

MINUTE OF MEETING OF LEADERSHIP SOUNDING BOARD

COSLA Offices, Edinburgh

9th February 2018

Present

Cllr Alison Evison (In the Chair)	Aberdeenshire Council
Cllr Peter Barrett	Perth and Kinross Council
Cllr Jim Gifford	Aberdeenshire Council
Cllr Steven Hedde	Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Gail Macgregor	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Cllr Stephen McCabe	Inverclyde Council
Cllr Douglas Reid	East Ayrshire Council
Cllr David Ross	Fife Council
Cllr James Stockan	Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Elena Whitham	East Ayrshire Council

Apologies

Cllr Steve Burgess	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Graham Houston	Stirling Council
Cllr Peter Johnston	West Lothian Council

Welcome

The President welcomed those present to the meeting.

1. Minute of Previous Meeting 17th January 2018

Under matters arising, a verbal update was provided on the latest position with regard to council tax exemption for care leavers. It was noted that a fuller briefing would be distributed to members following the meeting.

The minute of the previous meeting held on 17th January 2018 was agreed as an accurate record.

2. Brexit

The Board received a report which outlined the case for COSLA's continued UK and international engagement after Brexit, to both influence the broader policy agendas and to maintain the profile of Scottish Local Government.

The meeting was advised that COSLA along with all the other local government associations in the UK would be seeking a meeting with the Minister to apply some political pressure.

The Board:

- i. noted the summary of where we had got to with the Joint Local Government Committee; and

- ii. considered future COSLA international engagement post Brexit, and the need to work on these during the withdrawal and transition periods and noted that a report would be prepared for a future Leaders meeting.

3. Electoral Reform

Leadership Sounding Board considered a report which sought feedback on COSLA's initial draft response to the Scottish Government's consultation on electoral reform. Further drafting would then take place, and Leaders would be asked to consider the draft final response on 23 February.

There was a comprehensive discussion with a number of views articulated. Officers agreed to reflect the points raised in the final iteration presented to Leaders on 23 February.

Leadership Sounding Board:

- i. considered and commented on the initial draft response;
- ii. noted that a further version would then be developed for consideration and approval by Leaders on 23 February; and
- iii. agreed that COSLA seek an active role alongside the Scottish Government in taking forward any subsequent reforms to the electoral process.

4. Business Case for Local Government Review Special Interest Group

The Board was provided with a report which set out a business case for the creation of a Special Interest Group to guide and develop Local Government activity in relation to the Local Governance Review.

Leadership Sounding Board agreed to the establishment of the Special Interest Group (as laid out in the report) to take this activity forward and ensure that there was a dedicated forum in which to direct the work that would be needed, explore and debate key themes, and develop policy positions.

5. Local Government Settlement – verbal update

Leadership Sounding Board received a verbal update on developments associated with the local government settlement.

The meeting was advised that Cllr Macgregor had written to Patrick Harvie MSP, to thank him for his support and that we would now need his influence to ensure that, the additional funding he negotiated for local government, was baselined into future years settlements. Letters had also been sent to the Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee and to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Derek Mackay MSP about the need for the funding to be baselined. The trade unions were also going to lobby the Scottish Government on this issue. The media campaign would continue and press releases were planned on specific dates when the Scottish Government's budget was scheduled to be discussed at the Parliament.

Two draft press releases were then tabled for consideration. Officers agreed to amend these based on the discussion at the meeting.

Leadership Sounding Board noted the content of the verbal update, agreed that a report be taken to the February Leaders meeting, and further agreed the basis of two press releases to be issued as part of COSLA's media strategy.

6. Local Taxation

Leadership Sounding Board considered a report which sought political guidance regarding the next steps to COSLA's lobbying on local taxation. Specifically, the report sought guidance on two areas: transient visitor tax and council tax flexibility.

Leadership Sounding Board agreed that a report be brought forward to the next Leaders meeting on the transient visitor tax but not in relation to flexibility on the 3% limit for council tax.

7. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) – verbal update

Leadership Sounding Board received a verbal update on recent developments associated with Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs).

The meeting was advised that the Policing Board (a sub-grouping of the SPA) had been due to consider a report reaffirming Police Scotland's intention, following legal advice that they had sought, to stop policing events unless a council formally puts a TTRO in place. COSLA and various councils had differing legal advice and COSLA was seeking a meeting with Police Scotland in an effort to agree to jointly commission further legal advice that provided a definitive position to which all parties could agree. COSLA's Chief Executive had spoken to the newly appointed SPA Chair, Susan Deacon, who had in turn spoken with the Chair of the Policing Board. As a result, the report to the Policing Board was now being continued. COSLA's intention was now to secure the joint meeting with Police Scotland prior to the upcoming meeting of the COSLA Police Conveners Scrutiny Forum on 26 February. However, if a satisfactory resolution could not be found, it was possible that the matter could be added to a future Leaders agenda.

Leadership Sounding Board noted the content of the verbal update provided.

8. Issues from Spokespersons and AOCB

Cllr Heddle provided a comprehensive list of the various meetings and events he had been involved with since the last meeting of Leadership Sounding Board.

Cllr Whitham also outlined a number of ministerial meetings she had coming up and highlighted that there had been a lot of media interest on Housing which she had provided a detailed and balanced response to.

Members were advised that a Special Leaders meeting would be called to take place after the Convention meeting on 23rd March. Its primary purpose would be to seek a mandate from Leaders to take into the pay negotiations with the trade unions.