

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
GAELIC COMMITTEE - 18 September 2008

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	G/24/08

STAFF SURVEY UPDATE

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

This report provides an update to Members on key statistics and early conclusions from the survey carried out into Gaelic skills and abilities among Council staff during the month of August. The full analysis is still being carried out and the final report is due to be submitted to Council officials on September 19th. Overall a 34-35% response rate has been achieved, a positive outcome given the time of year the survey was undertaken, and when compared to the Council's full all-staff survey.

1. Background

- 1.1 As a commitment under the Gaelic Language Plan, Highland Council carried out a Gaelic Skills and Abilities Survey across its workforce during the month of August. Survey forms were posted out to the home addresses of nearly 15,500 Council staff. In addition an electronic version of the questionnaire was made available during the final stages of the exercise.
- 1.2 The Survey was carried out by a third-party contractor, Stirling-based Craigforth HACS Ltd, following a competitive tender exercise.

2. Key data and findings

- 2.1 At the time of writing late responses were still being accepted by the consultants and over 4,200 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 34%. By the time the exercise is fully completed it is hoped the response rate might reach 35%. For comparison, the general 'All Staff Survey' run by the Council every two years achieves a response rate of 40%. Given the specialist nature of the Gaelic survey, and the time of year it was carried out, it is felt that the response rate achieved is good.
- 2.2 This level of response is well above what is required to allow statistically accurate analysis to be carried out on the findings.
- 2.3 Early findings are:
 - 3.5% of respondents are fluent Gaelic speakers, with a further 2.7% saying they would be able to have a conversation in Gaelic;
 - 77% say they have no Gaelic at all;
 - 3% are able to write fluently, with a further 2% saying they are just about fluent;

- 20% of respondents say they have learnt Gaelic at some stage. Most of these are people who learnt some Gaelic at school or at home;
- 37% say they are very interested, or possibly interested in learning spoken Gaelic, 30% are interested in improving their writing abilities.
- 59% and 63% say they have no interest in learning either spoken or written Gaelic respectively.
- 61% of respondents work within the ECS Service.

At this stage there has been limited cross-referencing between responses to different questions, however it is emerging that:

- 70% of those who say they are fluent Gaelic speakers are using the language regularly in their work – but 7% never use it.
- 9% of those who say they can write Gaelic are doing so regularly, but 18% are not.

- 2.4 Further cross-referencing of the survey data will include an analysis of the geographic spread of responses.
- 2.5 There have also been some 1,300 responses to the open ended question at the end of the survey asking staff for any suggestions about the implementation of the Gaelic Plan. These will take longer to group and analyse but include requests for Gaelic learning opportunities and comments on Gaelic road signs.
- 2.6 These are very early findings from the analysis of the survey data but they demonstrate the value of the exercise in providing information that can be used to guide the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan. The data will also provide a useful baseline against which progress can be measured in the years ahead.
- 2.7 The final report on the survey is due to be received by the Council on the 19th September. A report on these final conclusions and any implications they may have for Council policy and activity is being scheduled for the November meeting of the Gaelic Committee.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are invited to note and comment on the contents of this report.

Signature:

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