

MINUTE OF MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY BOARD

COSLA Offices, Edinburgh

4<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Present

Cllr Steven Heddle (in the Chair)	COSLA
Cllr Alan Donnelly	Aberdeen City
Cllr Sandy Wallace	Aberdeenshire
Cllr Ron Sturrock	Angus
Cllr Donald Balsillie	Clackmannanshire
Cllr Archie Dryburgh	Dumfries and Galloway
Cllr John Jamieson	East Dunbartonshire
Cllr Altany Craik	Fife
Cllr Angela MacLean* (Video Conf)	Highland
Robert Gray	HOPS
Cllr Danish Ashraf	North Lanarkshire
Cllr Graham Sinclair	Orkney Islands
Gerry McCartney	Public Health Directors
Cllr John McNaughtan	Renfrewshire
Gordon Mackay	SCOTS
Cllr Mark Rowley	Scottish Borders
Cllr Ryan Thomson (Video Conf)	Shetland Islands
Pamela Smith	SLAED
Jim Savege (Video Conf)	SOLACE
Cllr Collette Stevenson*	South Lanarkshire
John Binning	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Cllr Iain McLaren	West Dunbartonshire

Apologies

Cllr Aileen Morton	Argyll and Bute
Gareth Waterson	CIPFA – Directors of Finance
Cllr Lewis Ritchie	City of Edinburgh
Cllr Donald Crichton	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Lynne Short	Dundee City
Cllr Jim Roberts	East Ayrshire
Cllr Norman Hampshire	East Lothian
Cllr Alan Lafferty	East Renfrewshire
Cllr John Patrick	Falkirk
Cllr Anna Richardson	Glasgow City
Cllr Ronald MacDonald	Highland
Cllr Colin Jackson	Inverclyde
Cllr Russell Imrie	Midlothian
Cllr John Cowe	Moray

Cllr Alex Gallagher  
Cllr Alasdair Bailey  
Andrew Fraser  
Gordon Mackay  
Steve Barron  
Cllr Brian McGinley  
Cllr John Anderson  
Cllr Evelyn Tweed  
Chris Wood-Gee  
Cllr Cathy Muldoon

North Ayrshire  
Perth and Kinross  
Public Health Directors  
SCOTS  
SOLACE  
South Ayrshire  
South Lanarkshire  
Stirling  
Sustainable Scotland Network  
West Lothian

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Cllr Heddle welcomed those present to the meeting. Apologies and substitutions were noted. He also advised that the agenda order would be slightly tweaked to allow the Scottish Investment Portfolio presentation to be taken as the first item.

### **2. Scottish Investment Portfolio**

The Board received a PowerPoint presentation from Marion Francis (Regional Manager Scotland) of the Department for International Trade. She outlined the portfolio which the Department of International Trade was developing for different parts of the UK which detailed the list of projects which would be marketed to international investors. Councils were invited to contact Marion if they had any projects they would like to see included in the portfolio or were seeking initial advice on potential projects for development. She also highlighted why investors like the UK, current trends, the types of investors and their typical requirements.

Following discussion and a number of questions which Marion responded to, the Board thanked Marion for her attendance and noted the content of the presentation.

### **3. Minute of Previous Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September and Matters Arising**

Under matters arising, the meeting was provided with an oral update on the socio-economic duty. It was noted that the Cabinet Secretary, Angela Constance MSP had now signed the Commencement Order for the socio-economic duty. However, the duty would now not come into force until 1 April 2018. This would allow for more stakeholder engagement including with COSLA in relation to the guidance which would accompany the duty. Following the consultation responses, the duty had been renamed as the Fairer Scotland Duty as this was deemed to be easier to use and explain.

The Board agreed to approve the minute of the Environment and Economy Board meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017 as an accurate record.

### **4. Board Plan**

The Board was presented with the latest version of the Environment and Economy Board Plan.

The meeting was provided with a verbal summary on the UK Government's Full Fibre Broadband Challenge Fund and it was noted that officers would circulate further information associated with this after the meeting.

Members were also informed that a PR company had approached COSLA to advise that as part of the Planning Review a brief questionnaire had been prepared and the intention was for this to be sent to members of planning committees across Scotland. It was noted that COSLA officers would help facilitate its distribution.

The Board agreed the Plan.

## **5. National Transport Strategy**

The Board considered a report which invited members to discuss the future of transport governance which was being reviewed as part of the development of the new National Transport Strategy.

During discussion, it was emphasised that 'one size did not fit all' and the transport poverty that particularly existed in rural areas must be addressed as part of the new strategy.

The Board discussed the general thinking on transport governance which was set out from paragraph 5 onwards in the report and agreed the next steps.

## **6. Roads Collaboration Project – Presentation**

The Board was provided with a PowerPoint presentation from Angus Brodie (Programme Manager) of the Roads Collaboration Programme.

Angus provided background information to the National Roads Maintenance Review, outlined the key points that emerged from the review, and the governance overseeing its delivery. The findings of the Audit Scotland Review 2016 were also highlighted and it was noted that a response was currently being prepared by the Roads Collaboration Board with a view to it being issued before Christmas.

There was a full and frank discussion with a number of views articulated. In particular, the challenges with collaborating for rural and island authorities were highlighted. Some members indicated that they were nervous about the potential direction of travel of this work although they recognised the pressures on local road services and that further work was required to support councils.

The Board thanked Angus for his attendance and noted the content of the presentation.

## **7. International Sustainable Development**

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the COSLA participation at the United Nations Climate Conference in Bonn and outlined a range of opportunities for local authorities on international engagement on sustainable development. The report also highlighted issues post the UK's exit from the European Union and invited member's views ahead of a more detailed paper to be provided for the next Board.

Cllr Heddle advised that a copy of the final declaration from his participation at COP23 would be issued to members after the meeting.

The Board:

- i. noted the report on the attendance of COSLA's Environment Spokesperson at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn; and
- ii. provided initial views on councils' interaction with various international agreements and organisations, and
- iii. agreed that a report be provided at the next Board which set out in more detail how agreements operate, the opportunities for Scottish local authorities and the interaction with Scottish and UK Government policy. This report would also allow for a discussion on the implications of the UK's exit from the European Union on delivery and monitoring of sustainable development.

## **8. Scottish Energy Strategy**

The Board was provided with a report which introduced members to COSLA's approach to energy policy, invited comments and observations, and to agree a broad policy response.

There was a wide-ranging discussion with a number of comments made which officers agreed to pick up in future discussions.

The Board:

- i. reaffirmed that COSLA welcomed the overall aims and ambitions of the Scottish Government's draft Energy Strategy;
- ii. endorsed the policy objectives of Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) and offered their political support for these, as long as they were fully funded, but requested a flexible approach to implementation, rather than a mandatory requirement being placed on local authorities;
- iii. discussed whether there was political interest, in principal, in local authorities taking a more active role as public energy providers or in enabling local communities' engagement in energy use and production; and
- iv. requested that COSLA explored options for members engaging with the Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse in more detailed discussions around energy policy and the use of devolved powers, including potentially an invitation to this Board.

## **9. Business Gateway Updates**

### **a) Business Gateway Board**

The Board considered a report which invited members to discuss governance arrangements for the Business Gateway Board and make a suitable recommendation to COSLA Leaders on membership.

Cllr Heddle suggested that bullet point 7 of the remit be amended to include the following wording at the end of the sentence 'and ensure the service is consistent and delivered to a high standard', which the meeting unanimously agreed to.

During discussion, it was clarified that this Board would oversee the national arrangements and would not delve into current local operations and oversight.

The Board agreed to recommend to Leaders:

- i. that the Business Gateway Board comprise of 10 elected members, populated as follows: 3 SNP, 2 Labour, 2 Conservative, 1 Independent, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Green;
- ii. that the nominations be made by Political Group Leaders;
- iii. that the Chair to the Board be Cllr Steven Heddle, Environment and Economy Spokesperson;
- iv. that the Board be supported by relevant SLAED, SOLACE and COSLA officers; and
- v. that subject to the amendment agreed at the meeting being incorporated, the remit be as detailed at paragraph 8 of the report.

### **b) DigitalBoost Update**

The Board received a report which briefed members on the development and successful delivery of the DigitalBoost programme and the work ongoing to secure additional funding for the programme to continue it into the future.

A verbal update was provided on some recent developments. It was noted that the Scottish Government had given an indication that they would welcome the continuation of the programme and appropriate funding was therefore expected to follow.

The Board:

- i. noted the development of the DigitalBoost programme and the strategic recognition afforded it by the Scottish Government;

- ii. noted the successful delivery of the programme by the local Business Gateway service and the results achieved;
- iii. agreed to support the continuation of the programme; and
- iv. agreed that the Environment and Economy Spokesperson take the necessary steps to seek to persuade Scottish Government to commit to funding the programme into the future.

## **Items taken in private Session**

### **c) Creative Scotland Screen Unit**

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the proposed development of a new Screen Unit within Creative Scotland and to consider how Local Government services, such as Business Gateway, would work in collaboration with the new Unit and other partners.

The Board:

- i. noted the proposal to develop a new Screen Unit to be based in Creative Scotland;
- ii. noted this would offer complementary and specialist support to the sector;
- iii. agreed COSLA's support for the Screen Unit; and
- iv. agreed that Business Gateway would work with partners to scope and develop a process of business analysis and triage to identify the cohort of businesses that can benefit from this additional specialist support.

## **10. Bill Updates**

### **a) Planning Bill – Verbal Update**

The Board received a verbal update on recent developments associated with the Planning Bill since members discussed it at the last meeting.

Members were advised that the Bill was expected imminently. Officers provided information on what they knew about the Bill and that it was anticipated there would be new proposals on performance. Details as follows:

- To make reporting on performance a statutory duty. This was currently done on a voluntary basis through Planning Performance Framework returns.
- To set up a coordinator post to support local authorities with planning performance. The post who could monitor performance and report on progress to Ministers. They could also provide advice to planning authorities on improvement.
- There may also be a power to appoint someone to audit an authority and to make recommendations for the authority to respond to. This auditing provision may involve commencing provisions from the 2006 Planning Act.

During discussion, members indicated their reservations about another layer of bureaucracy and oversight potentially being added to the system.

The Board noted the content of the verbal update and agreed to be kept informed of developments.

### **b) Crown Estate Bill – Verbal Update**

The Board received a verbal update on the progress towards a Bill on the long-term management of the Crown Estate in Scotland.

It was noted that COSLA was expecting the Bill to be laid in Parliament in early 2018, likely in January. Scottish Government primarily viewed this as an enabling piece of legislation which

would allow for the devolution of management responsibilities. COSLA indicated a willingness to support local pilot and would encourage any interested local authorities to contact Crown Estate Scotland directly on this issue. Some of the issues to be covered by the Bill were outlined.

It was suggested that there could be merit in inviting the Chair and Chief Executive of the Crown Estate to a future meeting of the Board. Officers agreed to explore this.

The Board noted the verbal update provided.

#### **11. Dates of Meetings for 2018**

The Board noted the dates of meetings for 2018. Details as follows:

- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April
- Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June
- Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September
- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November
- Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December