

PROGRESS

UPDATE

2017-18



Your local voice, nationally



Councillor Alison Evison, President

Looking back over the nine months since I became President, it's striking how diverse COSLA's work has been. From funding to housing, the economy to education and early years, and social care to dealing with Brexit, we've pushed forward what matters to local communities.

This report helps illustrate just how important that work is, and I am enormously indebted to the Vice-President and each of our Spokespeople who have been working tirelessly on your behalf. That's already paid huge dividends, and is ensuring that COSLA and Local Government is respected and listened to in Scotland, the UK and Europe.

This report is also part of significant activity across COSLA to modernise and improve. One of Convention's first actions after the 2017 elections was to agree the COSLA Plan setting our overall priorities and principles - this update highlights the progress we are making. It sits alongside 29 other actions to revise our governance, improve planning, and redevelop communications to give COSLA new and better tools to get on with the job.

As we look to the future, there are big challenges ahead, but real opportunities too. That's why I've made it a priority to go out and meet councillors from across the country and listen to what they need from their national organisation. From North Ayrshire to Shetland, and Moray to the Scottish Borders, I've been hugely impressed by the passion and innovation that I have witnessed.

Some major tasks lie ahead- fair funding, improving participation, building inclusive economies, and ensuring that education reforms work in the best interests of our communities, to name but a few. Brexit is a massive issue, and we have met Michel Barnier and worked with Scottish and UK Ministers, and with local government organisations across the UK, to press for a new constitutional settlement that empowers councils to deliver the outcomes communities need.

Like local elected members across the country, I know there are also huge opportunities to improve lives by strengthening local democracy. COSLA has long championed change, and we are beginning to see that work bear fruit. I welcome the growing appetite for reform, but it's more important than ever to shape this so that it strengthens democratic accountability and delivers the real-life benefits for communities that we know are possible.

Finally, one of Local Government's great strengths is that it is uniquely accessible and responsive to the diverse communities that it serves. But there is an area where more progress is needed. Despite some improvement, only 29% of Scotland's 1227 councillors are women. Other key parts of our communities are also under-represented. That's why this report sets out a new 'Equality, Representation, and Diversity' priority to take forward the work that is required.

We have achieved a lot, but over the year ahead I will focus on continuing to improve COSLA's relevance and impact, cementing Local Government's place in Scotland's system of government, and on ensuring that COSLA leads not responds to the political agenda. I look forward to working with you all, and I would be delighted to hear your views.



Councillor Graham Houston, Vice President

I'm proud of Local Government in Scotland, and its track record of changing lives for the better, whatever the challenge. One thing is for sure- councils are constantly finding creative solutions to the issues that they face.

I believe that it's the unique role of councillors as leaders of their local places that is the key to unlocking better outcomes, tackling inequalities, and promoting inclusive economic growth. Across the country there is a huge amount of great work taking place, and I witnessed just some of that first hand when I chaired the COSLA Excellence Awards last year.

That's why I'm passionate about bringing the Local Government family together to get the best deal for our communities, and developing the relationship between national and local government. We should have, as COSLA has always said, not tiers but spheres of government. By working together, local and national government can find solutions that serve everyone in Scotland.

I'm delighted to be part of the political leadership team putting COSLA at the forefront of that work. We're actively working as a team too – from COSLA's first shared induction and training programme, to its new Leadership Sounding Board, spokespeople and political group leaders are coming together to develop views, generate shared priorities, and build cooperation.

That approach works – and it's leading to successes. For example, we know that councils still face huge financial pressures, but our lobbying of parliament resulted in the final 2018-19 budget settlement being improved by £170m. And by bringing together all 32 councils, and working with professional associations and others, we've been able to argue strongly for the reforms that will best improve outcomes for children and young people locally.

Of course, it's simply not possible to capture everything COSLA does in this report, but I hope that it provides a flavour of the activity taking place. COSLA's system of work-plans provide a thorough overview of each of our four Policy Boards and Leaders, in combination with the cross cutting work of the Resources Spokesperson. Plus, we've already set up two Special Interest Groups to take forward detailed work on Local Governance and Police Scrutiny. Often the impact of our lobbying work can also take time to filter through to fruition, and that's why our website is regularly updated with a library of detailed reports covering all our decision-making structures - find out more at www.cosla.gov.uk.

Whatever the challenge, COSLA needs your help if we are to succeed. That means ensuring that as a Local Government family we speak with a strong, united voice. So I hope that the impact of our renewed emphasis on two way engagement, social media, and communications is now being felt. I'd be keen to hear about your experiences, and what else we should do to improve.

Of course, COSLA's mandate comes directly from its membership. Every Council has an equal say in that process - not just through its Leader, but through the vital role that its Board and Convention representatives fulfil too. In fact, over 250 local elected members are routinely involved in making decisions at COSLA. To them, we extend our sincere thanks - we simply couldn't work without you.



About COSLA

COSLA is the voice of Local Government in Scotland. We provide political leadership on national issues, and work with councils to improve local services and strengthen local democracy.

Millions of people rely on the services that Local Government in Scotland delivers every day. Together, councils spend almost £19 billion a year on local services, and employ over 240,000 people- nearly 10% of all employment in Scotland.

Our job is to champion councils' vital work and secure the resources and powers they need. We are a councillor-led, cross-party organisation which works on our members' behalf to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and to engage positively with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation.

COSLA was established in 1975, but standing up for Scotland's local priorities goes back 800 years. We evolved from the Convention of Royal Burghs, once the oldest representative body in Europe. Today, we're here to:



ENGAGE in key financial, legislative and policy developments to ensure they have the best possible impact



LEAD reforms that improve public services and save money effectively



DEVELOP partnerships with Scottish, UK and international governments, parliaments, and the third and private sectors



NEGOTIATE fair and affordable pay and workforce conditions on behalf of all councils



CAMPAIGN on the issues that matter to our members, and promote the image and reputation of Local Government



SUPPORT councils to work together, and deliver shared services that increase their capacity



CHAMPION the role of Local Government in the governance of Scotland, and lobby for stronger local democracy and community empowerment

COSLA is also responsible for providing national services directly to councils and their partners through the myjobscotland recruitment platform, Trading Standards Scotland service, and Business Gateway National Unit.



Our Current Priorities

COSLA’s work is very diverse, but our work is particularly focused on the eight game changing priorities agreed by Convention and set out in the COSLA Plan 2017-22. These are kept under review – and developments for the year ahead are at the end of this report.

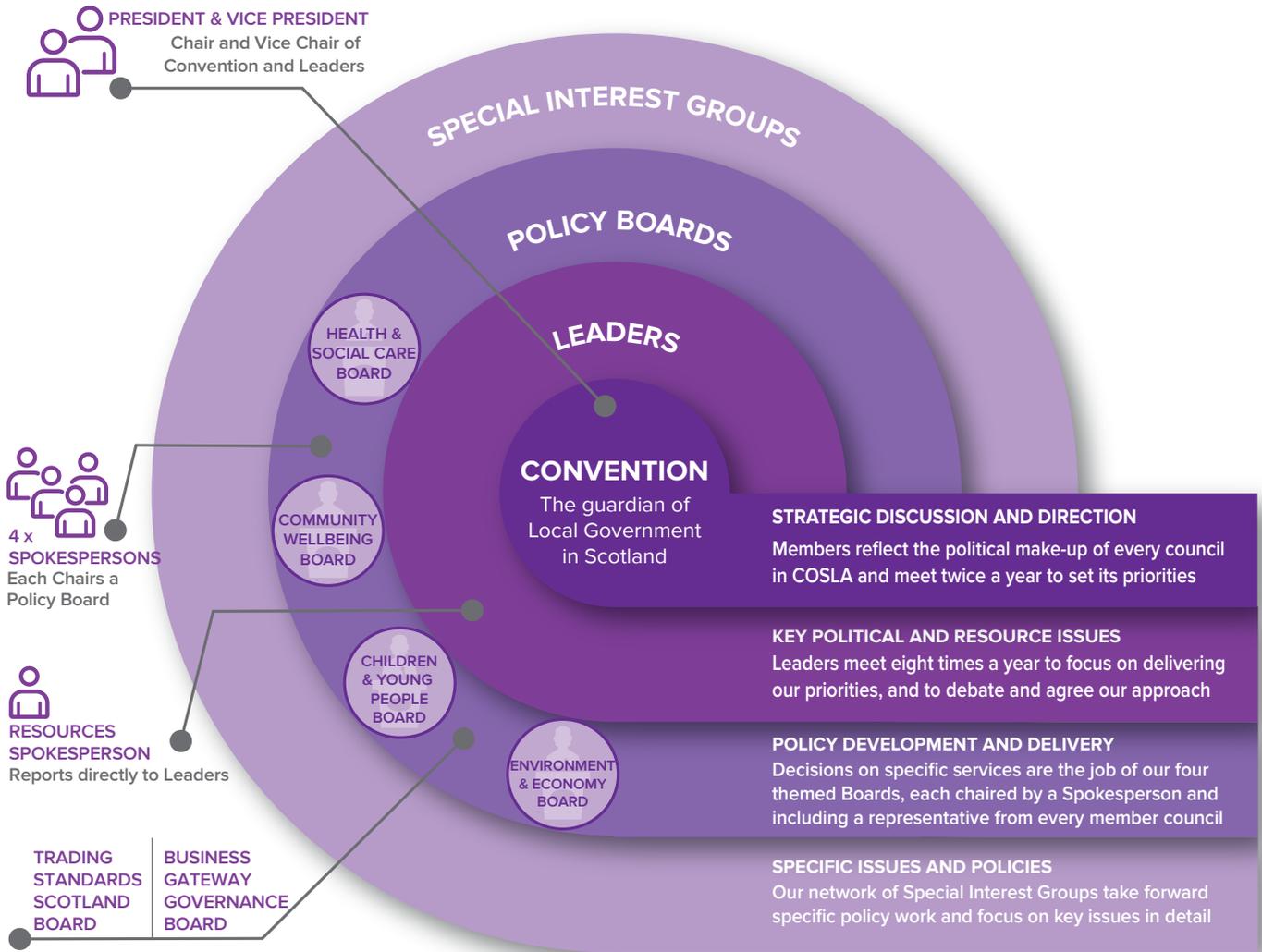
LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING	Getting a fair deal for COSLA members on public spending priorities, and negotiating greater local financial freedoms and powers.
UK EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION	Securing a strong voice for Local Government throughout negotiations, achieving devolution of powers in the new landscape, and supporting councils to address change.
DEMOCRACY and REFORM	Empowering local people through strong local democratic rights and elected leadership, and rethinking public services through collective reform of public services focused on local places.
EDUCATION and CHILDREN’S SERVICES	Working with councils to put children at the centre of our approach, by delivering positive outcomes based on the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child, and ensuring local accountability for all Children’s Services including Education.
HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE	Supporting Local Government and Integrated Joint Boards to address demographic and financial challenges, enabling communities to live healthy, independent lives, and promoting an outcomes and prevention culture.
LOCAL ECONOMIES and INCLUSIVE GROWTH	Building strong and sustainable communities by enabling councils to drive inclusive economic growth and investment in business support, economic development, skills and regeneration.
A UNITED VOICE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Strengthening and developing the way COSLA works by focusing on its members, communicating effectively, and championing key issues.
EFFECTIVE SHARED SERVICES	Continuously improving the myjobscotland, Trading Standards Scotland, and Business Gateway services we provide directly for councils and their partners.



How We Work

We're a politically led, cross-party organisation. That means that what we do, and how we do it, is decided democratically by elected Councillors from across our member councils.

Our governance structures are organised in the following ways:





Our Political Leadership Team

COSLA is led by its President, Vice President, and five Spokespersons. These office bearers were elected by the COSLA Convention. Group Leaders are also appointed by each of the political groups represented on the Convention.

PRESIDENTIAL TEAM

	<p>PRESIDENT Cllr Alison Evison Aberdeenshire Council (LAB)</p>	<p>VICE-PRESIDENT Cllr Graham Houston Stirling Council (SNP)</p>	
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SPOKESPERSONS

<p>RESOURCES Cllr Gail Macgregor Dumfries & Galloway Council (CON)</p>		<p>HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE Cllr Peter Johnston West Lothian Council (SNP)</p>		<p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Cllr Stephen McCabe Inverclyde Council (LAB)</p>	
<p>ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Cllr Steven Heddle Orkney Islands Council (IND)</p>		<p>COMMUNITY WELLBEING Cllr Elena Whitham East Ayrshire Council (SNP) Interim Providing maternity cover for Kelly Parry</p>			

GROUP LEADERS

	<p>SCOTTISH LABOUR Cllr David Ross Fife Council</p>		<p>SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY Cllr Douglas Reid East Ayrshire Council</p>		<p>SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE PARTY Cllr Jim Gifford Aberdeenshire Council</p>
	<p>SCOTTISH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS Cllr Peter Barrett Perth & Kinross Council</p>		<p>INDEPENDENT GROUP Cllr James Stockan Orkney Islands Council</p>		<p>SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY Cllr Steve Burgess City of Edinburgh Council</p>



The Year in Review

It's been a significant year, and we've worked through a huge range of networks and negotiations to stand up for Local Government, and make a difference to the critical issues facing councils and their communities.

It's one reason why we're regularly quoted by governments and parliamentarians, and have a high profile in the media. Of course, delivering outcomes is often a long-term project, but our Boards are making real progress, and laying the groundwork for longer term impact too. Just some of that diverse activity is set out below- more detailed updates are also routinely available on our website.

Children and Young People



Councillor Stephen McCabe,
Children and Young People Spokesperson

COSLA remains focused on Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), and the whole systems approach to providing services for children and young people.

We've continued to place GIRFEC at the heart of everything we do for young people, and our commitment to these principles has been a central tenet of our response to the various challenges facing Children's Services in Local Government in Scotland over the past nine months.

The proposed reforms to Education Governance have been carefully considered at COSLA, with a clear vision and set of principles established by COSLA Leaders in November 2016. COSLA has built a multi agency partnership approach across the Local Government family and our partners in the trade unions, parents and young people associations. The vast majority of public responses to the Education Bill have aligned with the COSLA position. We are clear that improvement is our agenda and our responsibility, and cannot be separated from local democratic accountability. We will lobby Government and partners as the Bill makes its way through Parliament to ensure that the voice of Local Government is heard in the debate.

The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 1140 hours by 2020 is a significant area of work, and COSLA has led the way to ensure that this opportunity will make a difference to outcomes in the lives of our youngest children and their families. Working with council officers and partners, we have emphasised the importance of early learning and a focus on the child at the centre of the expansion. We are actively recruiting for our future early years workforce and insisting that training, qualifications and the living wage remain the focus for delivering excellent services through our employees. In addition, we are working with Scottish Government and other partners to realise the potential of the expansion, whilst recognising that there are significant challenges ahead to resolve in terms of time and financial resource in order to ensure that councils can play the part they want for their communities. COSLA played a key



role in informing the recent Audit Scotland report into Early Learning and Childcare which showed that councils remain, by far, the providers of quality early learning in each area, and that they are expanding their provision in terms of flexibility. This is testament to the efforts by councillors and politicians to keep children at the centre of all our decision making.

From our youngest children to young adults, the Developing the Young Workforce programme has already realised some of its ambitions, with a significant reduction in youth unemployment in Scotland. The value of the whole systems approach utilised by councils can be seen in each local area as schools, councils, colleges and employers come together to provide a local service in response to the bespoke issues they face. COSLA remains disappointed that the Apprenticeship Levy has not been returned to councils as requested and we continue to lobby on that issue.

COSLA has embraced the opportunities introduced by the Care Review and will be hosting a specific session for Elected Members on their role in the lives of care experienced young people. COSLA continues to push the early intervention and prevention agenda established by the Christie Commission in relation to the many related areas such as the Review of Secure Care, Care Allowances and Youth Justice.

We remain focused on the whole child and supporting their family unit, whatever that may be, to realise good outcomes for each young person.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Putting children at the centre of our approach

Governance: working with councillors, professional associations, trade unions, parents, the third sector and young people to create and campaign on a powerful

Early Learning and Childcare: Lobbying for the resources councils need to expand to **1140** hours, and actively shaping the policy issues around this



Ensuring that school funding will continue to be a matter for local decision makers through lobbying on **the National Funding Formula**



Local Government Family position



Contributing to a **40%** reduction in **Youth Unemployment**, lobbying to return **Apprenticeship Levies** to councils and widen participation, and leading national **Young Workforce** events

Reaching agreement to increase the age of criminal responsibility as part of COSLA's preventative, whole systems approach to **Secure Care and Youth Justice**



Through COSLA, providing key funding to support **Children's Hospices** across Scotland



Working with the Scottish Government to agree in principle the roll out of **Sanitary Product** provision for young people by local authorities



Supporting the **Care Review** and Child Protection Leadership, and working on foster & kinship care payments - helping reduce **Looked After Children** numbers for the 4th consecutive year





Resources



Councillor Gail Macgregor, Resources Spokesperson

Our role as Elected Members is to ensure that services are delivered in the right way for our communities. Over the past year COSLA has advocated strongly for the resources that councils need, and will continue to work to get the best possible outcomes on your behalf.

The resources remit covers Local Government Finance, COSLA's Employers functions, and our digital work.

In terms of Finance, a significant priority has been working to deliver the 2017 Spending Review negotiations for COSLA. With the support of Leaders, we launched the 'Essential Services' campaign to positively highlight the vital nature and value of local services to our communities. This was extremely well received and had traction in the Parliament at both Committee and MSP level, and was supported as part of the joint campaign we launched with the Trade Unions. Essential Services formed the basis of our media, including a strong social media campaign, to support our Spending Review messages. Looking ahead we will aim to build on this success and promote positive messages about Local Government as we approach the next spending review for 2019/20.

I have been proud to work with political colleagues across Government and the Scottish Parliament to build relationships and tell them about the financial challenges that councils face. COSLA's lobbying resulted in the Local Government budget increasing by £170m compared to the initial allocation, and we are continuing to press for the reassurance that this funding will be base-lined. While this helps, we know it does not solve many of the difficult decisions which Scotland's councils will face in the coming year and beyond. We have particularly stressed the pressures around pay, and the impact of the Scottish Government's announcement on the pay cap.

Through the national collective pay bargaining process, we managed to achieve settlements for 2017/18 without imposition or industrial action, which in itself is an achievement. The Teachers Agreement was reached with the addition of extra money from Scottish Government which resulted in an extra 1% increase.

There is no doubt that expectations on pay and the level of any offer from the Employers for 2018/19 has been considerably heightened, as can be seen in the ambition of the Scottish Joint Council and Teachers Trade Union claims of 6.5% and 10% respectively. With no specific provision having been made in the 2018/19 Local Government settlement for pay increases for the workforce, it is shaping up to be a challenging round of negotiations. These negotiations will begin shortly, and regular update reports will be provided to the Leaders' meetings throughout the process.

I have also been working closely with my fellow spokespeople to ensure appropriate funding of policy initiatives. Full funding for the expansion of early learning and childcare is one such example and I will continue to work with Cllr McCabe to ensure that Local Government is properly resourced for this work.



It was very welcome that the Cabinet Secretary listened and acted upon COSLA's concerns relating to the Barclay Review recommendation to remove rates relief to Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs). With existing ALEOs retaining their relief, we will monitor the impact of the new restrictions and respond appropriately.

In addition to this policy work, 2018 also sees the tenth anniversary of the highly successful national recruitment portal, myjobscotland. Initially designed to save the £16m of expenditure spent on recruitment advertising in newspapers, it has subsequently transformed the way in which all council Human Resource services now operate, and opened up the service to other areas of the public sector. Working with our trusted partner, Lumesse, the service is continually evolving to match and exceed current global trends in e-recruitment. Over the last year, COSLA has also developed close operational links with the new Local Government Digital Office to help facilitate service transformation across Local Government, and we will continue to develop this work and assist in ensuring that it has a strong impact across the country.

Looking ahead, one of the key tasks for COSLA will be to lobby for greater fiscal empowerment for Local Government, and to engage with Scottish Government and the Parliament on this around the removal of council tax caps and the introduction of discretionary local taxes in particular. Pay negotiations are of course also set to be a considerable issue for all councils over the coming months, and I look forward to opening negotiations with the trade unions on behalf of all Leaders through our collective bargaining machinery.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

A fair deal for Local Government

Delivering significant media and Scottish Parliament impact through COSLA's positive **#EssentialServices** spending review campaign



Working towards securing full revenue and capital funding for **Early Learning and Childcare** expansion



An increase of **£170m**

to the **2018-19 budget** via our strong cross-party relationships



Supporting **£1.4bn** of council **efficiencies** since 2012, including service collaboration and streamlining, smarter procurement, and asset management



Maintaining **Rates Relief** for existing arms length external organisations following COSLA lobbying



Negotiating **Pay** for over **240,000** staff without imposition or industrial action





Health and Social Care



Councillor Peter Johnston, Health and Social Care Spokesperson

With pressures on core budgets matched by increased demand for services, this continues to be a crucial time for health and social care, and we have achieved a lot for our members this past year.

Importantly, COSLA and Scottish Government are facing up to these challenges together through shared ownership of the Integration of Health and Social Care agenda, the reform of Public Health, and delivery of digital innovation in health and social care.

The health and social care system's journey towards integration continues to be driven at a local level with the support of strong political collaboration between COSLA and Scottish Government – including my role co-chairing the Ministerial Strategic Group with the Cabinet Secretary – helping to create an environment from which integration can progress. This winter was particularly difficult for Scotland's National Health Service but I was pleased that the First Minister recognised the contribution of health and social care integration to reducing the burden – a real example of success.

In keeping with our continued focus on prevention, we are working to transform adult social care and shift the balance of care. A fresh approach to the National Care Home Contract will drive change and innovation within the sector as well as provide a robust, sustainable framework for commissioning care. Securing the buy-in of providers to this agenda has been a real achievement and a mark of progress for COSLA and the Local Government family.

“Strong political relationships and shared fundamental goals are the key to achieving positive outcomes.”

Successful delivery of outcomes-focused, person-centred health and social care services needs good people and effective equipment which is why COSLA has also prioritised investing in the workforce and digital health and care solutions this year. We secured a contribution from the Scottish Government for the implementation of a living wage for social care staff and have ensured, through the National Care Home Contract, that social care staff will be properly invested in. In total COSLA helped to secure an additional £66m for health and social care in 2018/19. Of course there is more to improving social care than funding and I hope to work with the Cabinet Secretary to overcome some of the other challenges on the horizon through the National Workforce Plan.

The Digital Health and Care Strategy for Scotland will articulate our vision for digital transformation throughout the system, and signal a real intent to embrace technology to improve our services in a joined-up way with the NHS. Being recognised as an equal partner with Scottish Government on this important agenda is vital and will ensure that a whole-system approach is taken to digital improvement in health and social care.



Finally, on Public Health Reform, a set of Public Health Priorities for Scotland will be published this spring, and we are working towards the establishment of a new Public Health Body in 2019. I am excited about this development and encouraged by the commitments to joint working to set up the body, which I hope will be reflected in the legislative footing and formal structures of the organisation.

I am aware that we have a busy and challenging year ahead, but with strong political relationships at a national level, and the shared fundamental goal of improving the services our communities receive, I am sure that we can continue to achieve further positive outcomes for our members.

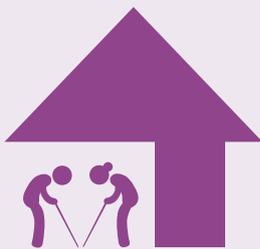
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Enabling healthy, independent lives

Supporting an increase in direct payments and personalised budgets from **1.6%** to **6.5%** of total spend since 2010



Assisting councils to care for **35%** of people with intensive needs at home- up from 32% since 2010



Agreeing a **3.39%** National Care Home Contract uplift for 2018/19- and helping deliver the national agreement for over a decade



Integrating **£8bn** of delegated **Health and Social Care** expenditure - and securing an additional **£66m** for 2018/19

Building the case for investment in the Carers Act, Self Directed Support, and integration – estimated at an additional **16-21%** by 2020



Enabling **Social Care** hours to increase by nearly **10%** since 2010



Working with the Scottish Government to develop a new Scottish local **Public Health** model



Environment and Economy



Councillor Steven Heddle, Environment and Economy Spokesperson

This has been a very busy and challenging year, covering major policy areas including digital connectivity, climate change, the economy, planning, transport and waste. We also work on specific proposals such as the Islands and Crown Estate Bills, and on the implications of the UK's exit from the European Union.

The Enterprise and Skills Review concluded in summer 2017, although its implementation continues. I am a member of the Strategic Board on behalf of Local Government and glad to say it is now finding its feet. It will oversee the work of the agencies and importantly ensure that they work with councils and others to deliver inclusive growth. Local Government's connection to the Strategic Board is one of the most important and potentially influential relationships to cultivate over the next twelve months, and will require close work with local authorities and professional associations, including the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) officer network.

I look forward to the new Business Gateway Board meeting for the first time in the Spring, and am confident that this will help bring a refreshed approach to business support over the coming months.

The new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency will be established through legislation and build on the interim arrangements in place. COSLA supported Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Councils to establish the agency, and I shall make sure that this support continues throughout 2018. Similarly, COSLA will work with the Scottish Government and partners to establish the concept of enterprise and skills regional partnerships, and ensure they complement ongoing reforms such as transport and planning.

The new Planning Bill is before Parliament and is a key priority for COSLA. Listening to councils and representing their views has been a major part of our work to prepare for this Bill and other planning reforms over the last year. This is not possible without the support from our partners including Heads of Planning Scotland and others. I also want to reference the High Level Group on Planning, which I co-chair with the Minister and which provides a regular opportunity to discuss issues. My Board has been hugely helpful in informing such meetings.

In terms of Brexit, and particularly Structural Funds, we've been highlighting the impact on communities if EU funding is not replaced. The key issue now is to ensure a fully funded UK approach is operational by January 2021, and that this is locally delivered and of at least equal quantum to current EU funds. Working with the Presidential team, we have been making this argument wherever and whenever we can over the last year. That will continue until we secure the best deal possible for our communities.

Linked to this, my Board has agreed a lobbying position on the replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The rural economy is often heavily dependent on the existing EU CAP and I hope that, for its successor, we can increase the 5% rural spending earmarked for local development. Equally, in my view, there is no reason why Local Action Groups could not be aligned with local authorities in line with Scottish Community Empowerment legislation. Rest assured that these, and many other dimensions of Brexit, will continue to be a focus for us.



I know just how crucial broadband is to communities across Scotland, and ensuring that every property secures a superfast connection has, and will continue to be a priority for the next few years. The Government's R100 procurement launched in December 2017, and I welcome that £600m has been allocated until 2021 for this project. The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme is also in the final stages of fibre delivery, and has been extended through gainshare funding through 2018/19.

The final Climate Change Plan published earlier in the year did not go as far as COSLA anticipated, or hoped, and I will continue to seek to 'push the bar higher'. I'm pleased, though, that the Scottish Government listened to our call to increase carbon reduction ambitions for the transport sector. The transition to electric vehicles is clearly key to this, and we will take this into account as we contribute to the National Transport Strategy refresh. On energy, we have been working specifically on Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies and local energy companies, including obtaining Scottish Government's commitment to full funding. There are tremendous opportunities here for Local Authorities to make a real contribution to carbon reduction, and to develop the local economy.

On waste, the roll out of the Household Recycling Charter continues. Zero Waste Scotland has provided, or agreed, around £6m funding to date. COSLA is also watching developments on the 2020 Ban on Biodegradable Waste to Landfill. The situation varies considerably across the country, and we are working with many partners to build up this picture. We are also looking in great detail at the proposed Deposit Return Scheme, not only to influence its targets or design, but to determine how Local Government fits in.

COSLA previously argued long and hard for a socio-economic duty and I'm therefore delighted that we have been able to influence the Fairer Scotland Duty, which asks public authorities to do more to tackle inequalities caused by socio-economic inequalities. We continue to engage with the Scottish Government as the implementation phase approaches.

Finally, the next twelve months will see the devolution of the Crown Estate reach an important point. The Bill is before Parliament and will set the legal framework for onward devolution to local authorities and community organisations. This touches on a number of COSLA priorities and is a major strand of our work to strengthen the future role of Local Government.

LOCAL ECONOMIES and INCLUSIVE GROWTH
Driving growth and investing in business, regeneration and skills

Maximising local opportunities for growth by securing COSLA's seat on the national **Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board**

Distributing **£26m** to local projects through the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund in 2018, in partnership with the Scottish Government

Securing **£6m** so far to transform waste services as part of the Household Recycling Charter

Lobbying to increase planning fees and improve the **Planning Bill**

A fresh approach to economic development by supporting the establishment of the new **South of Scotland Enterprise Agency**

Broadband: working to transform lives digitally through support for Scotland's digital connectivity goals, including the "Reaching 100%" project

Climate Change: Working on the Climate Change Bill, Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies, and local energy companies



Community Wellbeing



**Councillor Elena Whitham (Interim),
Councillor Kelly Parry,
Community Wellbeing Spokespersons**



One of this year's highlights was that in December 2017 we celebrated the arrival of the 2000th person in the resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees. A truly remarkable achievement in such a short period of time, and we're very proud that Scottish Local Government has in many ways been leading the UK's response to the tragic circumstances in Syria.

Supporting the long-term integration of these new Scots across our communities is the next phase for us. This is being underpinned by joint strategic work with the Scottish Government, Scottish Refugee Council and a host of other partners in a strategy launched in January.

Working alongside councils, we are building an evidence base on the impacts of Brexit on our population. One strand of this work included a round-table meeting with the Migration Advisory Committee that enabled councils to highlight their concerns about reduced inward migration. We are also working with Scottish Government to host a number of regional events so Leaders and Scottish Ministers can hear EU nationals' concerns, and reinforce key messages about the valuable role that they play in our communities.

COSLA has a distinct strand of supporting local democracy through participatory budgeting. While we are grappling with what our definition is, from an initial look at what our members are doing, we have about 100 examples of work, and will use this evidence to define 'mainstreaming' participatory budgeting in the future. Our benchmarking, as well as the next round of Community Choices funding, will be pivotal in how we progress.

Tackling poverty remains a key task. For example, welfare reform is a significant concern, especially the roll out of Universal Credit and its impact on individuals and services. Feedback and data from councils have been vital in our lobbying of the UK Government, particularly during autumn 2017. While this resulted in significant easements to moving on to Universal Credit, many issues remain. COSLA will continue to be active throughout the roll-out for new applicants and the migration of existing claimants.

Late last year we agreed an Overarching Partnership Agreement on Social Security, which will help shape local arrangements and their effective integration with existing advice and support provision. COSLA is also feeding into the ongoing Social Security Bill and planning for the delivery of new powers through advisory groups and direct negotiation with the Scottish Government. Most of this is going well, as is our oversight of the policy, practice, performance and resourcing of the Scottish Welfare Fund.

COSLA is helping to shape the content of the Child Poverty Act Guidance, and working with councils



to identify their existing policy and practice, and share this with the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission. We will work with local authorities on the cost of funerals to promote greater transparency on cost drivers and charging, and on the contribution to reducing funeral poverty. We are also maintaining an overview of work towards the piloting of Universal Basic Income.

The impacts of benefit changes for housing and supported housing requires COSLA to engage with both the UK and Scottish Governments. We met with Housing Conveners in January to discuss our continued progress around the affordable housing supply program – the Ministers joined us, and both COSLA and Scottish Government have taken away challenges to address in the coming months. The Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Actions Group came to the Board in December, and we continue to engage with its members and the wider sector more generally. We really need Local Government's perspectives to be understood and considered. Over the coming months we hope to report progress.

“More than ever, Councils have a pivotal role in building strong, safe, and sustainable communities across the country.”

COSLA also awaits the Scottish Government's route map for energy efficiency – it will become Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme. Energy prices, fuel efficiency and income standards all need to remain front and centre for both the Community Wellbeing and the Environment and Economy Boards.

Given the Grenfell Tower tragedy last year, fire safety in domestic buildings will require attention in the coming months as reports are published and recommendations made. From our perspective Councils have already taken significant actions to reassure householders across Scotland.

UK EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

Devolution of new powers and a strong local voice

Working with councils, professional associations, the private sector, and civic Scotland to understand the impact of Brexit, develop the evidence base, and plan for the future



Forming a powerful partnership across all four UK local government associations to lobby for a **new constitutional settlement** that empowers councils

Preparing for change by working with UK and Scottish Governments and others on future funding, procurement, state aids, and environmental and consumer protection

Deepening COSLA's relationships with **European and International bodies** to build Scottish Local Government's future outside the EU





The difficulties around police counters, armed officers, and temporary traffic restriction orders are not unexpected. Police governance has been very unstable, and I hope that joint working between COSLA and the Scottish Police Authority, Police Scotland and Scottish Government will bring the improvements required. We have met with the COSLA Police Scrutiny Conveners Forum and the Chair of the Scottish Police Authority, and seeking a similar discussion with Cabinet Secretary for Justice. Working with the Scottish Government, COSLA is also creating a new post to support the 'Equally Safe' Strategy and develop capacity and good practice to counter violence against women and girls.

COSLA continues to work on various aspects of Community Justice and Public Protection Arrangements, and will be convening a meeting with the local leadership of Community Justice Partnerships and Community Justice Scotland. This will seek to establish consensus around the new arrangements, and what can be done to support priorities such as reducing the numbers of people on remand, and the proposed 'presumption against short term sentencing'.

Finally, Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) are working with Highland Council and the Competition and Markets Authority to develop an online portal that will provide advice and sign posting about parcel delivery surcharges for consumers and businesses. In 2018/19, TSS will also fund a project providing financial advice webchat facilities for those seeking to borrow money. Delivered by Scotcash, the aim is to divert people from illegal money lenders into mainstream banking.

DEMOCRACY and REFORM
Strengthening democracy and rethinking public services

Securing commitment to spend **1%** of budgets through participatory budgeting, with over **100** projects already taking off around the country.



Co-launching the **Review of Local Governance** with Scottish Government, and successfully ensuring it includes all public services, and national and local government



Championing **local democratic reform** and the Right to Local Self Government – with legislative proposals now getting underway



Identifying place-based reforms across **5** key workstreams - working with the Scottish Government and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

Devolution: supporting the Islands Bill and changes to the Crown Estate

Helping Scottish councils resettle **2000** Syrian refugees by December 2017, just two years into the five-year resettlement programme.



Publishing the **New Scots** Refugee Integration Strategy in partnership with Scottish Government and the Scottish Refugee Council



Local Government's Voice

Effective communications are crucial to the impact that COSLA can make, and we've been working hard to develop a range of improvements. These aren't just about campaigning, but improving engagement with our members too.

Our new communications framework is the driving force behind the digital and social media channels that are supplementing our traditional media service. Through these we've been promoting positive stories and building direct engagement with elected members, councils, partners, and the public - and we've seen our Twitter following exceed 10,000 people as a result.

Our #essentialservices social media campaign was hugely successful, and we've kept up the momentum through Parliamentary briefings on issues such as Education Governance and the Budget settlement. Other improvements include a series of topical videos - 24 so far - including bullying and sexual harassment, COSLA's Annual Conference, International Women's Day, and key policy decisions. Plus, COSLA's website has more information than ever, and we've invested in state of the art video conferencing facilities to ensure that members can connect with us wherever they are. As a first for COSLA, we've also completed training for our political leadership team to maximise the power of the media to get our message out.

The COSLA Excellence Awards continue to showcase Local Government at its best, and are the largest of their kind. We've promoted this innovation via a huge new online database, and by working with partners such as the Scottish Local Government Information Unit.

As we plan for the future, there's plenty to do. For example, we're looking at options for regular news and e-bulletins, and from this year we're taking key meetings out on the road around the country. We're also working to be fully compliant with the new General Data Protection Regulation by May 2018.

A UNITED VOICE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Championing key issues and focusing on our members

Delivering COSLA's successful **#essentialservices** campaign

Sharing best practice and innovation through **400** online **Excellence Awards** projects 

Producing **24** COSLA videos on key issues - with more in the pipeline 



715

media coverage episodes

across **134** outlets, including local and national newspapers, radio, TV, and websites.

www.cosla.gov.uk
75,000 COSLA website users, generating 281,000 page views 

10,000+ Twitter followers, with **1.3m** Impressions, 4000 Retweets, and 4700 Likes 
@COSLA

Effective Shared Services

COSLA is not just about politics. Across the country, councils and their partners rely on the network of specialist national services we deliver through our myjobscotland recruitment portal, Trading Standards Scotland service, and Business Gateway National Unit.

MYJOBSCOTLAND

myjobscotland is the major award-winning, national recruitment website for all of Scotland's councils. Other public sector bodies, from Universities and Colleges, to Charities and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service also use the site, so there are thousands of varied and interesting jobs available all year round.

myjobscotland carries over 30,000 vacancies and processes some 500,000 applications every year. It's widely recognised as the best public sector job-site in the UK, winning the Recruiter Awards 2016 for Best UK Jobs Board, and attracting international attention from around the world. Although 97% of applications come from the UK, there's even been interest from over 200 different countries, from Macau to Mozambique and Paraguay to Papua New Guinea.

MYJOBSCOTLAND

Now expanded to cover
310 public sector
organisations



740,000 candidate
accounts registered since
January 2015



30,000
staff registered as
recruiters



Fully optimised
for mobile
devices in
January 2018



£17 average to
advertise, manage and
recruit per job – 90%
lower than other sites



82,000 jobs advertised
since 2015

Over **1m**
job applications
processed since 2015-
15.5m site
visits in 2017 alone



TRADING STANDARDS SCOTLAND

Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) is the national team for trading standards in Scotland. Funded by the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Treasury, it is managed by COSLA, with political governance provided through the TSS Governance Board.

TSS coordinates work on national priorities and investigates cross boundary and national casework. It also delivers specialist illegal money lending and ecrime functions, as well as managing the national intelligence database and conducting analysis of that data.

An integral part of COSLA, TSS works closely with partners including the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards Scotland (SCOTSS), Police Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland and UK and Scottish Governments to strengthen protection for Scottish consumers.

TRADING STANDARDS SCOTLAND

23 specialist staff working on behalf of every council



8 awareness and prevention campaigns in 2017, reaching over 60,000 people and preventing **£120k** of detriment.



1250 call blockers rolled out to protect vulnerable consumers



Delivery Surcharges

portal being developed with Highland Council and the Competition and Markets Authority

16 new investigations undertaken- consumer detriment running at over **£2m**



Over **50%** of enforcement being generated through the intelligence team.



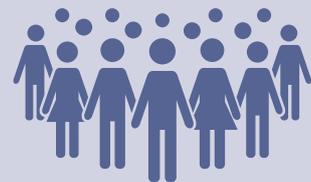
BUSINESS GATEWAY NATIONAL UNIT

Business Gateway provides free business support and impartial advice, and helps thousands of start-up and existing businesses each year. The Business Gateway National Unit delivers key national functions to help Local Authorities delivery services at a local level. These include supporting service governance and developing relationships with partners, management of national and local marketing campaigns, and day-to-day operational support, including shared customer relationship management resources. The Unit also collates, monitors and reports national performance results, delivers a Quality Assurance customer survey programme on behalf of local authorities, and monitors the progress of clients who have had start-up support. In other work, the Business Gateway National Unit successfully secured £1.7m in 2017-18 to deliver phase 2 of the DigitalBoost programme and has secured the same again for a phase 3 in 2018-19.

BUSINESS GATEWAY NATIONAL UNIT

Supported engagement with **33,237** new clients in 2016-17

Facilitated local help for **10,629** new business starts in 2016-17, creating over 11,000 jobs



Tracked **58,860** client enquiries

Attracted 31,903 attendees to **3,551** local workshops in 2016-17



Managed **818** DigitalBoost workshops and **707** 1-2-1's – satisfaction rates of 94% and 98.5%



Enabled delivery of **12,669** local products and services in 2016-17

Secured **£3.4m** for DigitalBoost phases 2 and 3





Our Priorities – What's Next

This report illustrates just some of the impact we've supported. But as we look to the future, Brexit and significant policy changes in the pipeline mean that it is going to be more important than ever to shape the political debate and make the case for the resources and powers that Local Government needs.

The eight priorities in the COSLA Plan continue to be pivotal for councils and local communities, and we will continue our strategic focus on them once again in 2018-19. There are, however, two additional areas where COSLA's priorities need to be reviewed and developed further.

EQUALITY, REPRESENTATION, AND DIVERSITY

One of the priorities shared by both national and local government is to transform the diversity of elected representation in Scotland, widen access to voting, and a determination to eliminate discrimination, harassment or bullying in any form. Ensuring that Local Government is representative of its diverse communities will enhance the services that Local Government provides.

Progress is being made. For example, following work by its Gender Balance Task Group, since the May 2017 elections COSLA's Constitution has formally required a 50:50 gender balanced political executive. This means that COSLA is led by a gender balanced Presidential and Spokesperson team. Maternity leave arrangements have also been introduced to support the new team.

However, more needs to be done. Action to identify and break down barriers is vital across every aspect of the governance of Scotland, including local and national government, and a range of partners. There is a huge role for individual councils and for Local Government as a whole to enable positive change and promote equality and diversity amongst elected members, communities and the workforce.

To provide national leadership in this area, COSLA will develop a dedicated priority around which to focus its work on improving equality, representation and diversity. This will galvanise the steps already agreed by COSLA Leaders in November 2017, and help identify and develop the support that councils and others may benefit from.

Together, our objective is to develop the diversity of local elected representatives so that they better reflect the communities they represent, address barriers and encourage and support a wider range of people to vote and come forward as candidates, and identify changes in culture and practices that will have a practical impact on further opening up Scotland's democracy.

STRONG, SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Councils have a unique local leadership role to tackle poverty and inequalities, protect the vulnerable, and support the cohesion of their local areas, both as directly elected Local Government representatives, and as community leaders working with other public bodies in local areas.

Finding locally flexible solutions that can make our communities better places to live in is a core part of COSLA's role, often involving multiple agencies and intergovernmental activity. With a significant



and growing agenda, we will therefore introduce a new priority to capture the important work being undertaken by COSLA and councils to strengthen their communities and improve their safety and sustainability.

This strand of work will particularly highlight Local Government's significant objectives and impact around improving housing and reducing homelessness, welfare reform and Scotland's burgeoning social security arrangements, and the vital role of local accountability in community justice and police governance.

Our objective is to ensure that as these and other key areas of reform take shape, they are built around the local priorities and circumstances that communities face, that Local Government has the powers and resources it needs to deliver effective long-term change, and that we achieve a greater shift of resources from failure led demand to preventative actions across the public sector.



Find out more

COSLA is your national organisation, and we need your help to succeed.

We're working hard to keep you informed and ensure that the issues you face are at the top of our agenda. And we want to make it as easy as possible for you to engage with us and actively support our work too. There are lots of ways to keep in touch:



WEBSITE

www.cosla.gov.uk: Our website has much more information about COSLA, and the issues we're working on.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on [Twitter](#) (@COSLA) or [Facebook](#) (CofSLA) for the latest news.



BULLETINS

Watch out for our regular bulletins.

FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS

Drop us a line at members@cosla.gov.uk or call 0131 474 9200.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Join us in October for the keynote event in the Scottish Local Government calendar.

DISCUSS

A liaison officer is assigned to each council and is always on hand to discuss the support that COSLA can provide.



VISIT

Our political meetings are generally hosted in our Edinburgh headquarters, which also have great conference facilities. We've got offices in Glasgow and Brussels too.

