

Councillors won't interview teachers over Gaelic link

ONE COMPARES COUNCIL POSITION TO NAZI GERMANY, AS PAIR WITHDRAW FROM PANEL

BY IAIN GRANT

Two far north members of Highland Council have withdrawn from interviewing prospective head teachers after learning the applicants would be expected to support Gaelic language and culture.

John Rosie and Donnie Mackay are "appalled" that this is included in the job specification for the vacancies in two Thurso primaries.

And Mr Rosie claimed it echoes of the need for people to have had party membership to get a job in pre-war Hitler's Germany.

Mr Rosie and Mr Mackay were due to take part in interviewing candidates for vacancies at Mount Pleasant and Pennyland schools.

But the two Thurso independent members pulled out after discovering that the criteria for assessing the abilities of the candidates included "support for the Gaelic language and culture".

Mr Rosie said yesterday: "I think it's appalling and Donnie agrees with me.

"To me, it's reminiscent of 1930s Europe where people

had to sign up to the party to get a job."

Mr Rosie clarified that his analogy refers to the Third Reich in Hitler's Germany.

Wick councillor Bill Fernie, who chairs the council's education, culture and sport committee, yesterday condemned his colleagues' last-minute withdrawal from the interview panels.

He said: "The interviews have been set up for some time and it's hardly helpful for these two councillors to decide so near the interviews that they disagree with part of the personal spec that has been in place for some considerable time and has been used for candidates in many schools."

He said the canvassing of support for Gaelic is incorporated in the adverts for all council posts in keeping with the council's commitment to

giving Gaelic the same status as English.

He added: "They should not be trying to make political capital out of a normal employment process and I hope we are able to find replacements for the panels at such short notice."

He also took issue with Councillor Rosie's reference to Nazi Germany. He said: "If he is comparing the council to the Third Reich, I think he has lost all perspective in this matter."

Mr Rosie also accused the Scottish Government of failing to reveal how much public money has been spent on the promotion of Gaelic.

A Scottish Government spokesman said it could only give a breakdown of costs incurred in implementing the Government's own Gaelic language plan.

The spokesman added: "If Mr Rosie is not satisfied with the response we have given, he has the right to lodge an appeal with the Information Commissioner.

"The Scottish Government

currently spends around £25million annually on Gaelic. Spending on Gaelic makes up 0.07% of the overall Scottish budget."



John Rosie: Nazi claim