

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CABINET MEETING – 23 APRIL 2008**

#### **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CROSS PARTY GROUP ON CHINA**

##### **Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite Cabinet to consider the aims and objectives of the Cross Party Group on China, and to consider taking up membership of this group.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Chief Executive received correspondence from Tom McCabe MSP, dated 10 March 2008, requesting notification of interest in joining, or working with, a Scottish Parliamentary Cross Party Group on China.
- 2.2 The group is being established to promote relations between Scotland and China, not only in recognition of the crucial importance of China as an economic power, but also of the role of China as a cultural force. The Cross Party Group seeks to work with organisations and authorities to increase cultural, educational and economic exchange between the two countries. The group hope to develop a dialogue with the Chinese Consulate in Edinburgh and to engage with the Chinese Community in Scotland.

### **3. NATIONAL CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Scottish Government is working to strengthen Scotland's engagement with China, for the mutual benefit of both nations. Scotland's strategy for stronger engagement with China carries forward Scottish Ministers international agenda and complements the broader agenda being advanced by the UK Government to strengthen relations with China. The strategy is a ten-point plan towards improving Scotland's relations with China.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Fiona Hyslop recently met with China's Vice Minister of Education, Wu Qidi, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding which established formal strategic Sino-Scottish collaboration across a number of different areas.

#### **4. LOCAL CONTEXT**

- 4.1 As members know, activity is already undertaken within East Ayrshire in relation to promoting and developing Chinese language and culture.
- 4.2 The Council has successfully engaged with KULOC, the Kilmarnock Chinese Community Association, since the group was formed in 1995, and in respect of which there are now more than 200 members. The group aims to provide support and assistance to improve the lives of Chinese people of all ages and backgrounds throughout the area. The Association organises many social and educational activities, as well as various events throughout the year.
- 4.3 The Educational and Social Services Department, and in particular Grange Academy, have been active in promoting and developing Chinese language and culture. Since 2006, two groups of senior pupils and staff from Grange Academy have visited Kunming, and a teacher from No 1 Middle School in Kunming was the first of the Academy's Chinese Language Assistants in session 2007-08. The first group of Grange Academy Students to be presented for national qualifications in Chinese are due to sit exams in May/June 2008.
- 4.4 As well as the classes offered at Grange Academy, other East Ayrshire Schools have been developing opportunities for access to Chinese language and culture:
- Loudoun Academy has offered workshops in Chinese language and culture;
  - Park Special School includes a study of Chinese language, music, calligraphy and mask-making in the curriculum for its older pupils and has a regular input from the visiting Chinese teacher and from members of the local community.
- 4.5 East Ayrshire Council will be among the first councils to establish Confucius Classrooms. Confucius classrooms aim to give pupils lessons in Chinese language and culture, and will also be used to organise trips to China and develop links with Chinese people living in Scotland.
- 4.6 The Confucius Classroom will be accommodated in the new build Grange Academy, and it will act as a hub, offering lessons in Chinese language to not only students from the other East Ayrshire Secondary Schools, but to secondary students from North and South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire Council employees, adult learners and to primary and special schools.

#### **5. MEMBERSHIP OF CROSS PARTY GROUP**

- 5.1 The inaugural meeting of the Cross Party Group on China took place on 26 February 2008, where it was concluded that there was sufficient interest, and support, to constitute a Cross Party Group on China. A

further meeting, to elect office-bearers, was held on Wednesday 26 March 2008.

- 5.2 It is intended that the group will meet every 6-8 weeks at the Scottish Parliament, subject to approval by the Scottish Parliament Standards Committee.
- 5.3 Cabinet is asked to consider whether to take up membership of this group, and if so agreed, to appoint a representative (or representatives) to attend meetings of the group, and to report back to Council on progress being made, and actions being taken.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 At this stage, indications are that there will be no fee for taking part in the group. Therefore, financial implications will be limited to expenses for travel to and from the Scottish Parliament, where meetings are to be held.

## **7. LEGAL/PERSONNEL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal, personnel or policy implications arising from this report.

## **8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Membership of this group would contribute to the Community Plan themes of improving opportunities and promoting community learning.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The Cabinet is asked to agree:-
  - (i) to take up membership of the Cross Party Group on China; and
  - (ii) nominate member/officer representative(s) to attend meetings of the Group.

Elizabeth Morton,  
Depute Chief Executive/  
Executive Director of Corporate Support

(PM/EM)

8 April 2008

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Correspondence from Tom McCabe MSP to Chief Executive – 10 March 2008
2. Minutes of the Inaugural meeting of the Cross Party Group on China – 26 February 2008
3. Agenda for meeting of the Cross Party Group on China – 26 March 2008
4. Scotland's strategy for stronger engagement with China (Scottish Government) – August 2006

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers relative to this report should contact Pauline Minnery, Policy and Project Development Officer, Department of Corporate Support, on Telephone Number (01563) 576144. Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Elizabeth Morton, Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support on Telephone Number (01563) 576002.

***IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Elizabeth Morton, Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support***