



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 21 JUNE 2007

## GAELIC IN THE COMHAIRLE

Report by Chief Executive

**PURPOSE OF REPORT** To advise Members of the current arrangements in relation to Gaelic within the Comhairle and to present options for decision making in the future in relation to Gaelic in terms of the Comhairle's Scheme of Administration.

### COMPETENCE

- 1.1 This report is concerned entirely with constitutional matters.

### SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the review of the Scheme of Administration carried out earlier this year consideration was given to the appropriate location of Gaelic within the Comhairle's Committee Structure. It was agreed that by having Gaelic and Gaelic Development as part of the Policy and Resources Committee this placed Gaelic at the centre of the Comhairle and of its decision making processes. Prior to being considered by Policy and Resources issues relating to Gaelic are dealt with through the Gaelic Language and Culture Forum which forms part of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership and the Gaelic Member Officer Working Group.
- 2.2 Since the formation of the new Comhairle an aspiration has been expressed by some Members to re-introduce or re-establish a free-standing Gaelic Committee to raise the profile and status of Gaelic within the Comhairle and send out a strong message to the local and national Gaelic community about the Comhairle's commitment to Gaelic.
- 2.3 This Report sets out the options for the future consideration of Gaelic issues within the Comhairle and recommends that a working party be set up to explore the options for the future consideration of the Gaelic issues within the Comhairle.

### RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 **It is recommended that a Gaelic Working Party be established with an appropriate Gaelic title such as Buidheann na Gàidhlig to consider the Comhairle's response to the Gaelic Language Plan and make the recommendations in relation to the future consideration of the promotion and development of Gaelic within the Comhairle and to report back to the Comhairle in time for the 2008/09 budget setting process.**

Appendices: None

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Background Papers None

## **BACKGROUND**

4.1 Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.7 of the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee outline the role of the Committee in relation to gaelic development as follows:-

- 3.1 setting targets and monitoring progress towards meeting the requirements of the Comhairle's corporate strategy so far as these relate to the gaelic language.
- 3.2 all aspects of the promotion of the gaelic language with a view to co-ordinating the encouragement of the youth of the gaelic language in all aspects of the life in na h-Eileanan an Iar..
- 3.3 all matters relating to the promotion of gaelic related jobs and economic development opportunities in na h-Eileanan an Iar.
- 3.4 all matters relating to the form of co-operation within international and local statutory bodies and voluntary and other organisations and persons involved in the promotion of gaelic language and culture.
- 3.5 all matters relating to the form and level of support to be afforded by the Comhairle to voluntary and other organisations and persons engaged in activities connected with the promotion of gaelic language and culture.
- 3.6 all matters relating to the development and promotion of the gaelic language and culture including gaelic broadcasting in the media.
- 3.7 all matters relating to the implementation of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

4.2 The Comhairle also established a Gaelic Language Plan Member Officer Working Group which has the remit to consider the Comhairle's response to the Gaelic Language Plan.

## **OPTIONS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF GAELIC ISSUES**

5.1 Officers have considered how the profile and status of Gaelic within the Comhairle could be raised and a strong message sent out to the local and national gaelic community about the Comhairle's commitment to Gaelic and have produced the following options.

- (1) The current structures for the support of Gaelic within the Comhairle could be retained.
  - (a) All reports pertaining to Gaelic issues or requests for funding are routed through Policy and Resources Committee. All reports from Sgioba na Gaidhlig on issues relating to Gaelic are taken in Gaelic with simultaneous translation. This allows all Gaelic reports to be full debated by all Members of the Committee, whether they are Gaelic speaking or not, giving Gaelic due prominence and status in Comhairle business.
  - (b) The Gaelic Language Plan Member/Officer Working Group offers Members and Officers a forum to debate and discuss major Gaelic issues but within a pre-defined framework and with a defined lifespan for the MOWG. Reports can be sent to the Policy and Resources Committee as required if Members consider this appropriate. A good example of this was the work of the previous Gaelic MOWG in relation to the National Gaelic Language Plan in partnership with Bòrd nan Gaidhlig.

- (c) The Gaelic Language and Culture Forum was established as part of the Community Planning Partnership framework. The Forum has members from all the major Gaelic organisations and community groups in the area including CNAG, PnE, WIE, VisitScotland, WIHB, An Comunn, Comunn na Parant and LCC. The Forum debates and discusses a huge variety of issues relating to Gaelic. The Forum is a valuable sounding board for Gaelic and ensures that the Comhairle does not presume to speak on behalf of the Gaelic speaking community contrary to the ethos of inclusion and community planning partnership ideals.
- (2) Set up a Gaelic Department within the Comhairle with a Head of Service, budget and liaison group with representatives from all Department along the lines of Management Team. This would have huge financial implications and could not be done overnight.
- (3) Set up a working Party or ask the Gaelic Member/Officer Group to explore the options of a new Gaelic structure within the Comhairle.
- (4) Bring in an external consultant, to prepare a report on the future of Gaelic within the Comhairle to look at staffing, logistical and resource implications.
- (5) Strengthen Sgioba na Gaidhlig with additional personnel to enhance their ability to deliver the Gaelic agenda identified by Members, when funding permits.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This is a particularly exciting and challenging time for Gaelic language and culture and it is accepted that the Comhairle and its community planning partners in the Western Isles should be at the centre of gaelic development. There are mechanisms in place through the Gaelic Language and Culture Forum to provide a forum to debate and discuss a huge variety of issues relating to Gaelic. There are also opportunities through the Integrated Services Project which also reports to this Committee for the Comhairle to work collaboratively to have Gaelic translation available throughout the community planning partners of the Western Isles to allow official meetings to debate matters of importance to the Western Isles in Gaelic and English thus ensuring equality of access for all participants in a meeting.
- 6.2 It is acknowledged in the remit of this Committee that the development of Gaelic is about much more than the provision of translation facilities although translation facilities are an essential element. It is therefore suggested that the current structures as detailed at Options 1a, b and c remain in place and that this Committee make a recommendation to the Comhairle that a Gaelic Working Party (akin to Finance Working Party in the previous Comhairle) be established encompassing the remit of the Gaelic Language Plan MOWG and also covering the future consideration of the promotion and development of Gaelic within the Comhairle.
- 6.3 As in all areas of the Comhairle's business it is hoped that effectiveness and efficiency could be achieved by maximising the use of the human resources already available within the Comhairle and within community planning partners both as part of the Integrated Services project and also as more general joint working to ensure that the Western Isles is at the centre of the promotion and development of gaelic. It is suggested that this Working Party also consider a lobbying strategy in relation to Gaelic issues as well as possible streams of funding to promote Gaelic language and culture by learning from the example of other communities which have successfully promoted their own language and culture.