

# **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 21 FEBRUARY 2002**

### **THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDE SURVEY**

#### **Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources**

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

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of a proposal by the Scottish Local Authorities Management Centre (SLAMC) and the National Centre for Social Research to conduct a survey of public attitudes towards Local Government in Scotland and to seek the Committee's approval to make a financial contribution to the cost of undertaking this research

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 SLAMC has recently contacted all councils in Scotland with a proposal to conduct, in association with the National Centre for Social Research, a survey of public attitudes towards Local Government.
- 2.2 The Committee will recall that the Council has conducted a Residents Survey through the market research company MORI, the results of which will be summarised within the Council's public performance report which is soon to be published. The national survey proposed by the SLAMC would complement the Council's Residents Survey and assist in informing the content of a future survey.

#### **3. PROPOSED CONTENT OF THE SURVEY**

- 3.1 It is anticipated that this survey into public attitudes towards Local Government will contribute to the quality of both public policy and public discussion in Scotland with respect to Local Government and local authority services. The survey would also provide a valuable national data set against which the standing of both Local Government and individual authorities may be assessed in the future. Specifically, the survey will focus on two key areas:
- (i) What is the level of public support for, and identification with, Local Government in Scotland?
  - (ii) What are the public preferences for, and evaluations of, the standard of delivery of local public services?

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 SLAMC believes that this will be an important piece of research and one that will have major benefits for Scottish Local Government. It will offer Local Government a unique opportunity to clearly establish the public's perceptions of Local Government across Scotland and establish within public debate a clearly articulated role for Local Government in post-devolution Scotland.
- 4.2 The results of this Scotland-wide survey should help to inform the structure and content of any future survey of residents within East Ayrshire, the timing and proposals for which will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

**4.3** The full survey will take place in the summer and early Autumn of 2002 and data should be available by the end of the year. A copy of the data set will be made available for participating councils at this stage for private use. First publication of the results will be at the annual Scottish Social Attitudes Conference which will take place in Spring 2003.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The total cost of the proposed survey, including the cost of all survey production, fieldwork, data analysis and report production is £52,000. SLAMC will contribute £10,000 towards the cost of undertaking the research, it will also provide a research team to produce the survey and analyse the data once it has been generated and produce the final reports.

**5.2** Individual Local Authorities are asked to make a contribution of £1,300 each to cover the remaining £42,000 cost of the project. The success of the project will clearly require as many councils as possible to participate but SLAMC propose that it shall make up any small shortfall in the total cost of the project if some authorities choose not to participate.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS - Nil.**

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

**7.1** It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) note the purpose and focus of the proposed Scottish Attitudes Survey;
- (ii) agree to the Council's participation in the survey at a cost of £1,300 subject to there being sufficient other participating councils to ensure its viability;
- (iii) note the timetable for the production of the final report and that a further report on this will be brought to the Committee at the appropriate time; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Depute Chief Executive/  
Director of Corporate Resources

MO'R/FM

5 February 2002

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Letter dated 30 January 2002 from the Director of the Scottish Local Authorities Management Centre.

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources on 01563 576019.

**Implementation Officer: Martin O'Rourke**

**AGENDA**