

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 28 NOVEMBER 2002

THE GAELIC LANGUAGE

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To seek approval from the Policy & Resources Committee for the Council's Statement of Commitment to promote the Gaelic language in East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** East Ayrshire Council received correspondence from the Scottish Executive Education Department regarding advice about the Gaelic Language.
- 2.2** The European Charter for regional or minority languages was drawn up in 1992 to help protect and promote Europe's lesser used languages. The UK government signed the Charter in 2000 and ratified it in 2001 in respect of Welsh in Wales, Gaelic in Scotland and Irish in Northern Ireland.
- 2.3** As part of the Scottish Executive's commitment to taking forward the measures set out in the Charter, the Executive expects public bodies to respect the interests of the Gaelic-speaking community and where appropriate to make provision for services in Gaelic.
- 2.4** Public bodies are encouraged to review their policy on Gaelic in the light of the Charter or, where relevant, consider drawing up a policy, which may include a statement of the services in Gaelic which the public body can provide. Public bodies need to take cognisance of the particular circumstances surrounding the development of such a policy, which will include the size of the Gaelic speaking community.

3. EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL'S POSITION

- 3.1** The Council supports the use of the Gaelic language in a number of ways and seeks to offer the opportunity to promote Gaelic from early years through to adult learners. This is primarily done through the Department of Educational & Social Services which has a significant commitment to Gaelic education. There are five main strands to this, namely:
- Gaelic Pre-school provision
 - Gaelic Medium Unit established at Onthank Primary School
 - an adult education programme through Support to Communities
 - a Gaelic Youth Club established this year and funded through NOF for three years

- wider provision through the curriculum in all educational establishments, where attention is paid to the heritage of Scotland, in which the Gaelic community plays a significant part

More recently a Gaelic Education Strategy was approved through Education Committee (17 September 2002). Consultation is currently taking place regarding the establishment of Gaelic Medium Education provision in the secondary sector.

4. THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

- 4.1** It is proposed that the Council's Statement of Commitment in relation to the Gaelic language should be "**East Ayrshire Council is committed to promoting the Gaelic language and culture particularly through Gaelic medium education, lifelong learning and cultural opportunities. The Council will consult with Gaelic speaking members of the community on matters which affect them**".
- 4.2** Directors will be asked to consider the promotion of The Gaelic language when opportunities arise and resources permit.

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** NIL

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1** It is recommended that Members of the Policy & Resources Committee:
- (i) approve the Statement of Commitment set out in paragraph 4.1
 - (ii) remit to Directors to consider how best to implement the Council's commitment when opportunities arise and resources permit and to advise respective service committees as appropriate
 - (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational & Social Services

KG/JW
28 October 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR