

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 17 AUGUST 2011

GLOBAL SCHOOLS EXCHANGE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SRI LANKA

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval to continue links between schools in East Ayrshire and those in Central Province Sri Lanka.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 29 June 2011, Cabinet considered a report entitled Global Schools Exchange in Partnership with Sri Lanka (item 6E, page 1422, 07/12). For convenience a copy of the report is attached as Appendix 1. The decision of Cabinet was that consideration of this report should be continued to a future meeting in order that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services could contact the British Council to relay the concerns raised at Cabinet in relation to issues associated with the report, and seek reassurance on the clear focus of the programme and report back.

3. RESPONSE FROM THE BRITISH COUNCIL

- 3.1 In accordance with the wishes of Cabinet, the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services wrote to the British Council on 4 July 2011. Consequent to which a response has been received from the British Council by letter dated 1 August 2011 which is provided at appendix 2 for the consideration of Cabinet.
- 3.2 It will be seen that the British Council has provided background to this particular project and similar developments and provides a substantial amount of information in support of East Ayrshire's continued participation in the project.
- 3.3 It is therefore proposed that the recommendations in the original report to Cabinet on 29 June 2011 should be agreed by Cabinet.

4. POLICY / LEGAL / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nil

5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that Members of the Cabinet:

- (i) agree to the recommendations in the original report of 29 June 2011;
and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

GRAHAM R SHORT
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

10 August 2011
GS/JP

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Anyone wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: 01563 576017.

Implementation Officer : Graham Short

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 29 JUNE 2011

GLOBAL SCHOOLS EXCHANGE AND PARTNERSHIP WITH SRI LANKA

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Global Schools Partnership between East Ayrshire Council schools and Gampola, Kandy District, Central Province, Sri Lanka and seek approval to continue links with the Province.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Cabinet approved a paper on of 17 November 2010 – ‘Global Schools Exchange and Partnership With Sri Lanka’ regarding a Global Schools Partnership between East Ayrshire Council schools and Gampola schools.
- 2.2 Elected Members will recall that the British Council approached East Ayrshire, as one of six Scottish Local Authorities Education Departments whose schools were under-represented in existing southern hemisphere school partnerships funding programmes.
- 2.3 East Ayrshire and Gampola were awarded the maximum Local Authority grant of £6,300, to create international relationships to broker and support 10 school partnerships with a focus on global education. This was funded by Ukaid from the Department for International Development and managed by a consortium of the British Council, Cambridge Education Foundation, ‘UK One World Linking Association’, and Voluntary Services Organisation. No Council financial contribution was required.

3. DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 Three Sri Lankan delegates (Mr Chandraratne Sendanayake, Mr Shyamtha Dehigalage and Mrs Hemanthika Gunardarwane) visited East Ayrshire between 22 January and 29 January. They toured all 10 East Ayrshire schools in the partnership, meeting pupils and staff. During the tours similarities and differences in educational culture and provision were discussed. Common themes were agreed on action points to help build future partnerships
- 3.2 The school partnerships are:

Loudoun Academy- St Andrew’s College; St. Josephs Academy- Holy Trinity College; Auchinleck Academy- Wickramabahu Secondary; Park School- Kurunduwatte Royal College; Patna Primary- Zahira College; Shortlees

Primary- St. Josephs; Hurlford Primary- Baudhha; Ochiltree Primary- Jinaraja Boys College; Dalmellington Primary-Kathiresan Ladies College; Onthank Primary- Jinaraja Girls College

- 3.3 Three East Ayrshire Delegates (Willie White, Outdoor Education, Sharon Yorston, Patna Primary and Shona McLaughlin, Loudoun Academy) visited Gampola, Central Province between 12 February and 20 February.
- 3.4 The Scottish delegation launched the programme in all 10 Gampola schools in a colourful ceremony with speeches, brass bands, traditional dancing and several hundred flag waving children and parents. During each visit the Sri Lankan schools exchanged information on curriculum programmes and resources with suggestions to further develop projects with linked schools in East Ayrshire. This exercise was invaluable in establishing realistic expectations and goals.
- 3.5 Two teacher development events were delivered by British Council representatives during the reciprocal visits in Kilmarnock and Gampola. These were attended by staff from all 20 local partner schools as well as the foreign delegates. Information was given on the Global School Partnership Teacher reciprocal grant scheme, promoting Global Citizenship within schools, and in addition, ideas were presented on how to develop the projects between link schools. In Gampola the East Ayrshire staff presented on the Scottish Education system and Scottish Culture.
- 3.6 Lead staff from the 10 participating East Ayrshire schools have established a collegiate support group have met on three occasions to track progress on the partnerships and share issues and ideas. They have established a GLOW space for this group.
- 3.7 A range of staff in all 10 school partnerships have now communicated. Many have embarked on a range of curriculum projects with pupils with plans to expand these projects next session. The projects vary across establishments but all integrate Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes across a range of key areas including literacy, technology, health and wellbeing, science and social studies. The aim is to support young people develop knowledge, skills and values so they better understand Scotland, the world, and their role within it. As 'successful learners' who understand the global context they will be better equipped as 'responsible citizens' to understand that their actions locally have implications globally and indeed that global issues have local implications. The curricular projects also aim to make young people feel confident that they can contribute effectively to debate and communicate in a global world.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Additional British Council funding is available to the school partnerships subject to bids for agreed project. Reciprocal Visit grants are also available for partnerships that are laying the foundations for long term collaborative work to embed a global dimension in the schools' curricula through short

teacher exchanges. Global Curriculum Project grants to enable well established partnerships to further develop joint curricular activities with a global dimension theme are also available.

- 4.2 Currently three of the school partnerships are intending to apply for teacher reciprocal visit grants in June 2011. The other seven establishments are proposing a November 2011 application deadline.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All visits and exchanges are subject to scrutiny, taking account of Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice, and must be approved within the Council's risk management arrangements.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no policy or legal issues associated with this proposed partnership.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This proposal supports the priorities of the Community Plan: Promoting Lifelong Learning.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) approve the continued link between the Gampola Region of Sri Lanka and East Ayrshire Council;
- (ii) seek annual update reports on progress in further developing the Global Citizenship links; and
- (iii) otherwise, note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

AS/WW
May 2011

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Paper – 17 November 2010 - Global Schools Exchange and Partnership with Sri Lanka

Members wishing further information should contact Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: School on Tel: (01563) 576126 or Willie White, Outdoor Education on Tel: (01563) 551457

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service

080811ES04



APPENDIX 2

1st August 2011

Dear Graham and colleagues,

Thank you for your letter dated 4th July to Dorota, which we received on Friday 8th July (your reference GS/EO'N).

We recognise the points made in your letter, and the concerns raised by your elected members. Hopefully we can provide some reassurances as to the impartiality of work undertaken by UK schools and their Sri Lankan partners, under the auspices of the Global School Partnerships programme (GSP), which is aimed solely at benefitting the experience of teachers, learners and schools. We are very pleased that there is strong support for the partnership work to continue, and that the value of that work is appreciated by those involved in East Ayrshire.

GSP is funded by UKaid from the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID). It is managed by the British Council on DFID's behalf. The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, and is a registered charity. It is funded in part by a core grant from the UK government's Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

The UK government continues to press the Sri Lankan authorities for a full and independent enquiry into alleged human rights abuses perpetrated on both sides at the end of the conflict in question. In our opinion, programmes like GSP and the wider education and cultural relations work of the British Council offer important opportunities to engage in dialogue on a range of global issues. It would be a great pity, therefore, if such programmes were curtailed at a time when Sri Lanka needs engagement with the international community, not isolation. Our assessment of the risk that participation in programmes like GSP in Sri Lanka might be viewed as condoning any proven human rights abuses is that this is extremely unlikely.

The funding provided by GSP is used by schools to develop educational partnerships. Global School Partnerships are a powerful educational tool for bringing the big global issues, such as human rights and social justice, into the lives of young people, their teachers, families and local communities. The programme aims to motivate and equip young people and teachers to actively engage in working towards a fairer, more sustainable world both locally and globally.

In Sri Lanka and a number of other countries, we work closely with relevant education authorities. This is usually underpinned by a memorandum-of-understanding (MoU) between British Council in-country and the local Ministry of Education, and is often the only way to successfully engage schools in that country into independent programmes such as GSP.

In Sri Lanka specifically, our MoU extends to the handling of finances for grants awarded to UK-Sri Lankan partnerships. British Council Sri Lanka receives and manages all funds due to be used by the Sri Lankan schools, meaning no capital benefit is derived by the Sri Lankan authorities and lending accountability and integrity to the process.

Quite apart from the particular objectives of GSP as a programme and the arrangements to deliver it effectively in Sri Lanka, the British Council has a long-standing commitment to building trust through engagement and dialogue, often in challenging situations. Here follows an outline of that position:

- **We seek to stay in countries through difficult times.** We did this with the Eastern Bloc before the fall of the Berlin Wall, with South Africa before the release of Nelson Mandela, through recent unrest in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya and on the ground during the last decade in Zimbabwe, Burma, Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **We believe in building people to people relationships** whatever the tensions between the UK and other countries by sharing English, the Arts and Education. We believe that engagement between people provides a better way forward than isolation. We respect the different beliefs, views and experiences of others, but on principle we are against boycotts and for cultural relations.
- **We believe engagement is better than isolation – and is more effective than boycotts.** We are deeply uncomfortable when freedom is compromised but we do not support educational or cultural boycotts – we believe continuing engagement and dialogue provides a better way forward than isolation

Our activities and programmes provide powerful ways of establishing open dialogue and engagement between people and cultures. This is essential to building understanding and trust.

- **We reflect and respect the broad spectrum of UK opinion.** We do understand that some artists or institutions may not wish to engage with certain regimes and we respect their individual choices, we also respect the fact that others will want to engage and that the positions of individuals and institutions will rightly change over time.
- **We are open to an ongoing dialogue and will listen to different views.** We would hope that those who favour boycotts can understand our position but we are always open to other points of view and we would encourage people to engage in dialogue with us so we can understand and reflect other points of view.
- **We are a people-to-people organisation not political one.** We are always ready to engage in conversation with the people we work with – artists, educators, policy-makers, teachers and learners – wherever they are in the world and find that face to face and people to people many differences can be accommodated even where states disagree.

I hope that this letter serves as sufficient reassurance to your elected members, education officials and others involved about the GSP programme in Sri Lanka, and relations with the Sri Lankan education authorities.

With thanks, yours sincerely,



Will Skinner
Account Coordinator, DFID portfolio
Programmes & Projects
British Council
Email: will.skinner@britishcouncil.org
Direct Dial: 0131 524 5764