

# Leith Primary Parent Council

## Extra meeting regarding Duncan Place Resource Centre

Wednesday 21 September 2016

**Attendees:** Jen Shepherd, Judith Weir, Katy Mclean, Kirsty Chatwood, Jule Hildman, Nikki Dunne, Rebekah McVitie, Christine Treche, Alasdair Friend, Liam Riggans and Ian Ramsay (architects from Edinburgh City Council) and Councillor Gordon Munro

Jen explained the background to the building closure back in Autumn 2014 and the protracted process that ensued to decide what was going to happen.

Jen attended a meeting of Children and Families in October 2015 and made a deputation to the committee. At this meeting we were assured that the 96 week programme of demolition and rebuilding was a realistic time scale and that officials had built in time for potential delays. This 96 week programme meant that the new gym and nursery would be ready by September 2017. Subsequently it was found that the chimney demolition was more complicated than originally thought. This, in addition to other issues relating to permission to close roads not sought, meant the planned summer demolition did not happen and the time scale slipped immediately.

We have been given a new date of January 2018 for completion, which will mean current P6 children will have spent half of their time at Leith Primary without a gym hall. Jen expressed her concern that we are not able to trust this new timescale and raised concerns of several parents that the demolition process and proximity to the playground was safe. There was particular concern that the slates on the building may be blown off during the unpredictable autumn weather. Jen received reassurances from the council officials that the demolition process and safety procedures were in place and would be monitored. The council will welcome any feedback from the Parent Council if anything changes.

### **The demolition:**

Ian Ramsay, who is managing the project, explained the tender process for the chimney demolition. Only 1 contractor was compliant and unable to start on the original date that the council set. It transpired that the chimney was thicker than anticipated and they would be unable to take it down by hand impacting on the timescale. Billy McIntyre, the council official is ill and not at work currently which may account for the poor communication. The conclusion is that Cornhill is one of the best/safest contractors and there is no alternative. We were told by Ian Ramsay and Liam Riggans that the demolition would take place in 3 phases: 1. The section next to Duncan Place Resource Centre is now complete 2. The other 2/3rds will be down by the end of September 3. The chimney will be taken down at a weekend during early October. By the end of October/start of November the demolition should be complete. Rebekah noted the timing of the work. There appeared to be a flurry of activity during school drop off and pick up however things have appeared to be far quieter at other times during the day when parents have been in the area. Ian offered Alasdair a regular meeting with the contractor; this was something that should have already been happening. Soil testing was due to take place at the start of October to help determine the type of foundations

required and this was one potential source of additional delay if the soil testing found additional complications for future foundations.

**The build:**

The original surveyor for the project had said the timeline was 42 weeks however the new surveyor has said this was wrong and increased the timeline to 52 weeks. This has also impacted on the finish date. The council have had some difficulties with the performance of the structural engineers who are a sub contractor. They have delayed the start by not supplying information required on time. This sub contractor is well known for their poor performance. Ian stated he was 90% sure that we can get this completed by the new deadline. There is a build start date of 9 January 2017. Ian is to give Jen a copy of the plan/time line. Gordon Munro was to try to expedite the committee who look after Finance to ensure our tenders are seen on time. Jen requested Gordon explore if we can get compensation for lack of facilities for such a long period. Alasdair, Gordon and Chas to work on this.

Unfortunately despite a catalogue of mistakes and delays from various departments, penalty clauses are not applied in the case of Council projects (not for profit) as they are unable to prove that there has been a loss of earnings/business.