

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 4 OCTOBER 2001**

#### **AYRSHIRE ELECTRONIC COMMUNITY**

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

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek agreement in principle to support a bid for external funding for a new or revised project to continue the advances made by the Ayrshire Electronic Community project beyond December 2001.

### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council is the lead organisation in the successful Ayrshire Electronic Community project. Progress of the project has been reported to Policy and Resources Committee regularly and it has attracted support from Scottish Executive Ministers as well as from within the local community.
- 2.2 The project is currently funded by a number of partners and receives external funding support from the European Regional Development Fund. This funding is scheduled to terminate at the end of December 2001 and discussions are currently underway to define a project that will continue to have a positive impact in securing digital inclusion within Ayrshire.

### **3.0 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 A range of discussions are currently underway with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and other partners around proposals that will secure the continued provision of the services that Ayrshire Electronic Community currently provides, as well as extend them to more communities in Ayrshire and to link digital inclusion initiatives with economic development activities.
- 3.2 There is ongoing discussion with the Strathclyde European Partnership about an appropriate strategy to secure maximum European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund monies for the initiative. While the detailed proposals will not be clear until these discussions have been concluded, agreement in principle from the council is being sought for the continued support of an Ayrshire Electronic Community-type operation.
- 3.3 The council currently contributes £150,000 per annum from its capital programme to the Ayrshire Electronic Community. It is proposed at this stage that the council supports the working up and submission of a bid for external funding for this project, with a further report on any financial implications being brought to the council for further consideration at the appropriate time.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Any financial implications which may arise for the council will be the subject of a further report for consideration at the appropriate time.

#### **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Ayrshire Electronic Community currently make a valuable contribution to the council's social inclusion agenda in parts of East Ayrshire through its drive to train and support local people and community groups in ICT skills and the support it provides to small and medium sized enterprises. It is hoped that the new project, based on AEC, will secure continued progress within these communities and extend it across the East Ayrshire area.

#### **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that the committee:-

- i) agrees to support the working up and submission of bids for external funding for this project ; and
- ii) notes that a further report on the project proposals, the outcome of funding bids and any financial implications for the council will be presented for consideration at the appropriate time.

**Fiona Lees**  
**Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources**  
25 September 2001

#### **LIST OF BACKGROND PAPERS**

Nil

For further information on this report please contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources on telephone (01563) 576019

**AGENDA**