



Leaders Item 02

## MINUTE OF MEETING OF LEADERS (DRAFT)

Friday, 25 September 2020 at 1100hrs  
Microsoft Teams

**Present**

COSLA President	Councillor Alison Evison
COSLA Vice President	Councillor Graham Houston
Aberdeen City Council	Steven Whyte (Substitute)
Aberdeen City Council	Councillor Douglas Lumsden*
Aberdeenshire Council	Jim Savege
Aberdeenshire Council	Councillor Jim Gifford
Angus Council	Mark Armstrong (Substitute)
Angus Council	Councillor Macmillan Douglas (Substitute)
Argyll and Bute Council	Pippa Milne
Argyll and Bute Council	Councillor Aileen Morton
City of Edinburgh Council	Andrew Kerr
City of Edinburgh Council	Councillor Claire Miller (Substitute)
City of Edinburgh Council	Councillor Adam McVey
Clackmannanshire Council	Nikki Bridle
Clackmannanshire Council	Councillor Ellen Forson
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Malcolm Burr
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Councillor Roddie Mackay
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Gavin Stevenson
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Elaine Murray (Substitute)
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Gail Macgregor
COSLA Spokesperson	Roger Mennie (Substitute)
Dundee City Council	Councillor John Alexander
Dundee City Council	Fiona Lees
East Ayrshire Council	Councillor Douglas Reid
East Ayrshire Council	Councillor Elena Whitham
East Ayrshire Council	Gerry Cornes
COSLA Spokesperson	Councillor Vaughan Moody
East Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Andrew Polson
East Dunbartonshire Council	Monica Patterson
East Dunbartonshire Council	
East Lothian Council	
East Lothian Council	
COSLA Spokesperson	Councillor Stuart Currie
East Lothian Council	Councillor Norman Hampshire (Substitute)
East Renfrewshire Council	Lorraine McMillan

East Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Tony Buchanan
Falkirk Council	Kenneth Lawrie
Falkirk Council	Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn
Fife Council	Steve Grimmond
Fife Council	Councillor David Alexander
Fife Council	Councillor David Ross
Glasgow City Council	Annemarie O'Donnell
Glasgow City Council	Councillor Angus Millar (Substitute)
Highland Council	Donna Manson
Highland Council	Councillor Margaret Davidson
Inverclyde Council	Aubrey Fawcett
Inverclyde Council	Councillor Stephen McCabe
COSLA Spokesperson	Dr Grace Vickers
Midlothian Council	Councillor Derek Milligan
Midlothian Council	
Midlothian Council	Councillor Kelly Parry
COSLA Spokesperson	Roderick Burns
Moray Council	Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Moray Council	Craig Hatton
North Ayrshire Council	Councillor Joe Cullinane
North Ayrshire Council	Des Murray
North Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Paul Kelly (Substitute)
North Lanarkshire Council	John Mundell
Orkney Islands Council	
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor Steven Heddle
COSLA Spokesperson	
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor James Stockan*
Perth and Kinross Council	Karen Reid
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Peter Barrett
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Murray Lyle
Renfrewshire Council	Sandra Black (Substitute)
Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Iain Nicolson
Scottish Borders Council	Barbara Renton (Substitute)
Shetland Islands Council	Councillor Steven Coutts
South Ayrshire Council	Eileen Howat
South Ayrshire Council	Councillor Peter Henderson
South Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Sneddon
South Lanarkshire Council	Councillor John Ross
Stirling Council	Carol Beattie
Stirling Council	Councillor Scott Farmer
West Dunbartonshire Council	Joyce White
West Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Jonathan McColl
West Lothian Council	Graham Hope
West Lothian Council	Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

**Apologies**

Aberdeen City Council	Angela Scott*
Angus Council	Margo Williamson*
Angus Council	Councillor David Fairweather*
City of Edinburgh Council	Councillor Mary Campbell
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Rob Davidson
Dundee City Council	David Martin*
East Lothian Council	Councillor William Innes*
Glasgow City Council	Councillor Susan Aitken*
North Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Jim Logue*
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor James Stockan*
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Murray Lyle
Renfrewshire Council	Sandra Black
Scottish Borders Council	Councillor Shona Haslam
Scottish Borders Council	Tracey Logan*
Shetland Islands Council	Maggie Sandison
South Ayrshire Council	Eileen Howat

*\*Denotes substitute provided*

*Apologies were recorded where notified in advance or meeting invite not accepted*

## **Public Session**

### **1. Introduction**

The President welcomed those present and provided guidance on how the meeting would be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams.

Members agreed that there should be a short recess after the Item on Local Government Finance to allow additional discussion to inform the debate. This was accepted by Members.

### **2. Draft Minute of Leaders' Meeting held on 28 August 2020 (paper)**

The draft Minute of the Leaders' meeting held on 28 August 2020 was accepted as a true record.

### **3. UK Government Consultation on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (paper)**

The report provided Leaders with an update on current pressures being faced by local authorities in supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children, particularly in the south east of England, and the consultation being undertaken by the Home Office on reforming the National Transform Scheme.

Several comments on specific council challenges around this (e.g. funding levels) were noted and Leaders asked for the detail of the draft response to be strengthened in a number of areas.

Leaders:

- i. agreed the approach recommended to administer the proposed pilot grant project;
- ii. agreed the approach recommended to allocate resources for this pilot grant to local areas; and
- iii. agreed local areas will use the survey results and their local knowledge to identify clients for the pilot grant.

### **4. UK Internal Market Bill (paper)**

As agreed at the August 2020 Leaders' meeting, the paper provided further details emerging about several aspects of the UK exit from the European Union (EU); in particular, the UK Internal Market Bill. Immediately following Leaders', COSLA officers would be attending a Scotland Office briefing on the Bill.

In agreeing the recommendations in the paper, Leaders emphasised the need for regular communications from COSLA on developments to help inform local discussions.

Leaders:

- i. endorsed the work by COSLA detailed in the report;
- ii. agreed particularly that COSLA continue to press for meaningful engagement by UK and Scottish Governments with Local Government in advance of any decisions being taken, particularly those with direct implications for councils, the services provided, and communities; and
- iii. agreed that further reports be provided as required.

## **Private Session**

### **5. Local Government Finance Update (paper)**

Cllr Macgregor presented the item and detailed the recommendations to Leaders. As agreed at the start of the meeting, a short recess would be held to accommodate further discussion and the meeting reconvened thereafter. Leaders' views were noted in advance of the recess to help inform the debate.

Two amendments to the recommendations were proposed, the first being taken as the motion:

Motion:

COSLA Leaders agree the recommendations and agree that a press and social media campaign be implemented to push for the flexibility we are requesting on PWLB payments, for borrowing powers to be devolved to the Scottish Government and for the financial flexibilities and additional funding requested from the Scottish Government.

Leaders further mandate the President to request an urgent video meeting with the relevant UK Ministers to make our case in person and agrees to continue dialogue with the Scottish Government to obtain the financial flexibilities and funding requested.

Leaders also agree that COSLA continues to stress to UK and Scottish Governments the need for longer term certainty and stability in local government budget allocations.

Leaders further noted the imminent danger of a significant rise in unemployment, which would add further pressure to public finances and all on Scottish Government to work closely with Local Government to avoid redundancies in the Local Government workforce which would ultimately mean cuts in vital services and a further increase in unemployment.

Moved by Cllr David Ross and seconded by Cllr Douglas Reid

Amendment:

COSLA Leaders agree the recommendations and agree that a press and social media campaign be implemented to push for the flexibility we are requesting on PWLB payments, and for the financial flexibilities and additional funding requested from the Scottish Government.

Leaders further mandate the President to request an urgent video meeting with the relevant UK Ministers to make our case in person and agrees to continue dialogue with the Scottish Government to obtain the financial flexibilities and funding requested.

Leaders also agree that COSLA continues to stress to UK and Scottish Government the need for longer term certainty and stability in Local Government budget allocations.

Leaders further note the imminent danger of a significant rise in unemployment, which will add further pressure to public finances and call on the Scottish Government to work closely with Local Government to avoid redundancies in the Local Government workforce which would ultimately mean cuts in vital services and a further increase in unemployment.

Moved by Cllr Andrew Polson and seconded by Cllr Douglas Lumsden

Vote

Motion – 25

Amendment – 5

Accordingly, Leaders:

- i. noted the progress made on fiscal flexibilities and the approaches to Treasury, in relation to options for councils to use as part of their financial strategies for dealing with financial pressures in 20/21;
- ii. considered and agreed, as later in the decision, further action required in relation to the request made to the Chancellor on Public Works Loans Board (para 8);
- iii. noted the work being undertaken on a loss of income scheme for Local Government and in relation to cultural recovery funding and business grants surplus;

- iv. noted the situation in relation to Health and Social Care funding to date (presented at paras 14-16) and based on any verbal update (to be provided at the Leaders meeting), agree whether or not further action is required;
- v. acknowledged the agreed position of Leaders so far, and noted the work planned now in relation to pre-budget lobbying to secure a fair settlement for Local Government as part of the 2021/22 Scottish Budget;
- vi. agreed that a press and social media campaign be implemented to push for the flexibility we are requesting on PWLB payments, and for the financial flexibilities and addition funding requested from the Scottish Government;
- vii. further, mandated the President to request an urgent video meeting with the relevant UK Ministers to make our case in person and agrees to continue dialogue with the Scottish Government to obtain the financial flexibilities and funding requested;
- viii. agreed that COSLA continue to stress to UK and Scottish Governments the need for longer term certainty and stability in Local Government budget allocations; and
- ix. further noted the imminent danger of a significant rise in unemployment, which would add further pressure to public finances and all on Scottish Government to work closely with Local Government to avoid redundancies in the Local Government workforce which would ultimately mean cuts in vital services and a further increase in unemployment.

## **6. Programme for Government (paper)**

Leaders were reminded that the latest Programme for Government had been published on 1 September 2020. It was necessarily focussed on recovery and harnessing the learning and experience gained over the last six months toward what was suggested as an improved normality.

Leaders:

- i. noted the analysis of potential implications for Local Government and local democracy which the Programme for Government has in relation to COSLA's key principles; and
- ii. provided initial comments in relation to COSLA's strategic approach to addressing key challenges and opportunities these may provide.

## **7. Digital Boost Programme (paper)**

The report provided an update on the ongoing delivery and development of the DigitalBoost Programme following the Scottish Government's recent increase in funding for it.

Following requests on points of clarification, Leaders agreed:

- i. the approach recommended to administer the proposed pilot grant project;
- ii. the approach recommended to allocate resources for this pilot grant to local areas; and
- iii. that local areas will use the survey results and their local knowledge to identify clients for the pilot grant.

## **8. National Protocol for the Managing of Cases and Outbreaks of Coronavirus (paper)**

The paper invited Leaders to approve a joint protocol for schools with Public Health Scotland aimed at providing greater consistency across Scotland in dealing with cases and outbreaks. Leaders shared experiences from their own local authorities in relation to this, which were duly noted by COSLA officers and would be reflected in ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government.

Leaders urged COSLA officers to resolve outstanding data sharing issues as quickly as possible.

Leaders:

- i. Considered and approved the National Protocol for the Managing of Cases and Outbreaks of Coronavirus for Schools, attached as Appendix I. and
- ii. Mandated officers to work closely with Public Health Scotland, SOLACE, ADES and SOLAR to resolve data sharing issues urgently.

### **9. Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan (paper)**

Leaders' were reminded that the Scottish Government had made a commitment to publish a Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan. This was intended to outline how the Government would respond to additional mental health needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The draft of the plan had been provided to Leaders for comment.

COSLA officers noted a number of comments that would be fed into ongoing discussions e.g. in relation to 20-minute neighbourhoods, dementia, support on mental health in rural areas, and suicide prevention.

Leaders:

- i. Provided their views on the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, highlighting any priority areas;
- ii. Endorsed, in principle the high level ambitions, types of need and target groups identified in the document;
- iii. Agreed that the points laid out at paragraph 9 in the paper should be shared with Scottish Government as the COSLA response; and
- iv. Agreed COSLA officers undertake further investigation, across policy areas, to understand the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on mental health and mental health support services at a local level with a view to ensuring this is captured and considered in ongoing work.

### **10. Redress for Survivors of Historical Child Abuse – Bill Introduction (paper)**

The paper provided Leaders with a summary of the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Bill and includes a proposed response to the Education Skills Committee' call for views.

COSLA officers agreed to consider how the comments in paragraph 7 in the report could be clarified around 'legacy of responsibility' and to draw out understanding on paragraphs 12 and 13.

Leaders:

- i. Noted the details of the Redress for Survivors Bill as introduced at Stage 1;
- ii. Noted the potential scale of the financial contribution from Local Government to support the redress scheme, and mandate officers to continue to work with Scottish Government and professional associations to further explore the likely contribution, and seek ways to mitigate its impact on Council finances; and
- iii. Agreed COSLA's position as outlined in the response to the Education and Skills Committee's call for views, which was appended to this report.

### **11. Local Government Settlement and Distribution (paper)**

The report to Leaders was presented in two sections.

Section A covered areas in relation to the Local Government Settlement. Section B sought Leaders' agreement to the Settlement and Distribution Group's (SDG) recommendations on six funding distributions.

With the comment that regular and timely updates on these matters were essential, Leaders agreed:

#### Section A: Local Government Settlement

- i. agreed the recommendations of the SDG in relation to the treatment of indicators;
- ii. noted that if they agreed to update indicators, there would inevitably be movement between Councils as a result;
- iii. agreed the options recommended by SDG in relation to changes to the quantum arising from the Spending Review and noted that each option assumed that the needs-based indicators would have been updated; and
- iv. agreed that the Local Government Finance Settlement and checking process was again decoupled from the draft Scottish Budget as recommended by the SDG.

#### Section B: Distribution

Leaders agreed the recommendations from the SDG in relation to six specific distribution areas:

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and related administration funding for 2021/22
- Increase to Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)
- Council Tax Reduction (CTR) – additional funding due to COVID-19
- Bus Partnership Fund (BPF)
- Test and Protect – Supported Isolation
- Area Based Schemes (ABS)

### **12. Trauma Informed Recovery for Scotland (paper)**

The paper outlined work around a Trauma Informed Recovery for Scotland and sought to agree an approach on a collective response to the needs of those in communities that had been affected by trauma and adversity. It sought Leaders' commitment to work towards the '3 Asks' to realise this ambition. COSLA officers took on board the comment to feedback the need to ensure that 'Ask 2' to nominate a local Trauma Champion would not undermine current partnership working.

Leaders:

- i. committed to the '3 Asks' as set out in the paper under paragraph 11;
- ii. provided reflection and guidance on what would be required locally to support the asks from a resource and operational perspective;
- iii. committed to continue to work together across Local Government and with partners to look at how we develop our workforce and shape our services to be able to respond and work in a trauma-informed way; and
- iv. agreed that COSLA officials would attend the planned 29 September event to co-produce a national pledge.

### **13. Isolate and Support Update (paper)**

The report provided information on proposed updates to the isolate and support elements of Test and Protect provided by councils and recent announcements in relation to financial support for those asked to isolate as part to the Test and Protect programme.

COSLA officers provided clarification on several points and assured Leaders they would be kept updated as this matter developed.

Leaders:



- i. agreed the proposed changes to the isolate and support elements of test and protect noting the additional funding to support this change;
- ii. noted recent announcements in relation to financial support for those asked to isolate; and
- iii. agreed in principle, subject to caveat in para 17 in the report, that Local Government was supporting of the Scottish Welfare Fund being used to distribute this funding across Scotland.

#### **14. Any Other Competent Business**

The President advised that this had been Cllr Aileen Morton's last Leaders' meeting. On behalf of Members, she thanked Cllr Morton for the significant contribution she had made to Leaders and the Boards and wished her well for the future.

#### **15. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 1100hrs on Friday, 30 October 2020 via Microsoft Teams.

#### **Close**

The President closed the meeting at 1335hrs by thanking Members for their attendance.