

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 30 SEPTEMBER 2004**

#### **ST ANDREW'S DAY BANK HOLIDAY CONSULTATION**

##### **Report by Chief Executive**

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite comments on a consultation paper on the establishment of a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 A consultation paper entitled St Andrew's Day: A National Holiday has been received from Dennis Canavan, MSP, regarding his intention to introduce a Bill in the Scottish Parliament to establish a St Andrews Day Bank Holiday. The consultation period ends on 31 October 2004.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Bill is to designate St Andrews Day (or an alternative day around 30 November) as a Bank Holiday so that St Andrews Day can be recognised as Scotland's national day and a celebration of Scotland's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic traditions.
- 2.3 A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Members' Information Point for reference.
- 2.4 The consultation paper sets out:-
- the case for an additional public holiday;
  - an international comparison which sets out the number of public holidays in countries within the European Union which are higher than the number granted in the UK;
  - the reasons behind the choice of St Andrew's Day; and
  - the history and status of Bank Holidays in the UK.

### **3. COMMENTS ON THE ST ANDREW'S DAY BANK HOLIDAY CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Comments were sought from the Executive Director of Development and Property Services regarding the implications in respect of tourism/local business and from the Head of Personnel regarding any possible implications for the Council from a Personnel perspective. Their comments are submitted for the Committee's consideration as follows and have been made in response to the seven questions contained in the consultation document, viz:-

### **Question 1**

#### ***What would be the benefits of establishing a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday in Scotland?***

The paper itself (in section 4) makes the case for establishing an additional Bank Holiday to mark St Andrew's Day, in terms of;

- Improvement of health within the workforce and reduction in work days lost due to stress-related illness;
- Increase in national profile, through celebration of Scotland and Scottish achievement;
- Potential benefit to the tourism industry.
- Improved employee morale.

### **Question 2**

#### ***What are the problems, if any, that might arise from establishing a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday in Scotland?***

- It should be acknowledged that from a weather perspective, the timing in the year of a date at or around November 30 might not produce much direct benefit for the tourism industry;
- The date is also within the build-up period to Christmas and people may take the view that they would wish to spend disposable income in the context of Christmas;
- In terms of recognition of nationally significant days, the proximity of the established Burns Supper season from mid January to mid February must be recognised. Established corporate practice within the business events calendar is to hold events post Christmas in January, rather than at the earlier time associated with St Andrew's Day. It is suggested that changes to this practice would take a number of years to be recognised;
- The implications for the Council of an additional public holiday being granted would be that additional costs would be incurred in those service areas where it is necessary to maintain a service. The additional costs would arise as a result of having to pay public holiday premium rates for those employees who would require to work.

### **Question 3**

#### ***How do you think St Andrew's Day could become a day of national celebration of Scotland's diversity of cultures, faiths and ethnic origins?***

- For St Andrew's Day to become a day of national celebration would require a considerable period of time – years. Whilst St Patrick's Day is an important day in the culture of Ireland, this is something which is of considerably long standing.

- It would be important in terms of recognition of St Andrew's Day, that this was extended beyond the shores of Scotland. There are many areas of the world with strong ex-patriot Scottish communities, where in fact the recognition of their "Scottishness" is stronger than it is for many people resident in Scotland. It is understood that part of the "success" of the St Patrick's Day celebrations is that they are embraced by Irish communities throughout the world;
- There may be a conflict between what is regarded as "traditional Scottish culture" (which is more reflected through the Burns season events) and the modern diversity of culture, faiths and ethnic origins.

#### **Question 4**

***What impact, if any, would there be on the Scottish economy if a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday were established in Scotland?***

- If this additional bank holiday was established, it is likely that the general public would have an expectation of their ability to "shop" on that day, particularly as it is well into the period of "Christmas trading". Therefore there would be a significant proportion of the Scottish workforce (in addition to emergency service workers etc) who would be required to work on that day;
- As noted in the consultation paper, there would be resistance from the business community with arguments based on loss of productivity etc.

#### **Question 5**

***What alternative arrangements, if any, should be made if a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday is established but the 30 November falls on a Saturday or a Sunday?***

- See comments to question 6.

#### **Question 6**

***Would there be any benefits in always having the St Andrew's Bank Holiday on the Monday or the Friday closest to the 30 November (rather than always adhering to the specific date 30 November)?***

- From an organisational point of view and for the minimisation of disruption to business and having regard to the profile of other holidays, it would probably be best, at least until the principle of a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday is established, to have it on a fixed day as suggested in the question;
- However, in the longer term and again based on the Irish experience, the actual fixed date gives a focus and perspective and could become viable from the point of view of cultural celebration, once the principle is established;

## **Question 7**

### **Do you have any further comments to make?**

No further comments were submitted.

**3.2** It should be noted that recently the Council has put in place arrangements which have traded public holidays in order to achieve closure of certain work locations over the festive period. In addition, many employers including certain Councils have reduced the number of public holidays taken and have added the days to employees' annual leave entitlement. This allows service to be maintained on days when traditionally the organisation would be closed. If, as seems likely, this practice increases it would conflict with a proposal to set a further bank holiday specifically in November to recognise St Andrew's Day.

**4. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS** – The financial implications arising from the granting of an additional public holiday would be that additional costs would be incurred in those areas of Council where it is necessary to maintain a service.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1** It is recommended:-

- (i) that the Committee provides comments to Dennis Canavan, MSP, on the consultation paper St Andrew's Day: A National Holiday; and
- (ii) that the Chief Executive forward to Dennis Canavan the comments detailed in paragraph 3 of the report together with any other additional comments made by the Committee.

Fiona Lees  
Chief Executive

AMC/KM  
22 September 2004

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Letter dated 30 July 2004 from Dennis Canavan, MSP.
2. Correspondence dated 26 and 27 August 2004 from the Head of Personnel and Executive Director of Development and Property Services respectively.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers relative to this report please contact Anne Marie Carr, Senior Administrative Officer on Tel No (01563) 576134. Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Fiona Lees, Chief Executive on (01563) 576103.

**Implementation Officer: Anne Marie Carr, Senior Administrative Officer.**