

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 2 OCTOBER 2003**

#### **PETITION BY SAFEWAY PLC - CALLED TO DECLARE 25 JANUARY A NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN SCOTLAND IN CELEBRATION OF ROBERT BURNS**

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

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

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to invite comments on a petition by Safeway plc, lodged with the Scottish Parliament, calling for 25 January to be declared a national holiday in Scotland in celebration of Robert Burns.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** A petition by Safeway plc has been received by the Scottish Parliament, calling for the Scottish Parliament to take the necessary steps to declare 25 January a national holiday in Scotland in celebration of Robert Burns.
- 2.2** At its meeting on 11 March 2003 the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee agreed to ask the Scottish Executive whether it would consider declaring 25 January an official holiday or a national day in Scotland.
- 2.3** However, the Committee also thought it would be helpful to seek comments from those local authorities with an obvious local interest in Robert Burns, including East Ayrshire Council, as to the possibility of declaring 25 January a local holiday.
- 2.4** East Ayrshire Council wrote to the Public Petitions Committee, as an interim measure, on 14 March and advised that a full response would be given by East Ayrshire Council following the Elections on 1 May 2003.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

- 3.1** If the proposal is agreed then depending upon which day of the week that the 25 January falls will have an impact on whether or not the majority of Council offices, depots and schools will require to be closed to the public on that day. Essential Council services e.g. residential units, personal carers etc will require to continue to be delivered and the Council will therefore require to determine whether or not the proposed national day on 25 January is regarded as a public holiday or a one-off holiday for payment purposes for any employees required to work on that day.
- 3.2** Members will be aware that the Government granted an additional one-off day on 31 December 1999 to celebrate the Millennium. Employees who were required to work on that day were granted a substitute leave day but with no additional payment was made over and above the normal days pay and a substitute holiday. This was in line with the arrangements made for the holiday granted on 8 May 1995 in order to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War 2.

3.3 In addition, a one off holiday was granted on 3 June 2002 to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. This day was regarded as a public holiday for payment purposes and therefore employees who worked on that day were paid in accordance with normal enhancements for public holiday working.

3.4 Any proposals regarding payment for working on this day would be subject to Trade Union consultation.

#### **4. POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM/LOCAL BUSINESS**

4.1 It is felt that there is no close tourism connection with the proposal. The Burns Festival is held later in the Year deliberately because it is a better time of year to attract visitors. It is considered unlikely that declaring a one day holiday on 25 January will result in a great influx of visitors to Ayrshire that day.

#### **5. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The financial implications arising from the granting of the national holiday will depend upon which day of the week that the 25 January falls and whether it is regarded as a public holiday or a one-off holiday for payment purposes for those employees required to work on that day.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended:-

- (i) that the Committee provide comments to the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee, on the petition by Safeway plc; and
- (ii) that the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources forward to the Public Petitions Committee the comments agreed by the Committee.

Fiona Lees  
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources  
JA/KC  
21 August 2003

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Letters dated 14 March and 14 August 2003 by Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers relative to this report should contact Julie Armstrong, Assistant Administration Manager on 01563 576147. Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources on 01563 576103.