

REPORT TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
- 17 April 2000

REPORT ON: SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION: "SUPPORTING ACTIVE COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND: A DRAFT STRATEGY FOR VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY ACTION"

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 282-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To note the content of the consultation document, identify the key objectives and their relationship to Dundee City Council policies and determine the Council's response.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

2.1 notes the content of the Scottish Executive consultation document "Supporting Active Communities In Scotland: A Draft Strategy For Volunteering and Community Action";

2.2 endorses the key objectives of the Strategy (see Section 6);

2.3 notes and accepts in principle the proposal that local authority Council leaders should champion the Active Community Strategy;

2.4 instructs the Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development to forward key points from consultation meetings held in Dundee to the Scottish Executive and COSLA (Section 7).

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications for departments arising out of this consultation. However, the support needs for volunteers will need to be taken into account if the strategy is to be implemented.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Voluntary Sector Policy (draft); the Volunteer Policy and the Employee Volunteering Policy illustrate the Councils' commitment to ensure there are opportunities to undertake satisfying work in a diverse economy, that the value of unpaid work is recognised, while payments for work are fair and fairly distributed.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 The Scheme of Decentralisation; the Voluntary Sector Policy (draft); the Volunteer Policy and the Employee Volunteering Policy all seek to bring the Council closer to its communities and facilitate the growth of active, informed and involved citizens. "Active Communities in Scotland" supports the Council's policy position on equal opportunities.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 The Scottish Executive has invited comments on its consultation document "Supporting Active Communities in Scotland: A Draft Strategy For Volunteering and Community Action." A copy has been placed in the Councillors' Lounge.

The draft strategy has four objectives, and the consultation invited comments on each:

- Bring about more positive attitudes at all levels towards volunteering and community action;
- Locate volunteering and community action at the heart of policy and practice;

- Broaden the range of people involved; and
- Increase the number of people involved.

6.2 All of the above objectives are already firmly located within the Dundee City Council Plan, Scheme of Decentralisation; Voluntary Sector Policy (draft); Volunteering Policy and Employee Volunteering Policy.

6.3 Each objective has key action points relating to funding agencies, Scottish Executive, COSLA, Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Groups, private sector, public sector and local authorities.

Many of the key action points propose action which has already been taken by Dundee City Council. One specific action point however proposes that in local authorities the Council leader should champion the Active Community Strategy. Acceptance of this proposal would reinforce the Council's position on active informed and involved citizens.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Social Work, Director of Education, Director of Housing, Director of Support Services, Director of Leisure and Parks and Director of Corporate Planning have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.2 Council officers and a local cross-section of voluntary organisations in Dundee participated in a consultation seminar organised by the Scottish Executive Voluntary Issues Group in Dundee on 10 March.

7.3 **Objective 1 - to bring about more positive attitudes at all levels towards volunteering and community action**

- More recognition of volunteering
- More resources - particularly to enable organisations who have good practice in involving volunteers, to involve more
- Measuring the value of volunteers' contributions
- Eliminate bad practice
- Emphasise the rights of volunteers
- Government and Statutory Services have to raise awareness across all departments
- Encourage all to make expenses available to overcome financial barriers
- Positive attitudes will develop when you can separate "giving time" from "giving money"
- Emphasise what you get out of volunteering
 - self esteem
 - skills
 - enjoyment
- Sustained awareness-raising

7.4 **Objective 2 - to locate volunteering and community action at the heart of policy**

- There is a danger that the strategy encourages organisations to "tick off" "action points" achieved, with no overall impact on strategy
- Need to address the supply side of volunteering opportunities
- Top down media initiatives "leave people at local level gasping"

- The values underpinning the strategy need to be more explicitly stated why we are valuing volunteering and community action
- Is the objective a serious one? Huge implications if it is. Need for much more robust discussion of this
- Volunteering and community action - distinctions need to be drawn to recognise the different policy, support and resource implications

7.5 Objective 3 - to broaden the range of people involved in volunteering and community action

- It costs to overcome barriers to volunteering - where are these costs to be found? Those on low incomes are least able to absorb the costs personally
- How are more volunteers to be supported?
- How does this connect to the Lottery?
- Assumption that more volunteers are a good thing
- What about infrastructure of volunteering?
- Volunteering is not seen in the same positive way within some ethnic minority communities

7.6 Objective 4 - to increase the number of people involved in volunteering and community action

- Benefits Agency/Job Centre staff do not always encourage volunteering
- Increased number of volunteers will require extra resources
- People expect community services, but are not often prepared to help out
- We need education -
 - (i) to reduce stigma eg mental health and the surrounding stigma
 - (ii) so people understand what skills they can share in voluntary work
 - (iii) about the personal satisfaction, well-being etc gained from volunteering
- Role of employers - employer supported volunteering is under-developed
- Support structures for volunteers need clarified - rights, roles, responsibilities etc
- Need to recognise the whole spectrum of volunteer involvement (one-off to ongoing)
- Police checks and issues arising (costs, training, recording etc)

7.7 The main points recorded at this consultation meeting were as follows:

- A need to recognise the development work already carried out by local authorities
- The need to clarify funding and support from the Scottish Executive
- The need to emphasise that developments should complement, not substitute for services provided by statutory bodies
- The need for a baseline study on the extent of volunteering in Scotland
- The need to make staff and resources available to support volunteers

- The need to examine adequacy of training and support for those working with volunteers
- The need for quality standards
- How does the strategy avoid becoming a tick list, thereby missing the point?
- Will there be any additional government resources to back-up this strategy?
- Will further recognition be given to the contribution already made by older people, ie "Discovery Award"?

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development

Date