

**Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd
The Highland Council**

**Buidheann Buileachaidh na Gàidhlig – 28 den Chèitean 2015
Gaelic Implementation Group – 28 May 2015**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

All Staff Gaelic Skills Survey 2015

Report by the Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This Report provides Members with information on progress in undertaking a Gaelic Skills Survey across Council Services.

The Survey is currently scheduled for commencement in September 2015; and is a Statutory commitment in Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16. It will also inform the training and development elements of the ***What we will do for Gaelic in the Workplace*** Theme in the Council's Third Gaelic Language Plan, from 2016 onwards.

The Report contributes to the delivery of :

- National Performance Outcomes 2, 3, 11 and 16.
- The National Gaelic Language Plan Outcomes – Home & Early Years; Education: Schools & Teachers; Education: Post-school Education; Communities and Workplace.
- The Programme of The Highland Council and its cross cutting commitment to 'the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area; and
- The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan.

1. Background

- 1.1** The Workplace Theme in GLP 2012-16 includes a Strategic Commitment to "identify and provide developmental opportunities for Members and officers to learn Gaelic or improve their Gaelic skills." This commits us to establish up to date baseline data, by conducting a Gaelic language skills audit; which will include Gaelic usage within the Council and to Review the need for updated workplace Gaelic Awareness sessions for Members and Council Staff."

1.2 The last Staff Gaelic Skills Survey was conducted in 2008 and this exercise will update that work. The Survey is being developed by the Council and Aberdeen University/Soillse (the Gaelic Research Network) both as a tool for identifying Gaelic usage and skills across Services; but also as a way of identifying potential training and development needs.

1.3 In order to avoid clashing with the current Biennial Staff Survey and to avoid survey “fatigue”, it is proposed that this exercise be carried out in September 2015. The results will also help to shape the content of the Workplace Theme in the Council’s third Gaelic Plan from 2016 onwards.

2. What are the aims and the scope of the Survey?

2.1 Language skills audits are generally undertaken as part of a bilingual skills strategy for organisations, which can enable an organisation to increase its capacity to offer a bilingual service. In this case, the Highland Council survey has as its primary set of aims:

- To ascertain the current level of bilingual skills of staff according to their team, service and workplace.
- To identify staff Gaelic interested in Gaelic language training for work and other purposes
- To identify staff willing to use Gaelic at work in some capacity
- To ascertain the current level of bilingualism in service provision

2.2 A set of secondary aims are to:

- To promote awareness of Gaelic bilingualism issues at work
- To promote awareness of the Gaelic Language Plan
- To understand patterns of uptake and use of Gaelic support and training offered to date
- To ascertain staff views on the Council’s use of Gaelic in services

2.3 It is **not** the aim of the survey to identify the bilingual requirements of posts or to explicitly inform a bilingual skills strategy. The latter would require involving mechanisms to address gaps in bilingual service provision, such as a proposal for evaluating job descriptions, and recruitment of staff with Gaelic language skills.

2.4 The scope of the survey is expected to include:

- Gaelic proficiency;
- Previous Gaelic training and qualifications;
- Gaelic job requirements and current use of Gaelic;
- Employee characteristics;
- Gaelic training needs and interest; and
- Attitudes towards bilingualism at work

2.5 The development of the questions has already involved several iterations, and continues to be progressed in consultation between the Gaelic Team and Aberdeen University; and the Policy and Reform and Learning and Development Teams. The survey will be available separately, in Gàidhlig and in English.

2.6 The survey will not duplicate the All Highland Teachers Survey conducted in February/March 2014; as, following on from that feedback, there will be a specific set of questions for Education staff that non-Education staff can avoid.

3. What will the Council do with the information?

3.1 Responses will be strictly confidential and the job payroll numbers will not be stored with survey responses. The findings will report responses in aggregated form to maintain anonymity, and no individual post holder will be identified.

3.2 The Staff survey might specifically request if the respondent consents to the Highland Council recording their Gaelic language skills on their staff record (e.g. on Resource Link), and if they have a Gaelic language skills, recording their willingness to use Gaelic at work. This information would then be made available to Heads of Service as well as to HR.

3.3 The staff identifier (payroll number) will be used to direct support to staff who have indicated in their survey responses that they would like Gaelic language training. Examples might include:

- Direct support to staff who are willing to transfer to posts for which Gaelic is a job requirement e.g. teachers who are currently doing GLPS

and are willing to transfer to GME or Gaelic speakers who are qualified teachers currently working in a non-teaching post.

- Direct offer of Gaelic training to staff who have indicated they lack confidence to use their Gaelic skills, and would like to develop confidence to use Gaelic at work
- Direct offer of Gaelic Awareness/Gaelic in the Workplace training to staff.
- Direct offer of basic linguistic courtesy training e.g. such as through the Council's Gaelic Toolkit.

3.4 Prior to circulating the survey, it is important that Highland Council have a vision of how it might prioritise training. For example, might *all* who are interested in attending Gaelic courses be invited to submit an application for Gaelic language training, or only those who need to improve their skill to use at work initially. Staff will not be pressurised into taking on additional duties and responsibilities simply because of their Gaelic linguistic ability.

4. What are the intended outcomes from the Survey?

4.1 The following outcomes are intended from the actions implemented as a result of the survey:

- Increased status of Gaelic within the Council;
- Increased awareness of Gaelic within the Council;
- Increase in demand from staff for Gaelic courses and skills training;
- Increased profile and use of Gaelic in Council services; and
- Targeted and prioritised Staff Gaelic Training Plan for the Council's third Gaelic Language Plan from 2016 onwards.

5. How might we encourage maximum participation?

5.1 There are several mechanisms which can be used to boost an employee survey response rate including:

- An individual in a Service, e.g. Director, Heads of Service, Corporate Manager, Area Service Managers, Head Teachers, might be asked via email to distribute the survey to all staff for individual completion;
- Advance letters might be emailed to inform staff about the forthcoming survey;

- Information might be included in Service newsletters, on the staff Intranet about the forthcoming survey;
- At least one reminder should be sent, including the survey link e.g. five days after the first invitation and two days before due date; and finally
- The survey will be trialled with a small group of staff in order to ensure the usability of the survey in electronic and paper format.

5.2 We will consult in advance to ensure that we take appropriate and proportionate actions to encourage maximum participation.

6. Implications

6.1 There are no additional implications associated with this Report at present.

7.	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Members are asked to comment on progress in undertaking a Gaelic Skills Survey across Council Services, as part of our ongoing Gaelic Language Plan commitments.</p>
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Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

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