Headteachers Charter

**Policy Proposal**
A central policy element of the Scottish Government’s Education Governance Review has been the “empowerment of Headteachers” through a Headteachers Charter. This paper provides an opportunity for Members to consider the various elements of the Charter following an initial approach by Scottish Government as they develop the Charter.

**Summary and Recommendations**
Early development-stage discussion has been initiated by the Scottish Government with COSLA and wider partners. It is intended that the Charter will form part of the pre-legislative consultation in Autumn but that discussions will continue throughout this period.

This paper invites Board Members to:

i. Agree that COSLA Officers should continue to engage in the development of the policy in line with the principles set out at paragraph 7; and

ii. Agree that the Strategic Group of COSLA, SOLACE, ADES and the Scottish Government should be the forum to consider the policy at a strategic level, reporting jointly to Councillor McCabe and the Deputy First Minister.

**References**
There have been no previous reports on the Headteachers Charter.

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Policy Proposal
1. A central policy element of the Scottish Government’s Education Governance Review has been the “empowerment of Headteachers” through a Headteachers Charter. Early development-stage discussion has been initiated by the Scottish Government with COSLA and wider partners. It is intended that the Charter will form part of the pre-legislative consultation in Autumn but that discussions would continue throughout this period.

Current COSLA Position
2. There is not a current COSLA position on the Headteachers Charter specifically.
3. Relevant to the discussion is the place of COSLA as part of the tri-partite Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT), and the agreements which are reflected in the SNCT Handbook. COSLA are clear that any fundamental change which the Charter affected on the role of a Headteacher would have to be reflected in the SNCT Handbook after due consideration by the SNCT. Also relevant to the discussion is the current COSLA position on teacher numbers and pupil teacher ratio. COSLA has consistently argued that these national targets reduce local flexibility and should be discontinued.

What is changing
4. The role of a Headteacher is currently outlined at a high level in the SNCT Handbook. This is the national tripartite agreement between teaching trade unions, COSLA on behalf of local government and Scottish Government:

*The role of the Headteacher is to promote high quality learning and teaching to secure improved educational outcomes for the benefit of pupils and the community, under the direction of the local Council. Headteachers have a corporate responsibility to contribute to an agenda of ongoing improvement in their school and across their Council area. The duties of the headteacher are to:*

a) provide leadership, good management and strategic direction to the school;
b) promote high expectations and standards through the provision of professional advice, reviewing professional needs and performance, and supporting continuous professional development of colleagues;
c) take responsibility for providing strategic leadership for curriculum development, learning and teaching and meeting learners’ needs;
d) take overall responsibility for improvement planning and quality assurance;
e) act as adviser to the Parent Council and to participate in the selection and appointment of the staff of the school;
f) work in partnership with parents, other professionals, agencies and other schools; and
g) take overall responsibility for the management of health, safety and well-being.¹

5. Certain aspects are devolved locally to Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers (LNCTs). Although the high level SNCT outline does not change, the operational aspects of a headteachers role can vary in LNCT agreements.

6. COSLA officers understand that initial thinking by Scottish Government officials is that the Charter will follow four themes – curriculum, funding, improvement and staffing. Although the detail is not yet known, it is important to note that it appears from initial conversations that the Charter will be interwoven with the wider reform programme. These themes are therefore most likely to be expressed in the Charter as an articulation of the policy developed in the wider programme from a Headteacher’s perspective – i.e. improvement will be linked to the NIF and the emerging Improvement Collaboratives, and funding will be the outcome of the Fair Funding work.

Proposed COSLA Position

7. The Charter is still in the very early stages of development and at this stage, it is proposed that COSLA officers continue initial discussions guided by some clear principles:
   i. Removal of the teacher numbers policy and the pupil teacher ratio policy would create flexibilities in staffing models and funding which constrains local authorities and, by extension, headteachers.
   ii. The Charter must not blur lines of accountability in terms of policy, staffing or funding. Local democratic accountability should not be impacted by any proposed changes.
   iii. The Charter should not lead to schools becoming individual silos. This would go against the wider policy to encourage an ethos of collaboration.
   iv. GIRFEC must be central to any Charter. The multi-agency holistic approach should not be impacted.
   v. The Charter should be aligned with the role as set out in the SNCT agreement.

8. It is proposed that the Strategic Group who considered Improvement Collaboration (comprised of COSLA, SOLACE, ADES and the Scottish Government) should consider the Charter as their next priority. As with the policy development around Improvement Collaboration, reports would be provided from this Group to Councillor McCabe and the Deputy First Minister, with any substantive policy developments brought to the Board for consideration.

Next Steps

9. If Members are content with the approach and principles outlined above, COSLA Officers will continue to engage with civil servants in the normal course of work and as part of the Strategic Group.

Summary and Recommendations

10. Early development-stage discussion has been initiated by the Scottish Government with COSLA and wider partners. It is intended that the Charter will form part of the pre-legislative consultation in Autumn but that discussions would continue throughout this period. This paper invites Board Members to:
   i. Agree that COSLA Officers should continue to engage in the development of the policy in line with the principles set out at paragraph 7; and
   ii. Agree that the Strategic Group of COSLA, SOLACE, ADES and the Scottish Government should be the forum to consider the policy at a strategic level, reporting jointly to Councillor McCabe and the Deputy First Minister.

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