

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| COMMITTEE:           | Council   |
| DATE:                | 19 August 2015  |
| DIRECTOR:            | Pete Leonard Director Communities, Housing and Infrastructure |
| TITLE OF REPORT:     | Final Draft Gaelic Language Plan                              |
| REPORT NUMBER:       | CHI/15/238  |
| CHECKLIST COMPLETED: | Yes   |

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

It is a requirement of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 that a public authority such as the City Council must prepare and submit for approval a Gaelic Language Plan when requested to do so by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The draft Aberdeen City Council Gaelic Language Plan was presented to the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015. That Committee instructed officers to bring a final draft Gaelic Language Plan to the Council's meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2015. The plan has been prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, and reflects the instruction from the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee that the commitments it puts in place are proportionate for the Council given the percentage of Gaelic speakers in Aberdeen. It also now takes account of informal feedback received from Bòrd Na Gàidhlig on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015.

The plan sets out how the Council will use Gaelic in its operations, how the Council will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how the Council will promote and develop Gaelic. It is intended that Aberdeen City Council's Gaelic Language Plan will be submitted on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015 to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for its consideration.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council agrees:

- the content of the Council's final draft Gaelic Language Plan;

- to receive annual monitoring updates in relation to the associated action plan by means of an information bulletin report;
- to submit the draft plan on 21<sup>st</sup> August to Bòrd na Gàidhlig its consideration; and
- should Bòrd na Gàidhlig propose modifications to the submitted draft plan, to instruct officers to submit the modified plan to Committee for approval.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Many of the in-house changes envisaged through the action plan can be made at minimal additional cost through for example programming work at the time of refreshing out-dated signage or through simply raising awareness of existing provision which is not currently promoted.

Gaelic Classes are available through Aberdeen Gaelic Club and Aberdeen University and their support for the Council's action plan will be sought. The Gaelic Club is already considering running some initiatives which the Council could support either through funding or promotion of the events/classes which would contribute to some of the aims of the plan.

Education projects have specific funding streams for Gaelic Education or are included as part of the '1+2' initiative which also has funding available toward all languages. Arts and Community projects can be supported through various bodies working in Aberdeen with Gaelic plans in place such as Creative Scotland, the University of Aberdeen, Scottish National Heritage, the Forestry Commission and the National Theatre of Scotland. Aberdeen Gaelic Club will also be aware of funding opportunities.

There are also several opportunities for funding community projects through various funds (Community, drama etc.) which are detailed at: <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/bord/en/funding-opportunities>.

Comunn Na Gàidhlig (CnaG) also funds Gaelic projects, information is available online at: <http://www.cnag.org/en/>

The Council will make partner organisations aware of the funding opportunities which are available to them and will promote these funding opportunities, as they become available, through Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisation (ACVO) for community groups and to our own mailing lists of organisations and community forums.

The envisaged annual monitoring report on the delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan will provide details of any additional costs incurred by the Council in its implementation.

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed the draft Gaelic Language Plan in light of the instruction by the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to ensure that the commitments the Council makes are proportionate to the size of the Gaelic-speaking population of the City.

He notes that the draft Gaelic Language Plan has been revised and the level of commitment reassessed, in view of the low proportion of Gaelic speakers in Aberdeen. The core commitments detailed in Chapter 2 of the draft Plan appear appropriate in light of this. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services acknowledges that the Head of Education Services has confirmed the achievability of the action points listed in Chapter 3 of the draft Plan.

The Committee also requested information on the sanctions a public authority may face should it decide not to prepare and submit a Gaelic Language Plan when requested to do so by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advises that the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 does not provide for any sanctions. It is likely that non-submission of a Plan would fall within the remit of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (for example if a member of the public raised a complaint). The SPSO could then produce a report for consideration by the Scottish Parliament, if the Council did not remedy this failure. It would then be for Parliament to decide what, if any, action to take. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is not aware of the SPSO ever producing such a report.

Officers from the Council had a positive and productive meeting with Bòrd na Gàidhlig in Inverness on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015. Bòrd na Gàidhlig recognises the challenges of the Council in managing scarce resources and higher customer expectations in the face of reducing budgets. The Bòrd also acknowledges that Aberdeen is an area with a low proportion of Gaelic speakers.

Nevertheless, Bòrd officers highlighted that there is a small increase in the number of Gaelic speakers in the City and since the underlying purpose of any Gaelic Language Plan is to protect the language, the Bòrd would wish to see within the Council's Plan, actions which promote, develop and sustain the growth of Gaelic use in the City.

An EHRIA has been completed and found no adverse impact.

#### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee of 9 June 2015, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure which provided details of the Aberdeen City Council Gaelic Language Plan.

The report recommended:-

That the Committee;

- (a) Agree the content of the Council's draft Gaelic Language Plan;
- (b) Agree to receive annual monitoring of the associated action plan by means of an information bulletin, and;
- (c) Submit the draft plan to Bòrd Na Gàidhlig for approval on 12 June, 2015.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) Instruct officers to discuss further with legal colleagues the proposed content of the Gaelic Language Action Plan to ensure that the commitments it puts in place are proportionate for the Council given the percentage of Gaelic speakers in Aberdeen;
- (ii) Instruct the Chief Executive to request from Bòrd na Gàidhlig an extension to the deadline set for the submission of the Council's draft Plan;
- (iii) Instruct officers to bring a final draft Gaelic Language Action Plan to the Council's meeting on 19 August, 2015, and;
- (iv) That details of the sanctions handed out to local authorities if they fail to submit the draft plan on time be circulated to members of the Committee.

This final draft takes account of the committee's instructions, input from legal colleagues and informal feedback from our meeting with Bòrd Na Gàidhlig on 3 July 2015. Officers also referred to the Angus Council Gaelic Language Plan 2014-19, since Angus, similar to Aberdeen, has a small percentage of Gaelic speakers.

This first iteration of our Gaelic Plan is a starting point for developing and improving our current Gaelic provision – this is an early stage in the process. This final draft will now receive a formal response from Bòrd Na Gàidhlig, and officers will work with the Bòrd so that we achieve an agreed plan. Once the Bòrd receives the Plan it will either approve it or propose modifications to it.

If modifications are proposed, they will be discussed informally with the Council prior to them being formally intimated. Once the Council has received the formal notification, it will have a month to notify the Bòrd if it disagrees with any of the proposed changes. If it does so, the Bòrd then has two months either to approve the original Plan or to agree with the Council a revised Plan.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2004. It aims to secure the status of the Gaelic language

as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect with the English language.

Bòrd Na Gàidhlig is a non-departmental body established under the Act and is responsible for safeguarding the future of Gaelic in Scotland, for promoting the use and understanding of the language and for developing and supporting Gaelic education and culture.

Under the 2005 Act, Bòrd Na Gàidhlig can require public sector organisations to prepare Gaelic Language Plans (GLPs). This is designed to help the public sector in Scotland play its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising its status and profile and creating practical opportunities for its use.

The Bòrd issued notification in 2014, instructing the Council under the terms of the Act to submit a Gaelic Language Plan for consideration by 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015, which has now had a final extension to 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

The Bòrd provided a list of high level expectations which had to be considered when compiling a plan in a proportionate and relevant way to Aberdeen's communities:

- Implement and deliver the aims of the National Language Plan for Gaelic, with regard to Adult Learning, Gaelic Medium Education and Support for Parents.
- Bi-lingual corporate logo with equality of respect for the languages, being used accordingly.
- Encourage and support learners by aiming for an increase of at least 15% each year in the numbers of Gaelic learners, who are enrolled in Gaelic classes in the authority area.
- Increase the numbers of children who are accessing Gaelic education at an early stage by at least 15% each year.
- Increase the numbers of children who are enrolled in Gaelic education at primary level by at least 15% each year.
- Give pro-active support to pupils who are transferring from Gaelic education in Primary School to Secondary Schools, with the aim of increasing the numbers of pupils who choose Gaelic Medium Education in Secondary School.
- Extend the range of opportunities for using Gaelic in the communities, with particular priority given to school pupils and

learners of Gaelic.

- Road entry signs which are bilingual with equality of respect for both languages.
- Bilingual street signs when new or being renewed, with equality of respect for the languages.
- Bilingual corporate and vehicle signs on a renewal or replacement basis, with equality of respect for the languages.
- Bilingual titles for fairs and initiatives which are directed or funded by the authority, with equality of respect for the languages.

The Council's draft plan was prepared by a Gaelic Language Action Plan Development Officer employed on a short-term contract to undertake the task. The Development Officer carried out the required staff survey and knowledge gathering process, which had a total of 517 responses.

A Language Plans Officer from the Bòrd has provided support on the draft plan and their initial views, in addition to the informal feedback from the Bòrd, have been largely addressed by the version attached as Appendix 1.

A public consultation was held on the plan between 30<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015. The following forms the list of consultees:

- Gilcomstoun Primary School
- Hazlehead Academy
- Aberdeen Gaelic Club
- Aberdeen University
- Aberdeenshire Council
- GMòr Group
- City Voice Blog
- Civic Forum
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- Comann nam Pàrant
- Cairngorms National Parks
- Forestry Commission
- Scottish National Heritage,
- Aberdeen Performing Arts,
- North East College
- The Robert Gordon University
- Clì Gàidhlig
- Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group

- Aberdeen Older People’s Advisory Group
- Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations ( ACVO)
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

There were a total of 5 responses; 4 positive and 1 negative, to the public consultation, with fuller contributions from Scottish National Heritage and the University of Aberdeen and certain themes within the plan were updated and expanded upon as a response to the consultation. The negative response would have preferred to see the focus on developing a common language such as Esperanto. An example of the positive comments appears below:

“It is pleasing to see that the Education Department of Aberdeen City have realised at last that the up-take of Gaelic in the schools offering the subject is unacceptably low. To read about a strategy addressing the matter, is equally pleasing! Education is key to the future of Gaelic (not just in Aberdeen)”

The Development Officer also engaged with the Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group, the Older People’s Advisory Group, Aberdeen Women’s Alliance, the North East LGBT + Development Group and a Women and Faith Group to raise awareness of the plan and to seek feedback.

## 6. IMPACT

Corporate:

The Gaelic Language Plan has been developed in line with the Council’s vision, Aberdeen - the Smarter City. We will ensure all citizens are encouraged and supported appropriately to make their full contribution. In order to address this, we will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.

The Gaelic Language Plan offers positive opportunities for joint working with partner organisations on projects/ activities.

Public:

This report is highly relevant to ensuring that the council meets its statutory duties.

An Equality and Human Right Impact Assessment has been carried out and is appended to this report as Appendix 3.

It is likely that there will be public interest in the Gaelic Language Plan.

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Author of the Gaelic Language Plan:  
Morag McDonald  
Gaelic Language Action Plan Development Officer

Morag left Aberdeen City Council employment in March 2015, so the amendments are being made by Sandra Bruce.

Contact details:

Sandra Bruce,  
Equalities Strategist,  
[sandrab@aberdeencity.go.uk](mailto:sandrab@aberdeencity.go.uk)  
01224 523039