

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE : 15 JUNE 2000

THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO VOLUNTEERING IN EAST AYRSHIRE

Report by Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to agree and recommend to Council an East Ayrshire Policy for Volunteering, to support the establishment of a Local Volunteer Development Agency and to endorse as the Council's response to the Scottish Executive on Supporting Active Communities in Scotland, the comments contained within the report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council recognises the valuable contribution made by volunteers to local communities and also the important role played by them in Council Services, which complements that of its professional staff. The Policy and Resources Committee on 23 January 1996 agreed to endorse the statement of principles between "Voluntary Sector and Councils" produced by COSLA and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.
- 2.2 The Council has given a commitment to volunteering and has taken steps to support and promote volunteering. In line with national guidance it is also keen to secure recognition and appreciation of volunteering and ensure that a model of good practice operates with regard to the involvement of volunteers.

3. POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERING

- 3.1 Guidance on volunteering was initially issued in circular 15/1995 from the Scottish Office outlining government policy on volunteering and encouraging Councils to develop and publish a policy statement detailing ways in which they proposed to engage with volunteers and encourage volunteering in general.
- 3.2 In order to ensure a corporate approach to the production of a Council Policy on Volunteering, an officers Working Group was established with representation from Community Education, Community Services and the Social Work Department. A representative from the Council of Voluntary Organisations was invited to participate but was unable to attend because of staff shortages.
- 3.3 The Working Group reviewed the reports, Draft Guidance on Councils' Voluntary Policy Statements Guidance on Volunteering previously issued by the Scottish

Office and Local Authority Policy for Volunteering produced by CoSLA and Volunteer Development Scotland.

The Working Group recognised that the Council currently offers support to volunteers both working within the voluntary sector and in support of Council services and agreed to build on existing good practice in preparing the policy on volunteering.

- 3.4 The Working Group has reviewed the documents referred to at 3.2 and has produced a Draft Policy. (Attached at Appendix 1) This Policy has been the subject of consultation internally with those Council Services who promote and support the use of volunteers and with the Trade Unions and Voluntary Organisations.
- 3.5 The Draft Council Policy for Volunteering recognises areas of good practice and procedures and includes:
- a definition of volunteering;
 - a statement of underlying principles;
 - a statement of aims; and
 - a statement on principles of good practice.
- 3.6 The Committee is, therefore, asked to agree the Draft Policy and recommend to Council that it be adopted. The Draft Policy will ensure a standardised approach to the recruitment, selection and support of volunteers.

4. LOCAL VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (LVDA)

- 4.1 In line with the Council's commitment to supporting, volunteering officers have been working with voluntary sector representatives and Volunteer Development Scotland to gauge support for the establishment of a LVDA. Contact was made with the Scottish Executive in December 1999 exploring the position regarding new applications to the Local Volunteering Development Agency (LVDA) Grant Programme. In its reply the Scottish Executive welcomed work being done by the Council to support the setting up of a LVDA and made it clear that they would welcome any application for funding submitted.
- 4.2 In line with its commitment to supporting volunteering, the Council is currently collaborating with voluntary sector representatives and Volunteer Development Scotland to promote the establishment of a Local Volunteer Development Agency, which will operate across East Ayrshire to:
- identify and disseminate successful volunteering practice
 - promote and develop volunteering within East Ayrshire
 - recruit and refer volunteers to agencies

- collect and distribute information on volunteering
- contribute to the support and training of volunteers and the agencies and projects with which they work
- develop new volunteer opportunities and projects involving volunteers
- network with other agencies to encourage community involvement.

On 16 February 2000 a workshop took place for voluntary sector organisations operating within East Ayrshire to gauge support for the establishment of a LVDA and share information about its purpose in relation to their organisations.

4.3 Following on from this successful event, a Steering Group was established to take this initiative forward. The Steering Group has membership from the following voluntary organisations:

- Princess Royal Trust East Ayrshire Carers Centre
- Blue Triangle
- Save the Children
- Alzheimer Scotland
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- yipworld.com
- NCH Action for Children

There is representation on the Steering Group from Strathclyde Police, East Ayrshire Employment Initiative and Ayrshire and Arran Health Board and local communities in East Ayrshire. The Steering Group is supported by staff from the Social Work Department Social Inclusion Unit.

4.4 The priority task at present is the completion of the funding application to the Local Volunteering Development Agency Grants Programme through which the Scottish Executive is supporting the creation of a national network of core funded LVDA's. There are currently 31 Local Authorities in Scotland with LVDA's established.

4.5 Each LVDA must match the Grants Programme funding by at least an equivalent amount of funding from other sources, that is £30,000 per year. The other sources can include funds from, for example, the local authority, health sector, local enterprise company, the private sector and trusts. Help in kind from an outside body will also count as a contribution. The Grants Programme will provide each LVDA with £30,000 per annum for 3 years as a contribution towards its costs.

4.6 Officers are currently working with the Steering Group to develop a funding package which will include any "in kind" support provided by the Council. Every effort will be made to secure external funding from other possible funders, however, the Council is being asked to make a sum of £10,000 available this

year. In the current year the phasing of grants payments has created some flexibility and such a sum can be found from the budget held by the Policy & Resources Committee. The base budget for future years however would require to be increased as part of the CCLS adjustment.

5. SUPPORTING ACTIVE COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND: A DRAFT STRATEGY FOR VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY ACTION

5.1 The draft strategy for Volunteering and Community Action was published by the Scottish Executive as a consultation document in response to the Active Community Initiative launched by the Prime Minister in January 1999. The Active Community Initiative:

- promotes the value of community involvement
- encourages the involvement of volunteers
- supports public, private and voluntary sector agencies
- recognises the contribution which active communities make towards planning, policy making and service delivery.

5.2 The strategy set out in the consultation document identifies four objectives as a focus for debate on volunteering and community action:

- to bring about more positive attitudes at all levels towards volunteering and community action.
- to locate volunteering and community activity at the heart of the policy.
- to broaden the range of people involved in volunteering and community action.
- to increase the number of people involved in volunteering and community action.

5.3 The Scottish Executive invited comments on the consultation document and the comments contained within this report have been forwarded as a draft response subject to approval by the Committee.

5.4 Local Authorities have a clear role in helping to meet these objectives through funding voluntary sector activity and supporting voluntary organisations. East Ayrshire Council is currently involved in supporting a range of volunteering activity and with the adoption of a Council Policy on Volunteering this work will be expanded and enhanced.

5.5 The Draft Strategy is welcomed as a document which seeks to bring together all standards of volunteering, community involvement and participation. It does so within the context of complementary national initiatives, such as Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship. The Strategy provides a framework for debate on volunteering and community action by detailing clear objectives for action.

- 5.6 The Scottish Executive has established an Active Community Forum which will have a role in monitoring the strategy and an annual report will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament to highlight good practice and ensure progress.
- 5.7 In addition the co-ordinating role of the Scottish Executive/Active Communities Forum can only assist in supporting locally based initiatives. The production of guidance on funding, models of good practice and the evaluation of the demonstration projects will be particularly welcomed.
- 5.8 The Council's Policy on Volunteering will provide a framework for departments to offer positive volunteering opportunities.
- 5.9 The development of the Local Volunteer Development Agency will improve the collection and dissemination of information regarding volunteering opportunities and will provide a focus for the recruitment and support of volunteers. Through support of this initiative, the Council will have the opportunity to promote best practice and innovation.

The new Volunteer Policy and the establishment of a LVDA will ensure that within East Ayrshire volunteering opportunities are enhanced and further developed.

- 5.10 The Draft Strategy is a brief but concise document which clearly defines the key players in the promotion of volunteering and community action. It is extremely helpful to both local authorities and the voluntary sector in that it clarifies and pinpoints their respective roles in the process of implementing a strategy for volunteering and community action

6. FINANCIAL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Committee is asked to agree to make available £10,000 as a contribution towards the match funding required to establish an LVDA. This can be done this year due to the phasing of payments from the grants budget. Financial Support in future years would require to be considered when the base budget is constructed.
- 6.2 The proposals contained within this report will ensure there is a policy framework for the recruitment, support and development of volunteers.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The committee is asked to:

- (i) recommend to Council the adoption of the East Ayrshire Council Volunteering Policy;
- (ii) agree to support the establishment of an East Ayrshire Local Volunteer Development Agency and to make available this year a sum of £10,000 as a contribution towards the required match funding;
- (iii) note that contributions in future years will require to be considered when the Council's base budget is constructed;
- (iv) to authorise officers to ensure an appropriate package of 'in-kind' support is prepared to allow the LVDA to make application to the Scottish Executive for funding;
- (v) to endorse as the Council's response, to the Scottish Executive on Supporting Active Communities in Scotland the comments contained within and
- (vi) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

David Montgomery
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
27 April 2000
Enc (1)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Supporting Active Communities in Scotland: A draft strategy for Volunteering and Community Action - Scottish Executive, January 2000.

For further information on this report please contact Helen Sinclair, Service Officer Development, East Ayrshire Council, Social Work Department, Civic Centre South, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 1BY, Telephone: 01563 576909.

AGENDA