

New Deal with Local Government: A Partnership Agreement, June 2023



The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Government have today agreed a new Partnership Agreement, setting out our vision for a more collaborative approach to delivering our shared priorities for the people of Scotland.

This agreement – to be known as the ‘Verity House Agreement’ – sets out the way we will work together, how we will approach our shared priorities, and how we will engage.

Scottish and Local Government will work together to:

- 1. tackle poverty**, particularly child poverty (in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty),
- 2. transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero**, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland, and
- 3. deliver sustainable person-centred public services** recognising the fiscal challenges, ageing demography and opportunities to innovate.

To address our shared priorities, we have jointly accepted that changes are required to our relationship in:

The way we work together	How we will approach our shared priorities	How we will hold each other to account and monitor progress	How we engage with each other in a positive and proactive manner
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This agreement is a statement of our intent from this point forward and provides a high-level framework for our partnership – it does not create legal obligations but it is Scottish and Local Governments’ clear starting point and public commitment to the principle of regular and meaningful engagement, and respect for each other’s democratic mandate, in order that we can work together more effectively to improve the lives of the people of Scotland.

A more detailed programme of work will be developed jointly to underpin this Partnership Agreement, with all actions adhering to the Agreement’s principles. Below are just some examples:

By end September 2023:

- Improved engagement on budgetary matters will be well underway, in preparation for the Scottish Budget in December
- We will conclude a Fiscal Framework between Scottish Government and Local Government, of which regular budget engagement will be a key part
- We will develop and agree a shared programme of activity underneath each of the three priorities, which will focus on the period between now and the next Scottish Council Elections in 2027

By end October 2023:

- A first joint review of Specific Grants and In Year Transfers to Local Government will be undertaken with a view to identifying those which can be baselined into the General Revenue Grant or General Capital Grant from financial year 2024-25, creating more freedom and flexibility for Councils to address our shared priorities in locally appropriate ways

By end August 2024:

- We will have jointly considered the first year of implementation of this Verity House Agreement and the Fiscal Framework as a whole, and agree any alterations or addendums required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of these two key documents

Full details of the Partnership Agreement can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781835210703> and www.cosla.gov.uk/partnershipagreement

Cllr Shona Morrison, COSLA President

Rt Hon Humza Yousaf MSP, First Minister of Scotland

Cllr Steven Heddle, COSLA Vice-President

Shona Robison, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Cllr Alys Mumford, Scottish Green Party Group Leader

Joe FitzPatrick, Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning

Cllr David Ross, Scottish Labour Group Leader

Cllr Douglas Reid, Scottish National Party Group Leader

Cllr Euan Jardine, Scottish Conservatives Group Leader

Cllr James Stockan, Independent Group Leader

Cllr Peter Barrett, Scottish Liberal Democrats Group Leader