

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 7TH MARCH 2002

OLYMPIC CURLING SUCCESS

Report by Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and recognise the achievement of the British Women's Curling Team who recently won Olympic Gold Medals at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Curling is a traditional sport in Scotland whose origins can be traced back to the 16th century although 90% of the world's players are Canadian at the present time. It is estimated that there are currently 20,000 active curlers in Scotland and locally there are a number of curling clubs. The national body for curling is the Royal Caledonian Curling Club.
- 2.2 The only remaining factory producing curling stones in the world is in Mauchline, the forty two pounds stones being carved from granite from Ailsa Craig. The majority of stones produced in Mauchline are now exported.
- 2.3 Despite the long history of the sport, curling only became a full medal sport at the last winter games in Nagano. This led to a considerable increase in development of the sport and as Members will be aware, a Curling Development Officer was appointed within the Community Services Department in 2000. This post is jointly funded and managed with the two other Ayrshire authorities, the Royal Caledonian Curling Club and the Bank of Scotland.

3. OLYMPIC SUCCESS AND LOCAL CURLING DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The Ayrshire Curling Development Officer has developed close working relations with the Educational and Social Services Department. The National Curling is Cool initiative was piloted with East Ayrshire Primary Schools and has now been fully implemented. Within the last year over 550 children from twelve East Ayrshire Primary Schools have attended a six week block of curling coaching sessions with the Galleon Centre. Many of these children were lucky enough to be taught by Rhona Martin who has been heavily involved in the East Ayrshire Curling is Cool programme. Indeed East Ayrshire have hosted the largest curling schools festivals in Scotland for two years in succession with over 200 children in attendance. This initiative has attracted coverage in local and national press and within sports specific publications. Margaret Morton has assisted the Development Officer in delivering a similar programme at Ayr Ice Rink.

- 3.2 A clear focus upon the development of a long term strategy in order to ensure the systematic development of curling within Ayrshire has begun to pay dividends. Within East Ayrshire there is now a clear pathway from participation to performance and excellence allowing all participants the opportunity to reach their full potential from club player to Olympic Gold Medallist. Approximately 20 children per week attend the after school club; the Galleon Club membership has increased and five curlers from Ayrshire are part of the Scottish Institute of Sport with three being admitted into the West Area Institute.
- 3.3 In terms of coach education and development around 15 local primary teachers have achieved the level A award ensuring the sustained delivery of curling at grass roots level.
- 3.4 East Ayrshire's reputation for excellence in curling also resulted in the Royal Caledonian Curling Club hosting their annual summer coaching camp at the Galleon Centre. In addition both Rhona and Margaret use the Galleon on a regular basis for training.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The success of the British Women's Curling Team, all of whom are Scottish, in the Winter Olympics is a major sporting achievement since this is the first Winter Olympics gold medal for Britain in eighteen years. Within curling itself, no British women's team has won at World or European level since 1975. It is therefore felt that the team comprising of Rhona Martin (skip), Margaret Morton, Fiona McDonald, Janice Rankin and Debbie Knox, should receive some form of civic recognition of this achievement from the Council especially since two members of the team, Rhona Martin and Margaret Morton, reside in East Ayrshire. Rhona lives in Dunlop and Margaret in Mauchline.
- 4.2 On Friday 1st March the Community Association in Dunlop held a 'welcome home' party for Rhona Martin in the Village Hall and the Council were represented by the Provost and the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive, exercising his delegated emergency powers to allow the necessary preparatory work to proceed at unusually short notice in these unique circumstances, had decided that the Council would assist with the provision of the hall and catering for this event, with the cost being met from existing budgets.
- 4.3 At the time of writing, it is proposed that a similar event is held in Mauchline but details have not yet been finalised. Similar support will be offered by the Council.
- 4.4 It is felt that the Council may however wish to formally recognise this achievement and host a civic reception for the team on a date to be fixed. This event could also highlight the many curling related activities which take place in East Ayrshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of the welcome home events and the civic reception can be met from existing budgets.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS -Nil.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Council may wish to formally recognise this considerable sporting achievement by hosting a civic reception for the British Women's Curling Team.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Council:-

- (i) (a) Homologate the decision to support the welcome home party in Dunlop;
- (i) (b) Agree to support similarly a welcome home function in Mauchline;
- (ii) Agree to host a civic reception on a suitable future date for the British Women's Curling Team;
- (iii) Remit, in accordance with normal practice, to the appropriate officer to make the necessary arrangements in consultation with the Chair of the Members' Services and Civic Ceremonial Sub-Committee; and
- (iv) Otherwise note the terms of this report.

David Montgomery
Chief Executive
DM/WS/JS
4th March 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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AGENDA