

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
GAELIC COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2009

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	G/18/09

Gaelic Language Training for Highland Council Staff
Report by Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

This paper seeks Members' approval for the proposals to run two pilot Ulpan Gaelic language courses for Highland Council staff and to support 20 staff through Ulpan courses delivered by other providers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan makes core commitments to:
 - Seeking to ensure that the public can deal with Council staff orally in Gaelic
 - Enabling staff to learn and enhance their Gaelic, with a view to using it in their work and, in the case of native speakers, to improve their knowledge of Gaelic spelling and grammar.
- 1.2 In the recent Gaelic language survey of Highland Council staff 38% of respondents said that they were interested or very interested in learning Gaelic, representing over 1,600 staff members.
- 1.3 This paper outlines proposals to run two pilot Ulpan courses for Highland Council staff and to pilot means by which staff members outwith Inverness can also be supported to learn the language.

2. Ulpan

- 2.1 Ulpan is a method of learning languages that calls on techniques used to teach Welsh and Hebrew and has already been introduced to the Highlands to teach Gaelic through courses run by the Community Learning and Leisure service.
- 2.2 In Ulpan, the emphasis is on listening and speaking in a less academic way and through using drills and language games, students learn phrase structures which are reinforced through literacy and language activities, including role-play.
- 2.3 The programme consists of structured units with prescribed content and each unit takes about 1½ - 2 hours to complete. The full Ulpan programme is some 270 units on achievement of which, learners should have fluent speaking skills. Only tutors that have been trained and registered to deliver Ulpan can deliver the programme. Experience in Wales, and initial information from Gaelic Ulpan classes currently underway in Scotland, demonstrates that this is a particularly effective way of delivering language learning.

3. Ulpan Programme for Highland Council Staff

- 3.1 As part of Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan's commitment to developing the Gaelic skills of Council staff, it is proposed to run two pilot Ulpan courses and then evaluate the effectiveness to determine how future programmes would be delivered.

3.2 The programme will be structured as follows:

- There will be two pilot Ulpan courses to run for 20 weeks and learners will reach Unit 20
- Courses will be offered from 1.00 pm – 3.00 pm and 4.00 pm – 6.00 pm on a weekly basis
- Highland Council contribute up to 1 ½ hours work time and staff will contribute 1 hour of personal time, as discussed by Members at the meeting of the Gaelic Committee of 13th November 2008.
- The courses will be delivered as a corporate priority, that is at no charge to the Services.
- The courses will run from w/c 24th August to w/c 7th December (with two weeks off for October holidays) with 6 weeks in January and February 2010
- Each course will run with a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 15 participants

3.3 As this is a pilot and because of numbers and the availability of trained tutors, these courses will be run in Inverness. Following suitable evaluation, it is planned to extend to other Highland Council areas.

In the meantime, it is proposed that 20 Highland Council employees are funded for 20 units when they participate in Ulpan Community Leisure and Learning or external courses outwith Inverness as this will provide information on how learning opportunities can be offered beyond Inverness in future, in locations where staff numbers or demand is too low to sustain a solely Highland Council class.

3.4 Applications for the courses will be made to Employee Development in the normal way with line manager approval required. Given the limited places available on these first courses, managers should consider posts that would reasonably require and benefit from the post holder being able to converse in Gaelic.

4. Course Promotion

4.1 It is proposed to promote these courses through:

- A mail out to respondents to the Gaelic Survey
- Service Training Representatives
- Employee Development intranet site

5. Resource Implications

5.1 The costs of the two 20 unit programmes are as follows:

- Ulpan Registration £50 per head x 30 = £1,500
- Tutor costs £50 per unit x 40 = £2,000
- Venues estimate = £ 800
- Printing estimate = £ 700

Total costs estimate = £5,000

Proposed funding for external courses = £ 167 per person

Maximum 20 participants = £3,340

5.2 Under current arrangements, Bòrd na Gàidhlig will fund 80% of the costs. The remaining 20% will be provided through the Employee Development budget. The Bòrd na Gàidhlig approval is in place. Assuming full costs are incurred, this will be a

commitment of £6,670 from the Bòrd na Gàidhlig award and £1,670 from Employee Development.

It is perhaps worth highlighting that a key principle behind all Bòrd na Gàidhlig funding is that of 'mainstreaming' so that support levels decline over the three years of any award with a view to the recipient body increasing their own expenditure accordingly. Future provision may entail a greater cost to the Council itself.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Members are invited to:

- a) Agree the proposals for the two pilot Ulpan courses for Highland Council staff, including the arrangements for funding and staff time.
- b) Agree to support up to 20 Highland Council staff from outwith Inverness through 20 units delivered by other providers.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Signature:

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive

Date: 11 May 2009

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Ref: HF/DM/CC