



Oxgangs Primary School – Transcript of the Meeting between the Parent Council and City of Edinburgh Executives

Tuesday 26th April 2016, 7.00 – 9.00 pm, Waverly Court, Market St.

Parents: Crerar Christie – CC (Chair), Sue Bellis – SB (Vice Chair & Eco- Group), Ewan Stewart – ES (Treasurer), Nicole Johnstone – NJ (Communication), Patricia Rudolf von Rohr – PRvR (Secretary), Tracy Brown – TB, Raymond Deans – RD, Julie Drake - JD, Eileen Easton – EE, Kat Girdler – KG, Ali Haines – AH, Sam Haston – SH, Richard Imlach – RI, Thierry Le Bihan - TLeB, Graeme Mackel – GM, Kaythie Reid – KRe, Kevin Roarty – KRo, Gordon Roberts – GR, Hazel Stewart – HS, Jill Walker – JW.

Staff: Liz Walshe – LW (Head), Sarah Crole – SC (Deputy Head), Louise Mercer – LM (Teacher Rep.), Fiona Hare – FH (School Business Mgr).

Councillors: Elaine Aitken – EA, Gavin Corbett - GC

Council Executives: Alistair Gaw – AGa (Exec. Dir. Communities and Families), Andy Gray – AGr (Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning), Patrick Brown – PB (Corporate Property)

[AGa] My name is Alistair Gaw, my job at the minute is Director for Communities and Families which includes our education services in the Council. I'm joined by my colleagues Andy Gray, who is Head of Schools, and Patrick Brown, who is a senior manager in our property services, and obviously we hope that we can answer a lot of the questions you have at the moment, it may or may not be all of them, but we'll certainly do our best. I think the first thing I want to say is, just to acknowledge what a really difficult time it has been for all of you and in that respect, apologise, of behalf of the Council for the disruption you've faced. You'll probably be well aware, not least through the media, that this is an issue that is primarily the responsibility of the Edinburgh Schools Partnership – we'll obviously go into that in our discussions – but nevertheless, in that respect, Andy and Patrick and myself, and our local elected members, we feel as let down as you do by the situation we're in, but nevertheless, of course we have a responsibility to make sure your children are educated and are educated properly and that their education needs are met, so we take those responsibilities very seriously, so in that respect, I do absolutely want to apologise on behalf of the Council. What we've been concentrating on, over the last few of weeks, is making sure that the needs of a great number of children - over 8,000 children – are met, and that we can put contingency arrangements in place, and we have been able to do that, but the issue for us is the sustainability of those arrangements and already you'll have seen that we've made changes to arrangements for the P6 and P7 children from your own school. The reality is we're some weeks away from any school reopening and the properties, Andy

and I were at Wester Hailes on Saturday morning, and we were at the properties, and whilst they were perfectly serviceable for an emergency situation they weren't a sustainable solution for more than a few days, a few weeks perhaps, and certainly, now that we're looking at not having a solution for some weeks yet, we made the decision that we had to look at a more sustainable solution for P6 and P7 children but, again, we can talk to you about that. I don't plan on saying any more than that just at this point because this is your meeting and Crerar's going to chair it, we just want to put ourselves at your disposal really and answer as many questions as we can, and we'll certainly do that, and obviously, at the end of the meeting, hopefully, as we're being recorded, there'll be a record of that meeting you can share with other parents, obviously you're a small group of all of those people affected. So I'll stop right there and hand over to Alistair.

[CC] Thanks very much Alistair. I'm just conscious that we don't have a lot of time and you've probably got a lot of questions, so, just getting the business out of the way first. We've had some apologies from Sarah Robertson, who couldn't make it tonight, and also from Councillor Jason Rust who had a prior appointment which he couldn't get out of. Just so everyone knows, quickly, who everyone else is, if we whistle round the room, just your name and that you're a parent, or what your affiliation here is tonight, just so everyone knows who everyone else is, that'll be grand, and then we can get underway.

<< Round the room introductions >>

[CC] Thanks very much.

<< Cllr Corbett asks for Air Conditioning to be turned off as its noise is interfering with audibility at the back of the meeting, Patrick Brown attends >>

[CC] While we're doing that, just to crack on, I think the two most important questions which we really need to get out of the way before you do anything else, and the ones that are raised most often by parents, are; can the Council indicate how long the school building is likely to remain closed and, if they cannot indicate how long, how long before they are likely to be able to indicate?

[AGr] At this moment in time, we do not, and cannot give you, an accurate estimate of when the school will be open. I recognise that that must be the most frustrating part of all of this. You can . . . I don't think there is anything I can do to rest assure you of anything, but you can be assured that the senior Council staff, including the Chief Executive, are in daily contact with ESP and it is they who have to say whether the buildings are safe to enter and the one thing that the Council is not going to do is allow children to go into those schools a minute before we are absolutely guaranteed that these buildings are safe to enter because the last thing that we want to do is to open the schools up for them then to something else be said and for us to be decanting again. So we are going to be quite risk averse in terms of returning children and staff to those, to any school in the city. And I would, I have so wished over the last, over however long this meeting has been planned to be able to say to you today, "I am pretty sure it is going to be no longer than X, Y or Z" – you've no idea how much I've wanted to say that to you, but I am not going to fill you with false hope and promises. The answer to the question is we do not know at this stage. What the Council is in receipt of are some of the surveys from ESP and there are other surveys to be delivered this week. And thereafter, there is a programme of work to be identified and some works have happened but those details of the actual building and where we are with the engineers probably is best answered by Patrick, but in terms of when will we get back to schools, I cannot give you a straightforward answer and that is as straight an answer as you are going to get tonight.

[CC] Patrick, would you like to come in?

[GR] Gordon Roberts, one of the Parent Council. So could it be that the school might not open again?

[PB] No. Where we are at is on Oxfords, there has been a tranche of remedial work carried out. It is, at the moment, it is at a point where there is still more work to be done but because Edinburgh Schools Partnership are looking at 19 schools, they are coming to us, we hope by the end of this week, with a programme for their full remediation. I would suggest I am maybe more optimistic than Andy in some ways, but I can't promise anything, but the indications are that the likes of Oxfords would be one of the early ones to reopen and there is no suggestion that this school wouldn't reopen, the nature of the remediation works I can talk to you about.

[KG] Yes, what has been done and what still has to be done?

[PB] Is everyone familiar with what we are talking about, with the wall ties and the header straights and that type of thing? The initial run for the line was to deal with the external wall where you had the collapse in your school and that was related to the cavity and the embedment of the wall ties and it just wasn't enough and either the cavity was a bit too wide or the wall ties were just not long enough to get the correct embedment. So that was the real focus through the holidays, that's where we were at. And on the 8th of this month, we had a meeting and we thought, great, we are going to be there, apart from recognising that there would be certain areas where what we called mitigation measures would be in place where there may be some local areas where they hadn't dealt with it, but certainly school was safe to be in. On the 8th, they identified another issue and that was the head restraints which takes the inner leaf and stabilises it to the other side of the steel structure. So that means that you have got a different issue because the external leaf which sheared outwards, worse case scenario, the inner leaf could go any which way, depending on wind roaring and the like. Edinburgh Schools Partnership were very straightforward about that, they said they could no longer say that the previous arrangements where the school would be safe to return was in place. So they have been conducting an exercise in this head restraint. First of all, I think that in some of the schools, it is quite hard to find whether the header straights are in place or not, because I am actually a building services engineer, not a structural engineer but what I can tell you is and some of the structural engineers may be amongst you, are somewhat harder to find than others. So it is kind of getting a hammer and chisel out to find and there are other potential solutions like bed joint reinforcement, which means that you don't need head restraints. Where there is any doubt, and to move things forward, they have been looking at head restraints. That is obviously dependent on analysis to see that the structural, that the steel structure was intended to take that kind of load. And that is what they have been putting in. They drill it in and it is a kind of, it is basically something sitting like that to stop the wall moving and that is the solution that has been rolling out in Oxfords, but it is not complete yet and where we are at and I think it is maybe because of Edinburgh Schools Partnership and their resourcing challenges or whatever, we haven't got a full

picture of the overall remediation programme and they are looking at it in its entirety. I appreciate the focus here is on this school that has suffered the most from the onset, but to answer the question, yes, the school will reopen and the nature of the work is these head restraints.

[ES] Do you have the survey? Sorry, has the survey been completed for Oxfords?

[PB] The surveys are being completed across all the schools. Oxfords is one of a number of surveys. It is being handled. To let you know, there is a slight difference in approach because PPP1 took place in two tranches and as everyone talks about, Miller but Galliford Try have taken a lot of responsibility in that area, albeit that we have structural engineers monitoring the work or monitoring the reporting they do. So before there is any suggestion of reoccupation, there will be a kind of response from Edinburgh Schools Partnership saying we are now saying that this building is safe, from the structural engineers that have been employed to specify the remedial work, from Amey who have an FM role and there will be a risk register as well, attached to that.

[ES] The personal frustration is that if the survey was done . . . I don't get the desire to wait for all the surveys to be done to be able to communicate on particular schools. And so there are a lot of surveys to be done granted, I agree with you, but if there are surveys that have been completed already, do we really need to wait for the last one to be done before you can communicate for all of us to have an understanding of whether we are talking about weeks or months?

[PB] The work in your school actually commenced, they immediately went in and they have had a look, but the actual surveys that we will be looking at for us to say that we are safe to go back in are what we are also waiting for. So, and they are looking at . . . I understand where you are coming from, but they are looking at an overall approach to their remediation across all the sites. Your one, I would suggest, is a front runner.

[CC] There is two connected questions I have, the first was what was the likelihood of a catastrophic failure from the absences of these header ties and from the . . . we already know we have had a catastrophic failure in the wall, but subsequent failures to that. Have we got any idea of what the risk to the pupils was? Because the Council actually sent pupils back, into the building, you know, after the first wall collapse with saying that the building was safe. So, I think parents would like to know, have some reassurance that they weren't sending their children back into a . . .

[PB] The structural engineers had gone around and they had assessed the building to be safe. That was then withdrawn when they identified this problem. The buildings, you could argue, are safe in current environmental conditions, where they wouldn't be safe would be in a red category type storm condition.

[CC] That is about an hundred miles per hour wind, something like that which is ???

[PB] But like everything to be perfectly honest, when it comes to that, this is all kind of . . . the kind of structural engineers assessment of the situation and you can have a wind condition that can be quite extraordinary round the building with the local fortresses and these are [???] when you have the . . .

[CC] But I have never heard of a wall falling of a building ever in recent modern Scottish building history. So, exceptional winds aside, and I know the tables they use to calculate their wind pressures from is still an extraordinary set of circumstances.

[PB] There are events that do happen.

[CC] There are?

[PB] Ours has been the most public and quite rightly so. I think the structural engineers are actually recognising that you are looking at possibly a construction issue for Britain and it is all about the masonry trade, you could say.

[CC] The second question that is associated with that is was the HSE notified given that it was a near miss?

[PB] The HSE, I think that would be for Edinburgh Schools Partnership to do that?

[CC] Right.

[PB] I did ask them to and they have had it assessed that it wasn't a notifiable event.

[CC] That's handy.

[PB] But there's no denying that HSE know about it.

[CC] Right.

[PB] But it is not a notifiable event if you look at the strict way that HSE report.

[AGa] I wonder if I could just come in briefly on the first question, Crerar. My lay person's understanding of what happened in terms of the escalation of risk was that at lunch-time on Friday the 8th of April, we thought we were there, we had sent letters to all of you, we had had peer review, the mitigation put in place around the wall tie issue meant that we were good to go with all of our schools. The . . . what was then described to me on that Friday afternoon was that this issue of the header ties, which had only come to light that Friday afternoon, was taking risk to a completely different level because you were dealing with the large internal walls and that it had the potential to have catastrophic results if they fell and because they were header ties that we were talking about, you were in effect talking about having large freestanding walls within the building. And that was why . . .

[PB] It was a change in . . . Before there was every sense you were safe in the building.

Can I just say one thing of the assessment and I think this is where the structural engineers have a challenge, if you go and inspect a wall and it is quite hard to find a wall tie, sorry the head restraints, and if you don't find it, it doesn't mean that the wall ever had to have head restraints, it may well have been that that wall would have been supported from inside, from the bottom and have the bed joint reinforcement that reinforces it that way, so you don't need head restraints, there may be things called wind posts which are interim steel, secondary steel members. So, if they don't find the head restraints, which was the first sweep to see then then it is how long you spend looking for all the other stuff and the approach that has been taken is what they find is in some areas reassuring and in some areas, no they have a concern and some areas, they just don't know. And where they just don't know without spending more time unpicking the structure to find it, they are taking the precautionary approach of going down the head restraint or wind post solution.

[KG] Are all these things on the architect's plans?

[Chorus] Yes.

[AH] Are there no plans? Is it guesswork?

[GR] What about the as-built drawings?

[SB] How can you not know?

[KG] Surely the architect?

[PB] That's all the same question and that was the challenge that the structural engineers faced that the asphalt drawings will show certain things, but when you go looking for the bed joint reinforcement and where the asphalt drawing suggests it is, there are question. And as that part dealing with the two draws and Yes, but they may be don't find it or they find it a

different course up, so they are looking here, but it is actually a course above and those kind of issues. So those are the challenges and it is down to . . . this has been down to a supervision issue of the masonry trade on those sites.

[??] So was that something that they were looking for on the 8th of April, or was it by accident that they noticed that the header ties . . .

[PB] I haven't enquired about that to be honest. It was flagged up by Galliford Try through Edinburgh Schools Partnership that they had identified it as an issue.

[CC] Andy, did you want to say . . .

[AGr] Yes, this key question when the children went back into Oxfords after the first failure of the wall, the 29th January that that wall fell down, the key question was why were children sent back into that building to later then be taken out of it? And all I will say about that is all that we know is that the structural engineers said that it was safe for the children to go back into that school. There was nobody in the Council who was putting pressure on any engineer and there was nobody in Children & Families or any other part of the Council that was taking a single known risk with your children going into that school.

[CC] I think the issue is that having . . . it was a catastrophic failure, but for hours and minutes, we could have had lost children, parents, teachers . . .

[AG] Absolutely.

[CC] There really was a near miss. Now, from my point of view, and I have a structural engineering background, I'll declare it now, the first thing you should do is close the building, have a complete survey of the whole thing, given the catastrophic nature of the initial failure and then draw your plans accordingly. But that didn't seem to have been the case. You seem to be taking the structural engineer's word for it, without questioning on what basis they were founding that decision, if you will excuse me and that seems to be . . . why wasn't a more overall approach taken given the critical nature of the initial failure?

[AGr] Well, the . . . what was happening was that we have a building that the Council uses that is in the control of ESP. There is a failure of that building, the contract says that ESP are supposed to provide us with a building that is fit for purpose. When the wall fell, it is their responsibility – I am not passing responsibility to anybody but – it is the responsibility of ESP to provide us with a building that is fit for purpose. Their engineers were to look over that building to make sure that it was safe to reoccupy and there was questions and it was clear that we were not wanting that building back until it could be written in plain English that the school was safe to occupy.

[CC] But it begs the question, how much confidence you still have in ESP to deliver these things?

[AGr] I can tell you that the . . . and I am not going to answer that particular question by directly answering it, but what I will tell you is that the Council has got information from a range of ESP structural engineers and we have employed our own independent structural engineer to peer review their engineers reports so that we have got some degree of confidence that whatever they are telling us, is not compromised in any way associated with financial inducement or anything like that. So, a critical part of where we are as a council is a peer review by a respected structural engineering firm and we are getting that information from them . . .

[CC] Directly, not from ESP?

[AGr] Directly, not via and they are not paid by ESP.

[KG] Because that was the whole of that . . . before now, that would make a lot of parents feel better because that's what people have been asking for, an independent, someone not linked with to ESP and if you had told people a bit earlier, then they would probably have felt a little bit better about that.

[PRvR] Did that happen at the first investigation as well? So when the wall fell down, at that point, was there any independent review done by the Council engineers, or is that just happening now?

[AGr] I think we should be able to explain, when the wall first fell, we actually asked our engineers, who we have used for other projects to take a look at the issue.

[PB] I can try to help with that.

[AGr] Can you explain that?

[PB] When the wall collapsed, the people who I have . . . I have an interim role managing the PPP contracts, it is with me for a few months and then it is going somewhere else and I seem to have had it the best few months possible . . . but when the wall collapsed, the team that manage the PPP contracts and they are managing a contract, they are not technical from that point of view, turned to one of my colleagues and said we have got a wall collapse and the first response is well let's get one of our framework structural engineers out. So it was one of our own framework structural engineers that first responded that weekend and

when we met at the school on the Saturday morning, that particular firm was making all the right decisions in my view, but certainly it was clear that Edinburgh Schools Partnership were kind of depending on them and it was actually a view was that you employ this firm to take you through this, so that structural engineering firm hasn't grown up through the PPP process, they have actually worked very closely with the Council outside of it. They have been scarred by the process from being embedded in the PPP process. The other thing that may maybe give a little bit of comfort is because it is so much work that is having to be delivered, there is actually three structural engineering practices involved in this exercise because they have taken part of the workload and they are working for Edinburgh Schools Partnership. The challenge in getting three different people to form the same technical opinion is not always a black and white issue, there is judgement, engineering judgement and this is getting them to an equitable position if they see the same thing, they are giving the same level of decision and that has been a huge challenge because that has meant that at least structural engineering wise, it is quite a robust thinking that is going on and we have employed and you say, rightly, at a very early stage a peer review engineer who actually they are allowed to sit in amongst it, so it's not that they have in the last, since the head restraint issue, possibly every second morning, they have sat with directors in at least two of those firms, so we kind of know what's going on behind the scenes with regard to . . .

[] Could I question, now this was reported in . . . I don't think it was the media . . . I think it was an email that came out to parents at some point, when the school initially a wall fell down on the 29th of January, it said the following "a non-intrusive visual survey", do you not think that a wall falling down, then it's a lot more than a non-intrusive visual survey? And then for the children to go back, and the staff as well, for a whole period of six weeks before the school was then closed immediately. It then questions whether the in-depth survey should have taken place before anybody was allowed back in to the building?

[PB] Well, with hindsight, that is quite possibly right, but why was that taken? The collapse took place on a large gable end wall which was a big panel which suffered the most and its angle for the wind that was taking place was if that if anywhere was going to have a problem in that school with that wind direction and that wind speed, it would have been that panel and that was what got caught. All the rest of the panels are smaller and lower and so the structural engineers took the view and they had a visual inspection at that time and then it was only when they got in amongst it and they saw that the actual physical reasons why that wall collapsed which was to do with the cavities then they recommended at that time when they had completed full technical assessment of the mortar mix and all these things, then they said in their report that the school could be occupied under certain weather conditions, that is always an issue, but they also recommended that within three months, an intrusive inspection is carried out. It is not easy for structural engineers as you'll likely know to form these views.

[CC] Yes, but again, I am conscious of time, but again, I think the fundamental issue is that it was a catastrophic failure and given that subsequently you have found unstable walls and that is the reason we are closed for the minute, I believe, which are potentially more serious than the gable wall issue, then why was a proper full structural survey not done at the initial time of the wall collapse? And I think you will have to find an answer to that question because a lot of people . . .

[PB] Well, let me take that question back. The point is that about the internal walls, it is not that they are . . . I am not defending them, it is not that there definitely unstable, there is a question mark over them and so there is remediation going in and please understand that.

[CC] Ok. Any other points on the structural aspects?

[SH] Can I ask about the checking engineering? Because we are now really putting our faith in trusting the people you have employed to give us the guarantee . . . So I just want to ask about the scope of the structural engineer that we have employed to peer review. What is their remit? What can be said about sitting in on meetings? Are they carrying out surveys themselves? Are they on site?

[PB] They are getting views on the methodology that they are adopting and that type of thing. Bear in mind please that the structural engineer, even though they are working for Edinburgh Schools Partnership, have a professional responsibility to discharge and

[] So do the ESP surely?

[PB] And Edinburgh Schools Partnership, yes, Edinburgh Schools Partnership have the responsibility to discharge. They have employed a structural engineer reviewing to determine whether the methodology and the approaches are correct and commenting on the reports coming back and asking for more information in certain areas.

[SH] Is there anyone that's taking an independent assessment of the quality of the workmanship that is happening?

[PB] I mean we don't want to take in the PPP team and three other staff members with kind of a more construction background to be the quality auditors so it may be checking on progress and quality on sites as the work progresses and so that . . .

[CC] So you have someone other than ESP checking?

[PB] Yes.

[KG] So the person that is going to sign this off at the end, who are they employed by?

[PB] Edinburgh Schools Partnership will be the group that comes to us with their dossier, let's say that dossier it's been called in the past, of the their position, their structural engineer's recommendations, their maintenance, that's Amey, who are responsible for Health and Safety aspects of the school and the risk registers. That's what will come to us to say that this building is now available under the PPP contract.

[AG] And our structural engineer will oversee that.

[PB] Yes.

[AG] And give confidence to the Council . . .

[KG] You are not just taking their word for it.

[AG] Absolutely not.

[KR] So there is a Clerk of Works of sorts, employed by the Council?

[AG] Well, there's . . . I think the structural engineering firm . . .

[KR] They are just checking the methodology, not checking the work.

[PB] The other Buildings staff I mentioned, they are doing more of a Clerk of Works type role.

[CC] There's one final question that I . . . Oh, sorry Gavin.

[GC] I realise that very quickly you can get on to things to do with confidence which is the final point you made, but I don't know if Patrick and Andy mentioned about ESP having resourcing challenges. Can you explain what that meant and how it might effect?

[PB] I think it might have been me that said it.

[GC] But what does it mean, a for the inner survey work that they are doing, and b, what does it mean for their ability to do proper remediation?

[PB] It's not so much that. It's when you are dealing with ESP, you are dealing with an unusual entity and it's what they call in the world of PPP contracts, a special purpose vehicle and it is a group of lenders and there is someone who has a contract management role or the delivery of that. Not necessarily a technical person. There isn't the strength and depth in ESP technically, what they depend on are Amey to provide their technical support but Amey are part of their supply chain contractor, so you have that frustration in dealing with ESP and I . . . they have challenges in thinking through this process because it is unusual for them and they are not . . . the people you are talking to are not from a construction background.

[GC] Can I try and caricature that back? Because in a way, the Edinburgh Schools Partnership implies that here's an organisation that's used to running schools but it is not that really. It is a funding vehicle.

[] Yes.

[GC] And I suppose one of the worries that I have had and this obviously applies to Oxfords because Oxfords was first in line, is that they are not properly geared up. Running schools is not what they do, what they do is run a funding mechanism and I am still not totally confident. And I think what you said Patrick is that you are not totally confident they are actually are really geared up to deal with this.

[PB] What they are drawing upon, they will draw upon, excuse the language, the supply chain. They have Amey who are a construction type organisation, supporting them. But the people that we meet are Edinburgh Schools Partnership because Amey are sitting behind them like a sub-contractor in a way, but that's not quite how it works, but when it comes to delivering it and they have got a team in place, they will be drawing upon Galliford Try, the contracting arm of Amey, a big contracting arm, to deliver the solutions at Galliford Try that are working through the work at Oxfords as we speak.

[AGr] So ESP effectively own the contract and use their contractors to deliver the expertise to the . . .

[TB] Could the structural problems that caused the wall to move? Could they have caused other structural problems like, for example, with the foundations or?

[PB] I can try and answer that. One wall has moved, as we all know, catastrophically. There has not been any evidence of any other walls moving. And, certainly what the structural engineers' inspections are, there is no concerns over the structure. It's a steel structure. No concerns over that. There's something nice about a steel structure, because it is less dependent on site works because it goes up and it fits together and it is a known quantity and there's no questions over the foundations either. Its . . . everything seems to home in on

what you would call the masonry trades, the guys that go in with the brick work and block work up.

[CC] Just for the sort of portal frame we have in the building though, it relies on those shear walls at the gable ends where it is rigidity at that end. So again it is . . . you'll understand that parents have got a lot of concerns about the overall structural stability.

[AH] What I don't get is ESP breached their contract. They gave us sub-standard buildings, so why are we allowing them to go back and make it right? I just think that that is . . . they have breached their contract and so we should just say right, get lost, we are going to take it in-house, we are going to do it and keep the buildings and stop paying them? I mean why are we letting them fix what they did wrong badly? There is 17 schools and you are talking about three people.

[CC] And now it would appear you are doing their work for them by encouraging these engineers to come along behind them, whereas because they don't have the facilities to do the job.

[PB] The contract requires . . .

[AH] But they breached the contract. They built substandard buildings. They built dangerous buildings and they put peoples' lives in danger. And you are letting them dictate the timescale by throwing five people into our school. I have not seen anyone in our school for two weeks unless they are teleporting them in there. There is nobody in there. Our kids have been out of school for five weeks and there is parents fighting parents, teachers falling out, well parents being mean to teachers. It has completely destroyed the school community. There is people crying daily.

[GR] The atmosphere at Oxfangs school has deteriorated significantly. It has been a great school. Everybody round here is fully supportive and now it has just killed it.

[] Can I also add into that whole conversation is that everybody is forgetting the people that are impacted the most, which are the children.

[AH] And the teachers.

[] And the teachers. But the kids. I've got a primary one, but I've also . . . I know people that have P5 kids and they are physically drained, they are not getting an appropriate learning. I know you are doing all you can with your contingency arrangements and I do appreciate of that, but I think for the sustainability of long-term contingency arrangements, there has to be

something that is more suitable for the children because they are the ones that are feeling the effect of this most.

[AG] I absolutely understand that and I completely get that. Bear in mind that the initial situation was to decamp because we didn't know how long this would be. And we did decamp into a temporary situation. I can assure you that we are looking at the situation now, and all of those decant situations to see now we are into not particularly . . . we can't describe a four-week period of time the children are not out of schools to be short term, we can cope with a lot of this for a couple of weeks. There is a complete understanding that we are now into that sort of mid term type arrangement which some of the solutions that were thought of at the very beginning on a short-term basis were not suitable for long term. And we are reviewing that in a number of settings. Now the fact that we have got 17 schools in a school estate of a rising role, is an additional challenge. But still your P1 children and up to your P7 children are still needing, and Edinburgh needs to provide a quality learning experience for those youngsters. I think it is the saddest thing that the resilience of the parents and the staff has been tested to the nth degree by a buildings estate that you are absolutely entitled to believe should be totally unproblematic, if that is actually a word. You are absolutely entitled to believe that you are sending your children to a modern, state of the art school and all you need to worry about is the quality of learning and teaching which the teachers at Oxbgangs, led by Liz, do a fantastic job. And it is a source of massive regret that we are in this situation. What we do have is every effort to try to improve the situation going forward. And if that takes reviewing things like arrangements, like what happened at the weekend, moving into a better situation, then that is what we will have to do. I think it is unwise of somebody like me to promise that every difficulty will be resolved. I am grateful to Patrick for sharing that he believes that Oxbgangs is probably one of the schools that will . . . that is nearest to a solution than most of the other schools. I would love to be able to say that that will be in three weeks' time, before the summer or whatever, I don't want to say that to you because we have nothing in writing from this group that is ESP and we can't really be quoted on saying anything until we get things in writing from them, which is a really important place to be. You can . . . you need to know that we are working very hard with all the schools and if you want off table to speak to other headteachers, I spoke to headteachers this very day, saying that we wanted to know about the difficulties that were being experienced in different schools because we want to either be able to say, I hear the pain, we can do nothing about that or we can do something about that and I think that the resilience of head teachers and staff up to this point has been nothing short of outstanding. And I think that attempts to do that, sometimes ends up with them putting up with things that perhaps are not the ideal situation and because they don't want to moan and create a different problem for people, then there is that coping with things which actually might be made better.

[CC] I think . . . I am conscious of time, we have got a lot of questions, but I think . . .

[AG] Well just to say, I have reassured all the Heads that they can contact us . . .

[CC] To let you know, the staff I know, some of the staff have been in an invidious position of having to face anger, pure anger from parents, and quite rightly in some cases, about it and have been powerless to give them anything other than the assurances that they have been

passed from, I guess, yourselves. You know, so they have been coming under some quite considerable flack as well and I think that most parents really appreciate the work that Liz and her team really do, fully appreciate it and especially in these circumstances. I think they are doing a grand job, it is just unfortunately as Gordon said, some of our parents are now becoming quite, you know, passionately frustrated by the whole process. But if we can move on from that . . .

[TLeB] But why do we have to wait for two months to have this first meeting?

[CC] That was perhaps my fault, in not asking Andy Gray to arrange it sooner. What we were hoping for was that the school would reopen on the timescales that were originally indicated and then we could have the meeting in the building, then that didn't happen. And I was conscious that the time was protracting on and so I asked Andy Gray if he would kindly facilitate this meeting.

[ES] Sorry, I had a quick one as well. So we talked about obviously the consequences and its impact on pupils, teachers and the people at the After School Club, but back to Ali's point about two weeks of inactivity. So you say that you are doing everything you can to make sure we can get you back as soon as you can, but where . . . we as a parent body are sitting watching nothing happen to the school for two weeks and we automatically then question, are you asking ESP for this survey straight away or are they just sitting on it and not giving it to you?

[PB] There will . . . There was people in yesterday working on header strengths because I have got a paper back on that. So there has been work progressing.

[AH] There should be mobs of them. There should be 50 people in there. They should be dropping every other job that Gallant, or whatever, are and getting everybody in. This is a crisis.

[PB] That's understood. And I think they've spread their resource amongst a group of schools, what they have called these stage two schools. As far as the report is concerned, the report is going to be . . . the report will be the key thing to say that this building is fit and safe to go, the report will inform the programme, but they have got enough information, I believe, to provide a programme and we are expecting a programme from them within the next few days.

[AH] So until we get that programme, they are not going to work? They need something to follow?

[PB] Oh no, that's the point, they are working in your particular area, they are working, because Galliford Try . . .

[AH] At fixing?

[PB] Yes, at fixing, putting up the thing . . .

[AH] But how many of them are working? I mean you would be lucky if there was five people there.

[PB] I know there is progress, there is a team progressing with drilling and fixing . . .

[GR] It is maybe a strange comparison but they are talking about the Forth Road Bridge was closed for x amount of weeks and everyone was up in uproar. The First Minister was comparing and everything and had heard nothing at all about the schools in Edinburgh and I think is more critical for education of children, for going forward, we have got children in P7 going up to high school. There is nothing there, no attention at all.

[KG] Well, they are using it in their fliers for the election.

[AGa] I could maybe provide a little bit of . . . I could maybe provide a wee bit of reassurance there. The government has taken a very active interest and I have been involved in discussions involving Ministers, including the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, the Minister for Education, the Deputy Minister for Education. I have had a number of discussions with all those Ministers on this very issue. They are taking an active interest, not least because the concern the government has is how widespread a problem across the country this is. So we are in regular communication. Patrick speaks to civil servants most days.

[CC] So, it's just, I am going to . . . we need to rattle through these questions because we need to move on. But the other questions that we have, are there likely to be any more structural problems that they have found that we don't know about? Was it the header ties and the wall ties? That's it?

[PB] Yes. Everything if you like that has been identified is associated with the masonry trades.

[CC] That's, I mean there are standards. People are trained in sort of masonry building and there should have been someone, in my day, it used to be the Site Engineer on site, checking everything.

[PB] I used to do the corporate work, so yes.

[CC] What went wrong? Why wasn't there?

[KR] That brings up that self-certification of them.

[PB] Well there is a whole different exercise in looking into what happened back when. I have not been focusing on that to be quite honest and the people that work in this organisation are no longer with us. So there will be that exercise to replace these.

[CC] And particularly, I mean, if this is the same problem over across all of the 17 builds.

[PB] Well it is potentially an issue around how PPP . . .

[CC] I think what people . . .

[AGa] Can I just quickly answer that? I think there are a couple of things that are probably worth making clear. This is not a problem that is unique to Edinburgh and it is not a problem that is specific to PPP and it is not a problem that is specific to Miller Construction Group who were the construction company at the time who built the schools 12, 13 years ago. Millers were then taken over by this firm Galliford Try that Patrick has been referring to. So there are concerns that are much more widespread than Edinburgh and don't just relate to PPP. PPP is a funding mechanism. Glasgow had a problem with a primary school in Cardonald, four years ago, that wasn't a PPP school but was built by Millers. Argyll and Bute Council have currently got a problem with a number of schools that were PPP but were built by a separate company, Barr Construction. So this is not an issue that is specific to any of these other things. The Chief Executive has announced, the Council leader has announced that there will be an inquiry in relation to this in Edinburgh and the First Minister has made clear, and the only reason it has gone quiet is because of the election, that the government, the new government, if it is of the same, if it is an SNP government, will also order an inquiry. The issues around what happened when these constructions were put in place will be looked at in the finest detail. I suspect by both an independent process commissioned by this Council and also a national inquiry.

[CC] Talking about lessons learned, and you mentioned I think it was Lourdes School in 2012, built by Miller. Did that trigger any investigations of the schools built by Miller in Edinburgh?

[AGr] We have no record at all. I wasn't in that post at that point, but there is no record of the Council being alerted to that. But when I learned of the catastrophic failure of that wall, I wrote to all the Directors of Education via the Association of Directors in Education to alert them to the possibility of looking at their own estate. And they have had a number of local authorities being in touch, which I think has actually led to the checks across the country.

[CC] Right. Subsequent to the failure at Oxfangs? Not subsequent to the failure at Lourdes?

[AGr] I knew nothing at all of Lourdes' situation.

[AGa] And there is a great deal of survey work, intrusive survey work now going on across the country.

[KR] Has any investigation been done into any other known or common faults between other Miller Construction jobs? Any common snagging items that might be present here that is not related to the masonry works?

[AGr] I am not aware of it.

[KR] So we are not just focusing on the masonry check, but on the common faults.

[PB] No, it wasn't a focus on, that's just where things have thrown themselves up, the issues from the structural engineering company.

[CC] Any other questions on the structural nature of the problem?

[] Just a quick question, are the original engineering drawings available?

[KR] They are not on the portal.

[PB] The original engineering drawings have been part of the challenge facing the teams doing the investigations. The original structural engineering firm has certainly been supportive in saying all the right things, but in checking their archives, they don't seem to be

coming up with the information. ESP, I would say, are also at fault about the information that is in their building manual, as well and so there's issues there too. We have supported the system by going in through and getting the building warrant . . .

[] So the Council does not get a copy of the . . . doesn't have or held a copy of the files?

[PB] On PPP, the Building Manual sits in the building but it is under, the buildings are managed under the Edinburgh Schools Partnership, but what we have been able to do is to get them released from our archive, the Building Warrant drawings which have the design and the warrant side of that but that is different from the point that was made about as-fitted .

. .

[KR] What about the architect's?

[PB] It's the structural engineering side that really covers these things that we are picking up on.

[] Do these drawings indicate whether there should be header restraints?

[PB] Some did, some didn't.

[AH] Do you think they have shredded them deliberately? It beggars belief that you can't find the plans to 17 school buildings and they are not forthcoming with them.

[CC] The design plans, the structural calcs should be part of the Warrant as well.

[PB] Well, the warrant. We have gone through our archive to get the Warrant information.

[CC] Gavin, did you want to?

[GC] I didn't want to lose sight of the point Ali and Gordon made as well which was how can we reassure parents, in fact the whole school community that absolutely every single bit of resource has been thrown into this? I think the perception of two weeks' inactivity and you might also say that there has been activity Patrick, but . . .

[KG] Communication. The communication has been . . .

[GC] I think it is reasonable for parents to say that they want to see swarming over this building.

[AH] Totally.

[GC] And I think the analogy with the Forth Road Bridge, and dare I say, if a bit of wall fell off the Parliament, we would have seen a lot of swarming . . . And I genuinely think you have got to give an answer to that. I don't expect that tonight but when you say, has absolutely every bit of resource been thrown at that needs to come out and if not, what do we need to do to put pressure on that to happen?

[PB] There was certainly a lot of resource evident when the works were external, the wall tie remediations. There is resource and I will try and get an assessment and a report back on what has been happening internally. I have not gone round personally, but I do know there has been work progressing internally, but you don't see it from the outside.

[GC] One day that ESP is leaning on its shovels, is one day that kids are out of school. Now, you need to just get that that the parents really want to . . .

[AGr] Can I just be clear and say that we are not apologised for getting a spade

[GC] Yes, I know that.

[AGr] And I can . . . and I for one can share the absolute frustration that the point that you have made, why aren't these buildings swarming with brickies and workies all over the place is a perfectly decent question.

[GC] What I am asking is what mandate do you need for that? What mandate do you need from parents? From councillors? Anybody else that says to ESP that this is not acceptable, you need to get more people on the ground to bring this school back to use as quickly and safely as possible.

[AGr] Those are exactly the sort of questions that the Chief Executive is calling the ESP to account, and the funders and all the other people around us. I personally don't know the answer to that question.

[AGa] There is maybe one thing that I would add. That is that the ESP, I think, is as we've acknowledged tonight are a thin veil in some senses and are a front and a special delivery vehicle for the funders. The funders and the vast majority of the assets that the ESP as a company has are actually geared in terms of loans from these funds. So we would not only . . . are not only talking to ESP, but are talking to the funders as well, the major banks. And, we will continue to apply all the leverage which we can to get the work accelerated. The pace . . . it is absolutely imperative to us that the pace of the remedial work accelerates. We are not that far away from the summer holiday, we are not that far away from making plans for P1 for the next ones, next year and it is critical to us that as much of the school estate as possible is back in action by the summer. And I am not confident that we are going to have that at this point in time and I need the funders to be applying pressure to be making sure that that happens and I cannot rely on the ESP to do it and we are not relying on the ESP to do them.

[SB] You would think they would stop splitting their resources if there's lots of schools and concentrate on getting at least one open. It might get people feeling a bit more positive about it. Because all they have done so far is close schools.

[AGa] Well this is the critical nature of the programme that Patrick is describing, a programme of works . . . the idea is that that is put together intelligently around a set of priorities . . .

[SB] Exactly.

[AGa] And clearly, the priorities are where can we get the fastest . . . where can we get schools open quickest.

[SB] I get that.

[AGa] We need to consider special needs schools. We need to consider the position of senior pupils, for example, we have got curriculum exams, and we will sit and a programme will be built around those priorities. Access to the curriculum is a major issue for us, as well, at the moment, the contingency arrangements are working fine, but they are not sustainable because secondary school pupils, for example, need access to science labs, they need access to all sorts of particular learning that at the moment is only partial. So, you know, Andy and his team are really working furiously to try and get these problems resolved because we . . . because the contingencies that we have in place are only temporary contingencies, they are not long-term solutions.

[GR] What do you mean by temporary? Temporary, I would say short term, we have discussed this earlier, it is four or five weeks, we can maybe accept this, but now, we are

talking about summer time, that is another seven or eight weeks. It is a long time for juggling, plus we have got additional challenges as well. We have got the May Fair coming up. . .

[CC] We will probably come on to that in due course.

[NJ] I have a question about incentives because everybody in this room has an incentive to get back into school. You guys have as well, obviously really keen incentives. The point is what incentives are there for ESP or the funders to actually get the schools open quickly?

[AGr] They are losing money at the moment because they are not getting paid.

[NJ] But will they have to get that money at some point?

[AGr] No.

[AGa] While the schools are out of action, they do not get paid.

[NC] So will they miss those payments, or is it just delayed payments?

[AGa] Will they miss them?

[AH] They are getting paid ten times the value of the building anyhow, so they have made ridiculous amounts of money off the scheme.

[AGr] Can I just qualify something that we also . . . it's a statement of the obvious, but I am up for getting these schools open as fast as possible, but not a single second before it is safe to do so.

[NJ] That's obvious.

[AGr] And I don't think anybody is going to be rushing . . .

[CC] Our frustration is that we have taken that as read, but our faith has been challenged . . .

[AH] But it is the timescale, it is not happening fast. We are not seeing it happening. We are all pandering, they are doing this, they are doing that. They are not doing anything. We want builders in the building, building, that's what we want. We don't want people sitting behind desks discussing, we want people on the ground.

[CC] Will your project works have a works completed to date and would that be something, even as a percentage terms of you must know what work is required in Oxfords, even if parents could see some indication of how much work was actually completed? I know it is not an exact thing, I know it is subject to variation . . .

[KG] That's what I was . . . communication. That's what has been lacking through a lot of this. The communication. And obviously, you are relying on ESP telling you things as well, but the parents are kind of guessing what has happened. And you know, we are not stupid, so we know a lot more . . . so communicating to us what is actually happening . . .

[AGr] I think the issue with communications is that you have to communicate certainty and when we have had comments from ESP verbally, we have had verbal guarantees of certain things that you know they would provide something by X and it hasn't happened and that is why it takes time and at this moment in time, frustrating I know it is, there has not been a written guarantee of anything at the moment.

[ES] So the latest version is that we are going to get an update by the end of the week, would that be fair to say? That was what was published last week.

[AGr] That was stated.

[ES] And will that communication tell us whether we have got days or weeks or months to go?

[PB] That would be the expectation. Yes.

[GR] Have you requested that? Have you set out saying what you are expecting to come back on Friday?

[PB] It is right up at Chief Executive level.

[GR] So have you requested that Oxfords Primary School will be actually returning back to normal practice?

[AGr] There has not been a letter saying we want Oxfords School open by such and such . . .

[GR] I am not . . .

[AGr] There has been a letter sent by the Chief Executive to ESP, saying what he wants them to deliver next Friday . . .

[ES] And that is . . .

[AGr] This Friday . . .

[AGr] This Friday, sorry.

[ES] And that is dates of individual, of each of the 17 schools?

[PB] The programme for every school.

[ES] And that will be communicated to parents on that day.

[AGa] That's our ambition.

[AGr] There is a big difference between what is being asked and instructed of them and what we get back. That is what I am trying to say.

[ES] But if they do come back with that information, you've ??? to let everybody in the community know?

[AGr] Too right, we have been asking for a programme for a couple of weeks now.

[EA] That was expected last Friday.

[AGa] Yes it was, Elaine. And obviously, what we want to do with that programme is communicate it and then we will all know exactly what we are working to. The . . . as yet, as Patrick has explained, we haven't got the detail back that we need for that. And there is still unanswered questions around some of the outcomes of the survey work. But we know that this absolutely imperative. It is critical for us. There is a council meeting on Thursday where this will be high on everyone's agenda. And we are absolutely determined to try and have much clearer messages to be able to give to people on Thursday.

[ES] What . . . sorry, I am just wondering, if they fail on Friday and they don't do what they are saying, what can the Council do in a capacity to make them do something? Can we withhold payment for . . .

[Chorus] They are.

[] For the other schools though. For all schools. I am assuming we are only not paying for the 17 schools,

[AGa] Yes.

[AGa] But can we withhold payment for the rest of the schools until they come to the table with . . .

[AGa] That's all there . . . We are withholding payment for all the schools that . . .

[AH] I mean, most peoples' works, if they have a deadline, they have to make that deadline. We were told we would hear on Friday, and what we were told was that we would hear this Friday, so when they tell us on this Friday, is it going to be that we are going to hear next Friday? I mean like . . .

[CC] It's just this sequence of disappointment after disappointment . . .

[AG] I totally share your frustration. Absolutely.

[AH] I can understand that, but I mean like what can we do to make these people . . . Just tell them they are going to lose the contract . . .

[PB] It certainly was escalated beyond Edinburgh Schools Partnership to their lenders, to the Chief Executive level. They were meeting. There was discussions around that and I think

Edinburgh Schools Partnership came out of that feeling a bit bruised. I think there is a focus there and this message has been got across quite forcefully to them.

[SH] Do you have any powers over that?

[ES] Yes, what happens if they don't?

[SH] We have taken advice from the structural engineers. Almost, it sounds like the mechanism to make this work is to hurt them at the lender and you are trying that, but what advice have you guys been getting from legal teams, from people who have dealt with similar situations to try and escalate that?

[AGa] Ok, again, maybe I can respond to that. The council is getting of advice from the very best possible sources, including specialist PPP lawyers that have come up from London to provide advice on this. So, believe me, every legal . . . every piece of legal advice, every legal lever that we can pull to exercise power in this relationship, we are pulling and the . . . and we will without hesitation start talking specifically to the lenders if we are not getting any deliveries through the ESP partnership. This is a multi-million pound contract, hundreds of millions of pounds are tied up. There's 20 years of this contract left to run, that's £300 - £350 million. Whether ESP exists or falls, there is a massive contract here that the lenders will want to sustain. And this will be sustained. And we will work with them to make sure that the problems that we have got at the moment are fully resolved. The reality is at the moment that we are dealing with contractual issues and because we are a client in this situation, and we have a contract that we are trying to enforce, inevitably a lot of the discussion at the moment is a legal discussion, but we are paying for the very best legal advice that is available in the country.

[CC] Ok.

[] Can I?

[CC} Sure.

[] Can I say, it is not so much effecting our school, because you already know what's been done at our school, but surely the quickest way to get all the schools open is to assume that these head restraints are required and have not been installed, and just instruct them to install all head restraints,

[PB] We have talked about that.

[J] Rather than waiting two or three weeks

[PB] We have called it the 'blitz approach', was the expression that they used. To get all the schools open and you get into areas where that approach doesn't quite work, where wind posts would be the solution or other solutions as well. But that has been talked about . . .

[CC] You can sometimes make it worse by . . .

[PB] Yes, you can unravel other things. But that has been discussed at a structural level and they are providing the recommendations to try and get things moving quickly and the structural engineers are kind of looking at optimum solutions. But there is an aspect of it where it will be standard detail, go and do it.

[CC] I think that, I am very conscious of time and we have got some other very important issues that we need to discuss. WHEC's burning on peoples' minds, but I think that the priority is perhaps for the impact of your decisions, however you have come by them, on the associated organisations that service our school. For example, we have got the After School Club, we don't have anyone from the Active Schools Club, but we also have various school functions that are going to be knocked sideways which are major fundraising events for this.

[GR] We have the breakfast club as well.

[CC] We have the breakfast club as well. I will ask Jill or Kathyie, perhaps, if they want to say what impact this is having on the After School Club.

[JW] First of all, I would like to say thanks very much to Andy and his team, because you have worked really hard with Landess Robertson, who is the Co-ordinator to find other accommodation to house the after school club and we know it has not been easy. We have had the army barracks at Colinton, we now have Colinton Primary School, well as of tomorrow. So we are going to be fully up and running, but the impact it has had, when we have been shut is again, it's like the school been shut, it is apprehension or just the hassle it causes parents to take time off work and to just manage childcare. I think possibly just the fact that because of the nature of when we were told as parents that the school wasn't opening, that becomes quite stressful for the club's staff to manage and to co-ordinate how they are going to provide a service and then contact parents etc. So there is a bit about communication but I understand that it is not always easy to get that information out as quickly as you would like to. I think the other thing is, obviously the loss of . . . because we have fees, we charge people to put their children into after school club. With the club being shut for a total of six days and we are just talking about the recent time, not referring back to January, we will . . . some parents have been asking for a refund of their fees which is quite rightly so, they put their child in, we can't provide a service so we will be looking for compensation to reimburse those loss of fees so that we can pay the parents, but also there

are additional costs required with us having to move around. The other thing I suppose is uncertainty, we have covered that already so I think that might have been . . . could have been problematic, maybe trying to find other accommodation possibly, because we didn't actually know how long the school was going to be shut. So that I think, maybe created some issues with possible opportunities and venues because they have clubs running and other things happening that they can't really commit. So temporarily, we could have moved in, if it was for two or three weeks, but long term it creates a problem. But we have now, and I know Mrs Walshe has been very helpful in organising the conversations with Colinton, that is actually probably easier for a lot of parents to come and go to. The Barracks have been brilliant – the outdoor area, for anybody here whose children go there, they have had a brilliant time. The weather has actually been so kind that it has worked out really well, but again, it was only temporary and now we have Colinton. But I think there is a vulnerability about reimbursing parents and also I suppose now that we have got Colinton it is a wee bit more reassuring that we can provide a service which takes a wee bit I suppose less worry, hassle off parents because they know that their child has got somewhere to go and it has less of an impact on their working day now. The breakfast club is not there, that is going to be problematic for some parents as well. I think if we hadn't have had Colinton and we were looking at having nowhere to provide a service then that would have been really detrimental to the club. We have got reserves and we would have been able to probably continue but it would have meant losing 16 years of building those reserves up after a fire at Oxfangs School which I suppose as a result this new school was built and another wee fire, so we have amassed reserves . . . we are a charity . . . so that we can have our staff. If anything happened, we've got those reserves to pay for redundancies etc. In some respects we have averted that problem because we have got temporary accommodation, but hopefully that will be able to take us as long as we need it, and I suppose we do know how long this is going on for. For the staff, it would be great to have dates as soon as possible when you know it so that we can . . .

[CC] And the issue also is that you have had a loss of income basically . . .

[KRe] Yes, the club doesn't run to make any profit and so, and the major point are that the staff are salaried so every parent that doesn't pay their fees because they didn't get a service and we all understand that, the club still has to pay its staff to keep them and the staff are great and the children love them, so we don't want to lose them. So I think the major impact on the club on that respect has been that is that the parents are right to be put in that situation where they don't want to pay for something that they haven't had. But the club is in a difficult position where it wants to continue and keep the staff so that it can run and let parents work when the school building is up and running. There has got to be some way of plugging that gap because effectively the club is a charity and we are not there sitting on piles of money . . .

[CC] Free cash . . .

[KRe] You know, that is the situation. It is a really tight squeeze and effectively we would be looking for that to come from ESP.

[CC] Before you answer that question, can I just . . . we have also got other . . .

[AH] I chair the PTA at Oxgangs and we have our major fundraiser in May which is called the May Fair, funnily enough, but this brings in round about £5,000 and this money pays for the Science Week we have at the school, it pays for

[CC] Trips to the theatre . . .

[AH] The panto, the theatre. All the money goes to the kids and we have preliminarily put down the date of the 28th May, but we were hoping by now to have an idea of if we are back at the school because we have put down deposits on photo booths, we've got to order in meat for the barbecue and so we don't know if we are back in the school, I think we said maybe the first week of May, we are going to have to cancel this and this means that the kids won't get out to the panto at Christmas, they won't get all the things that makes school special.

[AGr] Yes.

[AH] And, we don't know what to do.

[RI] Can I just ask a question? I guess if you are withholding your payments, however much around this time in the month, I don't know how much that is and . . . I guess us paying for coaches and temporary arrangements. We know you have a highly paid legal team, but can they not make emergency payments out of that money?

[RI] I wouldn't like to think that money had been absorbed into other accounts and activities or funding. ????

[AGr] The answer to compensation in all of those can be wrapped up in . . . the Council will expect ESP to pay for all the contingency expenditure, including the buses, the temporary units where there have been . . .

[CC] Is this contractual? Is that in the contract? Or is this that they will? They don't just have to repair the fabric, they have to repair the out of expenses for the associated . . .

[AG] This is some of the territory that is being discussed with the lawyers.

[CC] And if they can't provide it, we are still stuck for After School Club and we are still stuck for the May Fair?

[AGr] Our intention, as I say, is to ensure that all the contingency expenditure is covered by ESP and the contract and part of the reason for withholding is to make sure that we have got that money to . . .

[] ??? team of salary, I guess and consequently we have terminate their contracts.

[KRe] Hopefully not, but . . .

[JW] I think because we have got accommodation at the moment, we are providing the service so we will still get fees so we shouldn't have people . . . we're safe from that respect but if that changes then that would change the . . .

[AGr] There are risks around all of this sort of thing because let's supposing, ESP don't pay for some of the expenditure that we have gone to because there is a legal argument well was that reasonable or . . . you can imagine that sort of payment. I would sooner be a Council explaining why we had spent Council money on council facilities for the support of children than to be honest, providing council money to compensate the non-statutory functions that we have got responsibility for. So, we . . . a claim, for example, has come in for compensation and that is with our legal team to be satisfied whether we can pay them or whether there is a decision to do that. I am not taking that decision on my own. It needs to be decided as a . . . on a risk basis and it is public money. We have got to be very, very careful that Council money is spent on Council activity. Morally, I would say that ESP has a responsibility to cover all the expenses and some to be perfectly honest, but . . . and I know that we would be pushing very hard to make certain that that does happen but there is no point in me telling you in a gung-ho sort of way don't you worry it will all be sorted because we have to be realistic and measured and we are not there yet.

[CC] Can I suggest that at least as an act of goodwill, you recommend to your ESP people that an ex-gratia donation to the after school club and both our May Fair might be most welcome.

[AGr] Of course.

[GR] And breakfast club as well.

[CC] And breakfast club as well, thank you.

[] Is there scope for providing extra funding to the staff who are actually, for staffing and resourcing the contingency plans where the children are being taught at the moment, because I could imagine that that is fairly stretched in terms of staffing and resources?

[AG] As I've said, the longer this goes on, the more we are into a mid-term situation, a medium-term solution and we want to make the learning and teaching experience as good as possible in really difficult circumstances and we expect that to cost money, no we expect that to cost ESP money.

[] And thinking about children who perhaps receive support for learning who can't be having that at the moment . . .

[AGr] Can I come back to just the point you were making about the May Fair? I'm a former Head teacher myself so I am well used to summer fairs to raise funds and things like that and they are fantastic. And you talked about the damage that had taken place with the dynamics of the school community, would it be . . . and I think these school fairs do so much more than just raise funds for the school, it is something that can bring a community together in a really positive way. Would it be worth my while and your while, if we tried to get some support to get an alternative but close by location so that the May Fair could actually take place?

[AH] Mrs Walshe, would you . . . Yeah, what about a massive marque on the astro . . . and portacabins . . .

[AGr] I mean a venue where you would . . . an alternative venue.

[AH] There is a massive field right next to our school and just another point, why can't we have portacabins like Royal High and keep our school together as a community?

[AGr] The reason why portacabins are considered to be a good solution for Royal High is that Royal High is already fully open, well not fully open, but it is partially open and there are services there. If you went to see the portacabins, they are a solution, but they are not an ideal solution. The portacabins are about 3.5 metres wide, 10 metres long, they are tight, learning spaces, which is why I don't want to lose the audience just now, which is why the space in the WHEC temporary units were a much more sound learning space than a modern type . . .

[AH] For a short term, you can understand that . . .

[AG] Exactly. Absolutely, I totally get that.

[AH] But getting back to the May Fair then, if we came up with an elaborate plan and get . . . and speak to maybe Mrs Walshe and Sarah and teachers as to a suitable venue, would that be?

[AGr] I think we would happily . . . in the same way that we have got staff trying to help the After School Club really work, we want to try and reduce the pain . . .

[AH] It is a massive . . .

[AGr] We've got people who maybe could support some of the issues. It won't be throwing money at it or anything like that, it will be using the Council resources to actually make a really important community event happening and it is to address the really sad situation is that your seeing that there is a fractured community here, right.

[GR] I would fully support that but I think the challenge here is that everybody is just tired and exhausted, even Mrs Walshe, I am sure she is up every night just wondering what is happening, Miss Crole everybody. Everybody I think could be quite excited but it is just trying to get the momentum going because I think everybody is just waiting in anticipation of what happens tomorrow and if you don't have an end goal it is difficult to get that excitement going.

[AGr] I get that.

[AH] I'll have a chat to the teachers.

[KG] Could we use the field if there was toilet facilities brought in?

[LW] If we need toilet facilities . . .

[CC] We'll talk about that, let's try and keep on track. We've got big questions here as well.

[AH] Thank you.

[CC] Thank you for that.

[ES] So with the legal compensation, that is presumably a long term, that will take months. Yes, arguably years to resolve. So, the After School Club, if they have short-term funding issues, they can't wait for that to be resolved. Should there not be a commitment from the Council to help the likes of the After School Club out?

[AGr] We cannot underwrite what is effectively an organisation that is separate from the Council.

[CC] And I guess would it be the case, would the After School Club sue? Or would it be a class act of after school clubs, parents to take that forward? And who would they . . . would it be the Council that had first grabs on any litigation, if you litigate against the ESP?

[AGa] The lawyers will answer that one.

[CC] This one will rumble on. I'm keen to move on.

[AGr] What I will say is that we know that the service that is provided by whoever is important to the families at Oxgangs Primary School which is why we have had pretty much daily contact with the organisations to

[JW] It also affects St Marks parents as well as we operate a service for the cluster schools so it is not just Oxgangs kids and parents that have been effected, it's St Marks and Colinton as well.

[CC] I'd like to move on to the WHEC now, but is there any other comment about like, people affected directly, financially . . .

[GR] One last thing. We are obviously championing for Oxgangs Primary School, there is St Peters and other schools, is there any way we can piggyback onto the claims that St Peters are putting in for After School Club or breakfast club or anything? Rather than having multiple claims put in?

[AGr] I am not sighted on the claims from St Peters.

[GR] I am just putting that as an example, I don't know if they have or not. But is there a mechanism . . . is there a mechanism than rather having independent schools trying to champion, is there maybe a stronger case to put forward that this is for 17 schools that we are putting a case forward.

[AGr] I think that is a possibility. I think we should look at things on a school by school basis, I think that then gets a local solution and to resolve it for a particular school community.

[CC] Gavin?

[GC] I suppose I would want us to take that away because I think there is a difference between say a pensioner's badminton club that goes into Oxfords on a Tuesday night and is obviously put out and that to some extent, they have to resolve that. I think After School Clubs, breakfast clubs, they are part of the school texture and I know they are separate organisations, but I think I would like us as a council to look at what can we do to try and stitch those things together so that we are saying to ESP as a whole, across all of these school communities, that this is part of how the school works. Now, I think there is maybe some detail, we need to enter there. But I don't think just to say it is a separate set of claims than the whole served by the ??? as well. Can we take that away with us?

[CC] Yes, okay.

[EA] There is going to be claims from other organisations that have been effected because of the decant too.

[CC] I would just like to move on to the WHEC and I know you have answered that to a certain extent, but we have had, over the weekend there has been the fire storm about parents aghastness, if you like, about the state of the . . . certainly the external state of repair. And I think the question that we are most asked is, why was that chosen as being an appropriate site for primary school children, given the external state of the building?

[AGr] Okay. What happened there was that the wall fell, we needed to make quick and short term solutions. We believed, the information that we got, was there was space that was being used on a regular basis at WHEC that . . . those temporary units which the children were using right up until today, actually, were in regular use by the school for exam purposes and also when they were getting the refurbishment of their science labs, the art department was in there because there was an internal switch. Our information at that time was that it was regularly used, it was a large space and it was appropriate. And the internals of them, I was in them for the first time on Saturday morning and I totally agree that the external was disappointing, probably the best way to be quoted. And the internal, it is warm, there was ventilation, the windows open. It is heated. There is electricity and lighting and running water, contrary to all of the things that were suggested either on social media or in the press. As a teaching space, it was the sort of teaching space that was . . . has been in use in lots of different settings across Scotland. Was it dingy? Yes, it was. Was I disappointed to see that there were wooden . . . that one of the rooms had wooden floors? Yes, and when I saw that, we phoned up and made sure that there was carpet the following day. I think it lifted the place. The room that had carpet in it, looked better than the room that didn't in it. Now they

both have carpet in it. I still believe that those . . . that that space is worthy of using as a short-term solution. Do I think that it was the ideal situation? No, I don't think it was the ideal situation. At the time, it was the right decision to take and has it been the right decision to seek a better solution because we are now going forward with something that might be lasting a bit longer. But then, for a long period of time now, we have been believing that Oxfords could have been going back and it feels . . . it has felt a little bit of a cat and mouse, we think that it is going back. Horrendously frustrating for you, it's also frustrating for trying to put in contingency arrangements and the worry was that we could end up decanting this group of children to another setting . . . this is the situation right across the board, decant into a better situation and two days later, ESP says actually you can go back into your school. That would be a disaster.

[CC] Just to give you an idea, and I will open it up. I don't know if anyone with P6 or P7 children, but this was one of the comments that I was sent – “Given that there were obviously alternatives available, I am still furious that the way our children have been treated and I think we deserve answers about why they were considered less important than the other children.” Now that is from a parent who has been inside, been outside and there is this feeling, again, we see there was the portacabin issue, other schools appeared to be treated differentially.

[AGr] Yes, well.

[SB] Can I just say something? There seems to be a lack of awareness of capacity across the city, because I work in Tynecastle. Tynecastle is half full. There are 500 students in Tynecastle, it is built for a capacity of a 1,000.

[CC] I think we appreciate that. The point is that this is not being communicated to the parents. This is not . . . we have got parents now realising . . .

[SB] We have had students in for two and a half weeks, but there is this massive, beautiful new school which is sitting there half empty and finally we get Craigmount, but they are only here until the seniors go off on study leave. We then have a 500 space school sitting down the road. Why was that not used instead of WHEC? It just seems to be . . . it is a half empty . . .

[AGr] The strategy was to try to create solutions quickly and at the least disruption to other settings, that was the point of doing it.

[SB] But we could have got the whole of Oxfords . . .

[AGr] We could've put the whole of Oxfords into . . . well, we possibly could have put the whole of Oxfords into Tynecastle . . .

[SB] You could . . .

[AGr] Well, secondary school, if you have got lots of classes with say 18s in them, it is different from having older children with classes of 30.

[SB] But they are teaching Craigmount in the gym hall, divided by kind of curtains, and that would have been perfect for a primary situation. It just seems that they have not used the capacity that they have got very effectively . . .

[AGr] The decision was taken at the time in the best . . . genuinely, we thought we were doing the best thing that we could do at that circumstance. You asked a question, the answer was to try to create as least disruption as possible, because at that point, we thought we were only dealing with Oxfords.

[SH] Now we are in the position we are in where this period is extended indefinitely, whose taking on the role of thinking long term or mid term? And how is that getting accelerated?

[AGr] In terms of the contingency arrangements?

[SH] Yes.

[AGr] That falls to me to make sure that my team are constantly reviewing this sort of thing which is why when I was saying to the Heads today at the meeting of I think there would be about 83 Heads at this meeting, whereas the primary I was saying that if there are issues that need to be resolved to improve the predicaments you are in, then please let us know about it so that we can help improve it. We are not necessarily sitting back and thinking we have got an ideal solution. Far from it.

[SH] And when we get the news on Friday, potentially of how long it is going to be, is there a plan B there for mid term that has already been formed?

[AGr] There is a plan B that we are beginning to look at and to shape of, these plans can take a little bit of time to shape up. We have got to make sure that they work. For some of the solutions, we have not got ideal solutions. We have got a rising roll in Edinburgh and different schools are massively overcrowded and other schools are, you know, not as full. Alright? We are . . . we have got some ideas, we were discussing them today about how we

can make some improvements for certain schools. I think the priority has to be the secondary schools at the moment, because we have got secondary schools in different locations. And I know Oxfords is in a number of different situations. I think we are pretty much . . . we are more confident that Oxfords will go back sooner rather than later. So, we have got to then think about where the ones which are going to be later are dealt with.

[CC] Anything else to say about the WHEC situation?

[RI] I think for me, with Wester Hailes, I can't believe anybody would turn up there, look at the external structure and if my house looked like that, I'd think the inside would probably be reflecting that, that's unfair as I say. I don't believe anyone can turn up there and thought is this right, is this wrong? And practically, I suspect, as soon as you knew somebody might have seen that, they probably would have asked some questions. I am not sure how much yourself appreciate Mrs Walshe and the team have been doing everything they can. I don't know how much, you maybe can answer it

[LW] I would just like to say that I visited and I don't want to get upset here. So, bear with me, if I do, but I went to WHEC, we visited it. We went to all the sites before we went anywhere. WHEC was the first one that we visited, we went in and we saw the space inside and we thought, well actually this is a good space for us, we can make this work. We went to all the other sites and we saw them and we realised that WHEC was not the best of the sites and I did say it is not the best of sites, however, I would allow . . . I wouldn't mind my child being there. And I should have shouted louder. I have lost the confidence of a number of parents and it is very difficult . . .

[AGr] Liz is absolutely right. From a professional point of view ...

[LW] I just wanted to say that I did say my bit and I still went with it because I thought it was okay. I made that wrong decision and I apologise.

[AGa] Can I say for a second . . .

[RI] I think there is some feeling on social media etc that has been critical of yourself, which I defended you, I think, in terms of some of the people saying unacceptable things . . .

[LW] I just feel it was done inappropriately. Not one parent brought it to my attention that they had these concerns. It was all done through social media. It is not the way to do it. It has destroyed our community. It is not a good thing. That is all I've got to say.

[RI] Our communication. I think this brings us to communication. I think it is unfair with respect to expect the head teacher of a primary school and not somebody who is a Buildings Manager or a buildings expert.

[LW] But I am responsible for the children. And that is number one for me. And I wouldn't be making any decision about putting a child into a building that I wasn't comfortable with.

[RI] But there has not really been any . . .

[LW] So I was okay with that.

[RI] There has not really been any point of contacts given for parents to use because Mrs Walshe is not . . .

[LW] I am available, I have put . . .

[NJ] The emails have been out . . . mobiles . . .

[LW] I am on a phone number and I . . . and parents have been contacting me and asking me to contact them. I have been following up emails and phone calls as I would normally.

[AGa] Can I please say something, just briefly. First of all I was with Andy on Saturday morning, we went to have a look at the huts in Wester Hailes and there is no doubt from the outside, they look terrible. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

[LW] Especially the angle they took the photos from.

[AGa] My view is that I agree 100% with Liz. And I was with Andy and we spent an hour in these huts on Saturday morning and they were warm, they were dry, they were ventilated. They were actually spacious, twice the space of the brand new TUs that are up at the Royal High School. And actually in terms of a teaching space, as Liz has said, and as Andy has reiterated, it was working perfectly well. Nevertheless, being out there in quite a closed environment without a lot of play space round about, although the young people did, the children had access to all the WHEC facilities, which was really good, when we got the opportunity to . . . and knowing that we might be in this for a few weeks yet, we got the opportunity to find an alternative and we took it. And I think that was the right decision too. I think we have to be able to adapt to the pressures that we have. In terms of a single point of contact for individual schools, I think that absolutely is the head teacher. There certainly will be questions that head teachers and for people like me. I will not comment on legal issues, I

will not comment on buildings issues, that's why Patrick's here, but if there is issues that specific head teachers can't talk to, then these issues can come into headquarters and we will get the right people to respond, but the person who knows the school and knows the community best is the head teacher and I think we should definitely in my view, be the first point of contact.

[CC] And I think it behoves us as well as a parent body to thank WHEC for putting up with us for the time that they did and also to apologise for any implication that our saying that our facilities weren't good enough was any reflection on their own facilities or on their own school, I think that was also an unjust thing that has come out of the coverage as well.

[LW] However, they did get a new carpet . . .

[CC] Are those huts . . . am I right that those huts are due for demolition? I read a report that they were.

[AGr] They look like they should be!

[AH] I do genuinely think because my son was there and I know that kids are really resilient and that when he had complained about the building, he had said it had boarded up windows and there was no toilet facilities. And obviously as parents . . . and I said, don't be silly and then when we saw it and in your worst nightmare you wouldn't have imagined that, but as you say, the inside was better but on a short-term basis but I have to thank you that you really quickly went and sought the new accommodation, but I do feel slightly guilty about how Mrs Walshe wasn't maybe talked to first.

[SC] Can I just say that it was Liz that found Niddrie Mill, it was Liz that found Colinton. Liz has worked non-stop. It is Liz's tireless effort that has got us Niddrie Mill, she had contact over the weekend. She got Colinton. Liz is exhausted.

[AH] You look broken.

[LW] I am not broken!

[SC] But she has not stopped. All she hears about . . .

[AH] I know she does and we know . . .

[LW] And I hate to see parents fighting each other.

[GR] But it is nobody's fault apart from the issue that has caused the building.

[SC] But Liz is getting it.

[GR] Absolutely and she doesn't deserve it.

[LW] We need to pull together as a community.

[AH] Yes, we do need to.

[LW] I am still there for you. And I will still work with you and people are going to the authority about issues and then I get 15-20 phone calls from different people to sort out an issue that I could have sorted in a minute. It is just . . .

[AH] I think it is just frustration . . .

[LW] I know people are upset. I understand that people are finding this difficult but I am still there for you and you know, if I don't get to you that day, I'll get to you the next day. Just get that message out.

[CC] I mean it is . . .

[LW] Use the appropriate channels to communicate about the school . . .

[CC] Have you had . . .

[LW] The appropriate channel is me.

[CC] I know you do an excellent job, but have you? I mean the Council has got a duty of care to the staff as well. Have you had extra support or whatever to help you with these things?

[LW] Yes.

[CC] Very good. Diplomatically.

[] Social media completely elevates it.

[AH] I have stopped following it.

[] People get ideas but then there are people that are just constantly on ??? got out today and that is

[SC] But that was Liz again on Friday.

[LW] I sorted that on Friday. But you need to be speaking . . .

[] But that lack of communication caused a lot of this.

[LW] But that's right. I have been very clear about how to get in touch. I couldn't have put it out more.

[] No, not communication from . . . but from the . . .

[GR] but in terms of updates . .

[LW] generally. Yes . . .

[SC] We can't update until we get an update.

[GR] Absolutely,

[] But it's not . . .

[CC] I think generally, there is . . .

[LW] We are the first school in this situation. All the others are going to go through what we've been through . . .

[SC] Exactly.

[LW] And what staff are currently going through. It is not nice.

[CC] The irony is, on the one hand, from the people we should be getting communication from, it has, it feels, if you forgive me, a little slow to come and a little lacking in detail as to what exactly has been happening, step by step. I think a lot of parents feel that and yet, on the other hand, we have this social media who know next to nothing, but who seem to know about everything, who criticise parents for doing their best, they criticise the teachers who have done their absolute best and are run ragged as a result of this and we have this conflict. And I can't help but feel if there was better communication from the Council coming through, by whatever medium, what I was saying if you had some sort of communication support, a lot of these problems wouldn't have arisen.

[NJ] I don't think you would avoid that, because I still think you would have got. . . I stopped the social media because it made me feel sick.

[LW] Well I don't look at it either so.

[NJ] You are always going to get those people who just ??? because that is what they have got in them. And they are the people who don't help on the PTA, who don't help with the PC, they just want to mouth off using social media as a shield. They are not worth listening to.

[CC] Anyway . . .

[] I also think that right back to, we keep coming back to the stop gap point, that Edinburgh Schools Partnership are not giving you the information that you need to publicise to the schools. . . It does go like Chinese whispers. The WHEC thing would never have come about if Royal High had never got portacabins. To be perfectly honest, there was a bit of snobbery, like they kids aren't going, they have got portacabins, why aren't our kids? Then everybody started to look at the situation. And as you say, the space inside is fine for teaching on a temporary basis but there has to be something. . . Somebody has to hold Edinburgh Schools Partnership accountable for the lack of information, the lack of progress on what is happening in our school, being the first.

[CC] You can't help but feel if there is a good plan at the start, a proper survey, they know what the problems are, they plan accordingly, rather than this drip, drip, drip, problem,

problem, problem, which is just absolutely eroding. I think that maybe perhaps that these are some messages to take away from all this, but Gavin . . .

[GC] Forgive me, I am not as immersed in it as everybody here, I do have children in primary school, secondary school myself, and was on the Parent Council for four years so I understand some of the constraints. One of the things that might come out of the meeting, is there has been some very robust questions, but also some very constructive and that has been fantastic to see. I think that one of the things that came out of it was a restatement of the fact that parents did share all this information and they are supportive of each other, which I think is what I am getting here. Everyone is very supportive of each other and the staff. I think that might help. People will obviously feel angry and sometimes, all of us when we are angry, we say things on social media which we regret, but it's there. We are not going to stop that in any situation like this, but it might help to see that in context of a statement about how this says how supportive the parents are of each other and of the staff.

[CC] I think that is well said. I think a lot of the comments on social media is just parents who care being frustrated and this is how it manifests itself. I don't think it is . . . it is badly expressed and it is unfortunately expressed and it doesn't do anything for cohesion in the parent body and I think you are quite right.

[EA] I think Crerar that is perhaps some of the things that you have been trying to do on the website.

[CC] Not always appreciated by everyone, Elaine, but thank you.

[EA] Crerar has had a hard time too. Poor man!

[CC] Before we start on this stuff, let's crack on. I have, if we are finished with that one, I have a comment here which I found quite plaintive . . . the whole . . . this chap's whole email was quite plaintive, but one of the questions he asked, has there been no conversations as to how the authorities are going to recover from the many hours of lost education at a key stage of our child's education? So I appreciate this is not, why aren't our teachers doing more, I am just saying, had the council thought about this? Is there any plans to address it?

[AGr] Well. The way that the Council can address this is to maximise the amount of time during the school day. So to ensure that the buses get off quickly and try to get to the schools as quickly and safely as possible and return them to the Oxfords central point. Key questions are . . . that I have been asked over the last few days are . . . can we make Friday afternoons teaching time rather than not? Can we extend that? We can't do that. The teaching week, the school week is a nationally organised contractual arrangement and there is no way professional associations would extend teachers' hours. There is no mechanism for paying teachers for the additional hours and there is no desire to extend teacher's hours

beyond what they already are. I think there is a fair recognition that teachers' hours are huge. I am a former secondary teacher and I am married to a teacher and I know just how long primary teachers spend preparing for their classes, which nobody sees, at home and during the holidays. I don't think there is any realistic expectation of asking teachers to do Friday afternoons, for example, to extend the day. So in a way, I feel as if I need to knock that one on the head straight away. What we have tried to do is maximise the amount of teaching time by putting the contingency plans as quickly and as safely as possible. And I think we have had a degree of success. It is the biggest decant since World War II in the UK. It has involved manoeuvring 650 odd teachers, and also 61 schools are involved in it. It is a massive operation, not done by a small number of individuals but by lots of individuals working together like Liz has helped to contribute to the solutions. There are a range of loads of other head teachers, teachers and staff within here who have worked collaboratively to make that work. I don't feel as though we can ask our teachers to be doing any more at all than they are already doing. It is a really stressful time. They have been put into . . . forced into a different situation without all the resources that you really want. We are in an arrangement so that schools could go and access their old schools to get desks and chairs and you have no idea how difficult that was to negotiate with ESP. But that happened and staff went in for a limited period of time to gather as much resources as they can. They are under enormous pressure and they are rising to the challenge really well. I am not certain about what sort of other solutions we can realistically achieve which isn't going to involve, for example, teachers being asked to do more than they are already doing. And I think we have got to be careful to manage . . . I've got to get to my expectation from you of the teachers.

[CC] I think the real concern about the parents is what impact this will have. So perhaps if you can say something . . .

[AGr] I think we are very conscious of the potential impact on children's attainment and achievements over this period of time, which is why we are working really hard to try to make sure that the solutions are as reasonable and as decent as possible. Which is why we had no problem in looking to see if there was a better solution to the WHEC solution when we saw it on Saturday morning and which is why we are asking the Heads to say if there are issues, don't put up with it without letting us know about it, let us know about it and if we can solve it, if we can get a better solution, we will do and the whole point of it is to maximise learning and teaching so that the children get what is the very best out of a very difficult situation. Which totally recognises it is not ideal.

[CC] Thank you. Right, I think we are rapidly coming to the end of our time, so I am going to wrap up, if there is any questions, any other questions that you want to ask, now is the time to do it.

[GR] So if we don't get any notification on Friday, what are we supposed to do?

[AGr] If you don't get any notification about whether the school is going to be open? Supposing we don't? I think we have got to continue with the arrangements until frankly we know any different. We would expect there to be, I think there will be, if we don't get anything

from ESP on Friday, I think there will be comments about that released on the website to let you know.

[NJ] Is there anything we can do to help?

[PB] That's a good question.

[CC] How are you with bricks?!

[AGa] The only people who are more frustrated than Patrick, Andy and I and our members about this are yourselves. And we are working, literally night and day to try and move this forward as fast as we can. We will put a communication out on a daily basis still. So it is always, the single point of truth is the website and the communications that go out on that. We . . . as soon as we know something positive, you will know it. And really, up until, until we have a concrete timescale with which we can work, then we just have to continue working and there's a phrase that Winston Churchill used, if you will forgive me, it was "keep bugging on!" was his phrase during the war. And there is an element at the moment where we are really still in the middle of what is a crisis and we just have to continue to work through it. We will not . . . We are very resilient in this place and we will continue to work on this until it is resolved. But what I can't give you at the moment is a date, as soon as we know it, you will have it.

[CC] Anyone else? Any other questions? . . . Well, I think on behalf of the parents we would like to thank you for coming here tonight. We would also like, before we do anything, on behalf of the parents to thank again, Liz and all of the teachers.

[Round of applause.]

And second to that, we would like to thank yourselves for coming along tonight. I know it must be a difficult time for you all, I know you all have family time yourself, I know I have been speaking to Andy and getting emails late at night, early in the morning and we are very grateful for all the work you are doing and I appreciate that you have answered some robust questioning tonight but you will understand from the parents' point of view . . .

[AGr] Absolutely.

[CC] I am sure and I would just like to thank you again.

[AGr] And we will keep the communication up.

[CC] Thank you.

[Round of applause.]

[CC] Thanks very much.

[GC] Crerar, just before. I have been and Alastair, I have been here with him at midnight. Crerar's emailed me at 1am in the morning and I think this is true. This is very difficult and people are entitled to . . . but I do think you have done a lot of measured...

[Round of applause]

[CC] Thank you very much. Thanks for coming everyone, thank you.