

## **Item: 19**

### **General Meeting of the Council: 5 October 2021.**

#### **Arctic Circle Assembly.**

#### **Report by Chief Executive.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider representation at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2021 to promote potential economic opportunities for Orkney with the Arctic Circle Countries.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Council is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That the Political Engagement Strategy, approved by the Council in October 2018, was reviewed and updated in December 2020.

#### **2.2.**

That building on existing and cultivating new relationships and alliances with Orkney's Arctic and Nordic neighbours will help to develop an alternative international "family" for Orkney, and help optimise opportunities in the blue and green economies post Brexit.

#### **2.3.**

That the Arctic Circle Assembly, the largest annual international gathering on the Arctic, is being held again in Reykjavík, Iceland, from 14 to 17 October 2021.

#### **2.4.**

That Council representation at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2021 will comprise the Leader and the Chief Executive, who have both been included in the Assembly programmes as speakers on the investment opportunities Orkney has to offer..

#### **It is recommended:**

#### **2.5.**

That the Chief Executive should consider how best to provide additional ongoing representation following the Arctic Circle Assembly 2021 to maximise the promotion of potential economic opportunities for Orkney at the event and thereafter submit a follow up report to the Council in early course.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1.**

The Council adopted a Political Engagement Strategy in October 2018, which was reviewed and updated in December 2020 to consider changes in national and international political circumstances impacting on the Council.

### **3.2.**

The aim of the strategy is to achieve maximum focus in respect of political engagement to ensure that the Council's key strategic priorities are vigorously promoted and achieved. This facilitates the pursuit of local, regional, national and international strategic alliance, typically for the purposes of generation and optimisation of economic opportunities for Orkney, the maintenance of cultural and/or historical relationships and the sharing of best practice.

## **4. Arctic Circle**

### **4.1.**

Building on existing and cultivating new relationships and alliances with Orkney's Arctic and Nordic neighbours will help to develop an alternative international "family" for Orkney, and new opportunities in the blue and green economies, following Brexit. In addition, the Scottish Government's Arctic Policy Framework promotes the development of Arctic – Scotland links and Orkney, the UK's natural gateway to the Arctic, is well placed to play a vital role in identifying and pursuing opportunities that will benefit the Orkney community as well as others.

### **4.2.**

The Arctic Circle is the largest network of international dialogue and co-operation on the future of the Arctic in the context of the impact of climate change on the planet. It is an open democratic platform with participation from governments, organisations, corporations, universities, think tanks, environmental associations, indigenous communities, concerned citizens and others. It is not for profit and nonpartisan.

### **4.3.**

The 2021 Arctic Circle Assembly, the largest annual international gathering on the Arctic, is being held again in Reykjavík, Iceland, between 14 and 17 October 2021. Foundations, organisations, universities, corporations, research institutions, governmental bodies and public associations around the world can utilise the Arctic Circle platform to extend the reach of their efforts. The partners can, through the various Arctic Circle platforms, host or participate in various meetings and sessions, announce news of their activities and achievements, network and showcase their important work.

#### **4.4.**

The Council Leader and the Chief Executive have been invited to attend on the first day to make a formal presentation to the Assembly and have been included as speakers for a session, titled Orkney: Europe's Gateway to the Arctic, in the official programme.

#### **4.5.**

In response, it is proposed that the Chief Executive should give further consideration to how best to provide additional representation to maximise the promotion of potential economic opportunities for Orkney at the event and into the future and thereafter submit a follow up report to the Council in early course .

### **5. Corporate Governance**

#### **5.1.**

Although this report relates to the Council complying with governance and procedural issues, the proposal contributes to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. This proposal of political engagement has the potential for assisting delivery of Council Plan and help develop Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities further enhancing international relationships and economic opportunities, including climate change responses.

#### **5.2.**

In terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the following matters are delegated to the Chief Executive:

- To determine attendance by Councillors at any conference, seminar, course or meeting held within or outwith the United Kingdom, including attendance at meetings of bodies to which members have been nominated or appointed by the Council.
- In consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, to authorise foreign trips by employees in respect of international professional development opportunities and/or service priorities.

### **6. Financial Implications**

The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, can authorise foreign trips by employees in respect of international professional development opportunities and/or service priorities. The cost of the conference is in the region of £500 per delegate. The approximate total cost for the travel and subsistence to attend the event is £2,000 and will be contained within the budget identified for elected member and officer travel.

## **7. Legal Aspects**

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **8. Contact Officer**

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