

Irish Language Provision	14th June 2016
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Julie Welsh - Head of Community & Culture
Cost: (If applicable)	

The purpose of this report is to update Members on Irish language provision within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

Background

Limavady Borough Council was the only legacy council to make specific provision for the promotion and development of the Irish language. In 2007, the council entered into a three-year partnership agreement with Magherafelt District Council to share the cost of employing an Irish Language Officer. The post was co-funded by Foras na Gaeilge, the statutory body with responsibility for promoting the Irish language.

Costs

Foras na Gaeilge contributed 50% of the salary costs through its Language Officers Scheme. The remaining cost was shared between the two councils with Magherafelt District Council the employing organisation. The scheme has been extended twice. The current funding period 2013-16 and agreement between Mid Ulster District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is due to end in September 2016.

In 2014-15, Limavady Borough Council allocated £21,000 to Irish language provision to include salary and programme costs. In 2015-16, with 5% savings applied, the budget was £19,950 with salary costs £12,911 and programme costs £7,039. In the current financial year, there is provision of £6,500 in the Cultural Services budget to cover salary costs until September 2016.

Provision

The Irish Language Officer has been responsible for implementing an Irish Language Development Plan with aims and objectives agreed between both council and Foras na Gaeilge. The main themes addressed in the plan are as follows:

1. Promoting Opportunities to Learn
2. Promoting the Irish Language in the Community
3. Promoting Heritage and Cultural Tourism

4. Promotion and use of Irish within and by Council

The officer has worked with a range of community groups, cultural groups, schools and youth groups across the borough. Provision to date has included the following:

- A Bursary Scheme for young people to attend Irish Language Summer Schools.
- Funding advice and developmental support for Irish Language groups.
- Development of heritage trails.
- Support for Irish language courses, events and programmes.

Foras na Gaeilge has confirmed that the Irish Language Officers Scheme will end in September 2016. A review of the scheme has taken place and is currently being considered by the organisation's Board. At this stage, they are not in a position to indicate what support will be available after September. There is an expectation however that Mid Ulster District Council will make the Irish Language Officer a permanent member of their staff.

Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2016-21

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is a European Treaty adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote regional and minority languages in Europe. In May 2016, Council adopted the new Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2016-21 and Action Plan 2016-19. Theme 3 in the Cultural Strategy specifically references regional minority languages as follows:

Theme 3 History, Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Promote a sense of pride, identity and deeper understanding of our area by bringing together the many stories, histories, identities and languages.

Operational Action

Support & develop the cultural diversity of the area, working in partnership with external agencies and community groups to enable access to regional minority languages.

Within both the Cultural Strategy and the Community Development Strategy there is provision to continue the work which has been carried out to date. All groups will be able to access advice, training, support and mentoring. The new Culture, Arts and Heritage Grant Scheme offers financial assistance to local groups to promote and develop cultural, arts and heritage projects and activities in the area, and a bursary scheme is currently being planned to offer support to young people to develop their creative skills.

This report is for information only as there are no options to consider at present.