
- Key Holder 2 went to the school, confirmed the alarm was sounding. No external sign of a fire, smoke or other. The alarm was de-activated and the heating put on.
- P. Rita requested a site walk be done by key holder two.
- Key holder two noted an odour and charred door on affected room.

Sunday 4th March 2.15 pm

- Fire service contacted.
- Contact made with Caretaker, DP, cleaner, alarm monitor company.
- Alarm monitoring company called out/alarm checked.
- Adjacent rooms were cleaned and mopped.
- P. Rita spoke to the fire officer that attended the scene asked if it was safe to open the school on Monday. The fire officer confirmed it was safe to open as normal.
At no point was P. Rita advised to obtain further structural examination.
P. Rita consulted with board members who all agreed to open the school based on the recommendation of the fire officer.

In hindsight it has been acknowledged that fire officer did not have the authority to say the building was safe.

A follow up action is now in place with the Board to review the critical incident procedure.

Monday 5th March

- Professional cleaning company contacted to undertake a thorough clean. They were available Tuesday during school hours, a decision was made to move classes to another class room while the cleaning took place.
- Advised by the fire service not to clean the damaged room until it was assessed and the insurance company were contacted. It was ok to leave the damaged items in storage for the assessor to examine.
- The Department of Education and Skills were contacted. They advised they would liaise with the contractor currently on site with regards to quoting for the repair work.

Wednesday 7th March

- Department of Education and Skills agreed to engage a specialist cleaning company to clean the damaged room and to cover costs. The cleaning company expected to assess the room on Thursday 8th March. Possibly available on Monday to clean. Glenbeigh Fire and Flood is name of the company. They were given the time frame of mid-day today to confirm a time. They were advised that the school would be made available over the weekend.
- The building contractors advised they were to have a quote prepared and sent to the Department of Education and Skills that evening.
- Key holder list for the school has been changed and sent to the alarm monitoring company.
- Chief Fire Officer agreed the information given when they attended the scene on Sunday 4th March was a miss-communication.
- The assessor is due to come out at 9am on Monday 12th.
- The Department of Education and Skills confirmed they have engaged KSN for assessment and reports on the repairs. KSN have been informed of the repairs that are urgent as per the repeated requests to the Department of Education and Skills from the school.

Feargal confirmed that this is the time line of events which the coiste were given up to 8AM this morning (Thurs 8th March AM) and handed over to Príomhoide Rita to continue timeline of events from Thurs 8th onwards.

Timeline of events Thursday 8th March (P. Rita)

- Update late this afternoon from Ger Cleary from KSN Project Managers appointed by Dept of Education and Skills. He visited the school and has been liaising with the structural engineer and the fire consultant. They were all onsite this afternoon and he spoke with the electrician who confirmed to him that the room was fully disconnected. He said he was happy that the electrics performed as they should and that anything that should have tripped in that room did trip. He will be back here on site at 7am in the morning (Fri 9th March) to do a thorough check of the entire building. Based on what he has seen he is confident that the electrics are ok.
- Frank Burke a structural engineer visited the school this afternoon. He assessed the structure of the damaged room. He said he is happy that the ceiling had done its job to retain the fire, no signs of warping or damage to the structure. He was happy with the structure of the plaster board on the walls. He could see they were still in place on the walls. In relation to the door he is happy it did its job to contain the fire and there were no signs of warping. In general he was very satisfied with the room. He will put this in writing to us in the morning. He will send a report to say the he is happy the room is structurally safe.

- Mark Gavin a fire consultant with Michael Slattery Associates Fire Safety Engineers also visited the school this afternoon. He says he is happy the room is safe no damage above the ceiling. He removed the ceiling tiles and inspected the area above the tiles, there was no damage there so he was happy with that. He is happy the alarm is fully functioning and shows no signs of fault. The alarm is deactivated in the room as it should be. He is happy all the fire systems worked and that the building contained the fire as it should. He was very happy with how the building performed. The only recommendation he had was to contact our alarm company in the morning and ask that a heat alarm be installed as opposed to a fire alarm until the room is reinstated at which point we go back to the original fire alarm

Update on remedial works (P.Rita)

- The latest update went out in February. The only change to this is that KSN have been appointed as project managers. Their purpose is to keep the schedule that was put in the last update and to make sure the contractors are sticking to that schedule. For example, if contractors are due to be in Room 4 on April 4th, they will ensure they are there and we have handed over room 4 to them.
- In light of the current events, they have said that they will undertake all the emergency lighting over the Easter break so when we come back after Easter that will all be in place.

Fire drill (Louise Anderson)

Fire drills are normally done once a term, and are currently being done on a monthly basis. A fire officer has come to review one of the recent scheduled drills.

As Feargal noted to earlier, there have been unscheduled drills due to the fire alarm being set off by the builders. Sometimes the intruder alarm goes off, sometimes the fire alarm. In those incidents where fire alarm accidentally set off, a full fire drill has been completed.

One unscheduled drill happened today – the school was cleared in 3mins 30 seconds.

The purpose of these drills is to rehearse what would happen in a real life situation and to identify any issues.

There was one such issue in a recent drill that the Coiste were made aware of yesterday. The Coiste followed up with the school and the board on this issue. A child was in the toilet when one of the unscheduled fire drills happened. Normal procedure is that the teacher clears the classroom and the toilets and then exits with the class and shuts the door. On this occasion this did not happen. There was a child left behind in the toilet.

The child was picked up on the second sweep of the building that is done by the teachers as a double check. The child was picked up from the toilet and brought out to the clós.

This fire drill took 4mins 30 sec. including getting the child from the toilet.

The purpose of drills is to be a learning exercise. The teacher was spoken to about what the correct procedure is, so that it won't happen again.

Coiste Q & A Summary (Feargal Mc Kenna)

Feargal provided a run through of high level questions that the Coiste put to the Board this am. The key questions were common from all parties (Coiste and Parents) and most have been covered

already.

Q: When did the fire start?

A: 1.30 am Saturday 3rd March – assumed based on when the first fire alarm went off.

Q: What was the cause?

A: It is believed it was a laptop plug-in cabinet where teachers plug laptops in to charge. It was that unit that went on fire. Not the electric socket. We have asked for clarification of that in writing.

Q: How were they notified?

A: That has been covered.

Q: Was a risk assessment carried out on Sunday and by whom?

A: No risk assessment was carried out other than by the fire services.

Q: Did the schools risk assessment review electrical safety, structure safety and health and safety?

A: The answer is no, that only took place on Thursday the 8th.

Q: Can the Coiste obtain risk assessments from the school, Gardaí and fire officer?

A: If that is common place and permitted by the Department of Education and Skills then we will try to get it. If not we can still ask for it. We will seek clarification from the Department on the policy for a school in this situation.

Q: Who made the decision to open on Monday? Who made the decision to communicate with parents on Sunday evening?

A: These decisions were made ultimately by the board.

Feargal explained it was made off the back of recommendations from the fire service. It is recognized now these recommendations should not have been given but it is off the back of these decisions the board decided to open.

Q: What else has happened since Monday in relation to cleaning of effected classrooms and the survey?

A: This has been covered.

Summary of Open Floor Q&A Session

This is a summary of the topics discussed during the Q&A session and resultant action plans.

Miscommunication

It was clarified by the school and Board that there was miscommunication regarding confirmation that the school was safe to enter on Monday. The fire officer who was on premises was asked on Sunday if the school was safe to open the next day and he replied yes which the school and Board understood to cover all aspects of safety. Later in the week, following a query from a parent the chief fire officer clarified that the fire officer on site was only confirming safety from perspective of the fire itself not confirming structural safety or otherwise. As soon as the school and board became aware of this, they contacted the Department of Education and Skills to get structural, electrical and

health & safety confirmed by qualified persons.

Exceptional Circumstances

The exceptional circumstances of the Red Weather Alert and the fire happening at the same time was noted and acknowledged that these were highly unusual circumstances.

All acknowledged that there are lessons to be learned.

Classroom Safety/Air Quality

The issue of the smell of smoke and air quality was discussed. Glenbeigh Fire & Flood, a specialist cleaning Company have now been engaged to conduct a deep clean of all affected areas. They were on site today and completed a soot test of all affected rooms. They confirmed that there were traces of soot but they said it was no different to what you would find in a room in your home with a stove. They will return to complete a thorough clean of all affected rooms – hopefully Saturday TBC.

Communication

There was a lot of discussion about lack of communication and the Board confirmed that they are working on improving communication. The Coiste have requested that a weekly email is sent to all parents to provide updates on remedial works. P. Rita has agreed to commence this from tomorrow.

It was also noted that some children are concerned about the incident. P.Rita said that teachers have reassured children and agreed to visit classrooms herself.

Social Media

There was a lengthy discussion about the use of Social Media surrounding this incident and in particular, negative posts about members of the Board and Coiste. Some of the posts on social media were ill-informed and distracted from the work that was going on in the background to deal with the extraordinary situation, to establish facts and to collate accurate information to be communicated to Parents. Parents were reassured that the safety of all children is paramount to the school, the Board and the Coiste. Parents were also asked to consider the impact of statements made on social media. Parents' feedback regarding the need to improve communication to parents has been noted and is being addressed with the introduction of a weekly update on remedial works.

Emergency Lighting

It was confirmed that emergency lighting would be completed over Easter break. A question was raised re whether these would be illuminated signs or additional emergency lighting in corridors that kick in when the power goes out or when smoke is in the building? The latter was requested as a priority as it is believed to be quite straightforward and relatively inexpensive. The Coiste have taken an action to raise this issue.

Bernie Ní Ógáin, Chairperson of the Board of Management

Bernie expressed her thanks to the Coiste for all their hard work in addressing this issue with P. Rita and the Board, for calling the EGM and conducting it in a respectful manner. She took on board the need for improved communication. She also acknowledged that there are lessons to be learned from what happened and agreed to take those lessons on board and deal with them as best we can. She acknowledged parents' concerns and assured parents that the board are working their way through the many emails received. Bernie also commended P. Rita for her hard work in dealing with this serious issue and the múinteoirí who are doing a fantastic job in their classes.

Contingency Planning

The need for contingency planning and a disaster recovery policy was discussed. P. Rita confirmed that she would look to the Dept. of Education and Skills in the event of a requirement for alternative

accommodation etc. A parent asked that a Contingency/Disaster Recovery Plan be put in place and that a professional review the final policy. The Board confirmed that external expertise is drafted in when required for example safety review in Summer 2017. TBC whether contingency planning will be included in revised critical incident policy or separate policy.

Pressure on Department of Education to expedite remedial works

A number of parents asked if there was anything they could do to put pressure on the Dept. of Education to expedite fire safety works. It was agreed that a petition or a letter sent by all parents to the Minister for Education and other relevant parties is a good idea. The Coiste will progress this.

It was noted that remedial works have started to progress more quickly since the Department appointed the Project Manager. The Board will continue to put pressure on the Department especially in light of this incident.

Coiste members have attended 2 meetings with the Department to express parents' concerns and try to understand reasons for delays. The Coiste became aware recently that the GSCL remedial works are being completed under the contract which the Department had for a school in Mullingar's remedial works and not under a new separate tender for GSCL which limits the contractual pressure which can be exerted.

The Coiste will continue to put pressure on the Department, using recent events as leverage.

Cause of Fire/Equipment lost

Electrician confirmed that fire was caused by laptop caddy and that the electrics in the room were sound. He will return to the school tomorrow at 7am to conduct review of the electrics in the entire school. Approx. 16 laptops were destroyed along with some furniture. Insurance assessor coming to assess damage on Monday.

Fire Doors

Query re replacement of Fire Doors. Confirmed that this is in schedule of works and new magnetic fire doors have been ordered but there is a long lead time. P. Rita to follow up re completion date.

Teacher Representative on the Board

As the representative of the teachers on the Board, Múinteoir Louise acknowledged that it has been an extremely stressful time for not only the children, the Board, the Coiste and the parents but also for the teachers. She commended the teachers for their professionalism and continuing with the education of all children and making sure they are still in a safe environment.

She stated that teachers are working with full thoughts of our children and we will always continue to support children and parents.

Risk Assessment Training

Suggestion from a parent that Risk Assessment training would be beneficial for people involved in making decisions.

Policy Review

It was suggested that a review of all policies should be conducted to ensure they are fit for purpose in light of the growth of the school. It was noted that all policies are available on the school website. Parents were asked to come forward if they have any special expertise, have any recommendations etc.

Acknowledgements

A number of parents expressed their confidence in the School, the Teachers, the Board and Coiste. They gave thanks to all for attending the meeting tonight and clarifying important issues.

Rúnaí Lisa thanked parents who have offered support and assistance to the staff. She also expressed her full faith in the teachers and P. Rita who do so much for our children.

Closing Statement (Louise A)

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and contribution. It was noted that the meeting has shown the positive support there is for the school and has helped to rebuild trust between parents, the school and the board which had broken down during the week.

Special thanks were given to the Board, P. Rita and staff for their continuing hard work.

It was acknowledged there is a lot more work to be done, but the key outcome of the EGM is that parents, school and board are all going to work together to make things better.

Summary of key learnings to be actioned:

- i. Key Holder issue – being addressed by the Board
- ii. Critical Incident Policy reviewing – being addressed by the Board
- iii. Communication – weekly updates for parents on the ongoing works and other safety measures coming out of this fire. If any questions email coiste or school.
- iv. Additional fire safety lighting - Coiste to progress*
- v. Parental pressure on Dept of Ed to expedite remedial works – Action with coiste to progress. The Coiste will come back to all parents re next steps.
- vi. Contingency planning – TBC by Board if part of Critical Incident Policy or separate policy

Meeting Closed

***Note added 23rd April 2018.**

Following the EGM the coiste contacted a fire officer to enquire about additional fire safety lighting which was suggested at the meeting. The advice which we recieved was that additional L.E.D. emergency strip lighting has to be recessed into the floor to avoid it being a trip hazard. It was advised that sinking the strip lighting into the floor could be problematic and could potentially compromise the structural integrity of the floor.

Upon review of this advice, the coiste consensus was to not include a request for additional L.E.D. lighting in the sample letter for parents to the Department to be issued with these minutes (per key learning v).