
AUGUST 2019, ISSUE 5

Inside COSLA

The Local Government Communication



for
**Inclusive
Growth**



to
**Tackle
Inequalities**



for
**Prosperous
Communities**

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President's Welcome

Welcome to our fifth edition of our elected members' communication – Inside COSLA. Thank you all for returning to read our update to all elected members. This communication is an opportunity for **COSLA** to showcase the varied and extensive work we carry out on behalf of Scottish Local Government.



The conference season is almost upon us and I am very much looking forward to our own: the **2019 COSLA and Improvement Annual Service Conference**. I think you can tell the esteem with which Local Government is held in in that we have both the **First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and an ex-Prime Minister Gordon Brown** speaking at conference.

However, the Conference wouldn't be complete without the **Excellence Awards** as well. Applicants from across Scotland's 32 councils have been applying, highlighting projects that are setting new standards of excellence in all our service areas. Alongside my **Vice President Graham Houston** and a host of guest judges from the **Parliament, NHS and the media**, this month I will be judging the 15 finalists who have made it this far. I'd like to wish every council who entered the best of luck on the night!

As the situation with the **UK's Exit from the European Union** continues to react to changing events, Local Government is again showing leadership by coordinating responses across all our essential services. Last week I was in Cardiff to discuss resilience work with our associate organisation, the Welsh local Government Association.

As many of you will know, I established a **Special Interest Group looking into Barriers to Elected Office**. Alongside my colleagues **Councillors Elena Whitham, Jennifer Layden, Heather McVey, Claire Miller, Linda Holt, Eleanor Bird, and Emma Macdonald**, I attended the #ScotWomenStand event at the Scottish Parliament where 400 women joined together to explore their paths to elected office and participation in democracy. I'd like to thank all the female Councillors who took part and I was astounded at the huge energy, determination and focus of the women who attended.

As always our task as the representative voice of Local Government is to communicate our work to you as often and as best as we can. I hope you enjoy this edition of Inside COSLA.

COSLA President Councillor Alison Evison



Leaders' Recap

Scotland's council Leaders met in Glasgow on Friday 30th August to discuss COSLA's direction and provide a political mandate for the work carried out by COSLA officers.

Local Governance Review

The report provided an update following the discussion at Leaders in June and the concerns raised with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary regarding Scottish Government's commitment to all three empowerments as initially agreed.

Spending Review Update

The paper updated Leaders on work undertaken to progress the Spending Review Strategy since the Key Messages and Key Themes were agreed at the June meeting. COSLA's Spokesperson for Resources provided Leaders with a verbal update on a meeting held between the Spokesperson, COSLA Presidential Team and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work.



Interruption of European Social Fund Payments

This report updated Leaders on the work which has taken place over the summer to resolve the current pre-suspension of European Social Fund payments. Leaders agreed that COSLA seeks a further meeting with the Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation and, if necessary, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work.

UK Exit from the EU - Update

Previous reports summarised the work being undertaken by COSLA as we prepare for the UK's Exit from the EU. COSLA's own risk monitoring arrangements are continuing and are expected to increase in pace. This report provided an update.

Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding Post-2021

Officers have been discussing the future of SAC with the wider Local Government family and have developed a set of principles to inform joint discussions with the Scottish Government on future funding in relation to achieving equity in education. This could ensure that the strategic role of the Local Authority is recognised and valued, and that funding is targeted more effectively to those who need it and builds on local knowledge.

Learning Estate Strategy - Programme Governance

Since June, COSLA officers have been engaging with Scottish Government on developing options for ongoing programme governance. The paper updated Leaders on those discussions in relation to the pilot phase projects and ongoing Programme Governance.

Programme for Government Commitment to Counselling in Schools

In the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2018/19 there was a commitment to "create around 350 counsellors in school education across Scotland and ensure that every secondary school has counselling services". The paper sought agreement on the delivery of access to counselling through schools in line with a set of principles, and agreement on funding distribution. Leaders agreed the recommendations in the COSLA paper.

Child Protection Register Information Sharing with Police Scotland

COSLA officers have been working with Police Scotland and colleagues from SOLAR to develop an Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) that would allow Local Authorities to notify Police Scotland when a child's name is added to the Child Protection Register by a Local Authority Keeper of CPR. Leaders agreed the recommendations of the COSLA paper.

Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

The paper provided Leaders with an analysis of changes made to the Planning (Scotland) Bill at stage 3 and updated on the anticipated impact of additional duties now contained in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Leaders agreed the recommendations of the COSLA paper.



Business Support Environment

The Enterprise and Skills Review which ran from May 2016 to Summer 2017 identified “clutter and confusion” in the business support environment. A key output from the Review aimed at addressing this issue is the creation of a Single Entry Point, an online platform where businesses and individuals will be able to access information on all public sector business support that is relevant to them. Due to additional requirements for COSLA staff involvement, a refreshed mandate was sought from Leaders to continue engagement in this project. Leaders agreed the recommendations of the COSLA paper.

Devolving NDR Empty Property Relief

Leaders were informed at their June meeting that the Scottish Government intends to devolve Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief (EPR) to Local Government in time for the next Revaluation in 2022. Leaders agreed in principle to devolving EPR. The paper reported on work undertaken by officers to understand the implications, risks and opportunities, as mandated by Leaders.

Spokespersons' Update

Community Wellbeing

COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)

Councillor Kelly Parry



National Community Justice Leadership Group

COSLA will ensure Local Government has a voice in national community justice policy as it has secured a place to co-chair a national steering group to look at ways to improve the delivery of community justice in Scotland. Cllr Kelly Parry, alongside Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf and senior leaders from justice, health, Local Government and social work the group will consider actions to strengthen community justice services and alternatives to custody, as well as working to increase public and judicial system confidence in community justice as an alternative to prison. It will also link into other national groups including the Drug Deaths Taskforce and Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group to consider multiple and complex needs.

IOM EU Settlement Scheme

COSLA has secured funding from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to provide Scotland-wide assistance to local authorities supporting vulnerable people through the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) application. The project is designed to work alongside councils, supporting key stakeholders and service providers who are working directly with vulnerable groups. We are delivering targeted briefings for relevant staff/key strategic leads, providing general information on EUSS to vulnerable groups/individuals under local authority care, and delivering 1-2-1 immigration advice and support on vulnerable individual cases.

COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)

Councillor Elena Whitham



Rapid Rehousing

An original offer from the Scottish Government to provide £15m over five years for councils to rapidly rehouse homeless people was seen as unrealistic. COSLA countered that this was only the beginning of the journey to end homelessness in Scotland and that £15m should only cover years 1 and 2. COSLA successfully lobbied the Scottish Government for an extra £8m for year 3, meaning that £8m will be spent on years 1, 2 and 3 to rapidly rehouse our homeless population across all 32 councils.

Environment and Economy

COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Steven Heddle

Regeneration Capital Grant Fund

COSLA has worked with colleagues from Scottish Government and a range of Local Government stakeholders to complete stage 1 of the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund. Successful applicants will now be invited to apply for stage 2 of the process to fund place based regeneration projects to deprived or disadvantaged communities in Scotland.



Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has now completed stage 3 and received Royal Assent. COSLA successfully lobbied to remove prescriptive performance measures from the Act, as well as the most costly additional duties. Our focus on planning reform now shifts to resourcing the Act and the upcoming consultation on Planning Fees.



Health and Social Care

Interim COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Stuart Currie

Adult Social Care Reform

In July, COSLA and the Scottish Government announced a programme of support for adult social care reform. The much anticipated Adult Social Care Reform programme was launched at the Social Work Scotland conference.



Mental Health

COSLA and the Scottish Government have jointly published the recommendations of the Children & Young People's Mental Health Taskforce and set out a blueprint for improving the mental health of young people in Scotland. The report has recommended that the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce will now be taken forward by a new programme board – the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board.

Public Health

In June, the Scottish Government launched a six week consultation on Public Health Scotland. The breadth and scope of the response reflected the interest in the new organisation. Over 180 organisations including Local Government, health and social care partnerships, NHS boards, national and local third sector organisations and public health organisations took the time to respond. The majority of respondents expressed broad support for the establishment of the new body and the key functions and leadership roles in relation to data, research and the public health workforce set out in the consultation document. The Scottish Government and COSLA will now consider the consultation responses in detail and the reform team will take forward the legislative work to establish Public Health Scotland.

From September, COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Peter Johnston will return to his role. We'd like to thank Stuart for all he's done over the past year.



Resources

COSLA Spokesperson

Councillor Gail Macgregor



Spending Review

COSLA representatives met with the Finance Secretary to discuss the upcoming Local Government settlement as part of the Scottish Budget. COSLA conveyed to Mr Mackay that the protection of councils' core budgets, both revenue and capital, was of paramount importance. COSLA representatives made it clear that councils have to be empowered to tackle local issues and circumstances in the way which best suits them through flexibility to design and direct budgets – this is significantly limited when resource is increasingly directed by central policies.

Professional Associations Meeting

COSLA has been continually engaging with Scotland's professional associations on planned campaigning tactics for this year's Spending Review. COSLA held a widely attended meeting with representatives from key associations such as Directors of Finance, SLAED, and SOLACE on how all organisations can work collectively to demonstrate the fundamental importance of investing in Local Government as part of the Scottish budget.

The Scottish Local Government Living Wage (SLGLW)

This is applied by councils to the lowest paid members of our workforce and is part of the pay settlement agreed with our unions. As part of the 2018-2021 wage settlement it was agreed that councils that had not already done so would consolidate the living wage as part of their formal pay structures. It was also agreed that the Scottish Joint Council would set up a reference group to monitor and report back on councils progress in consolidating, collating and sharing examples of good practice identified. The joint union and employer reference group had its first meeting on 22 August. The group's draft terms of reference were discussed and initial work was agreed. Further meetings are to be scheduled to occur on a six weekly cycle.



Children and Young People

COSLA Spokesperson

Councillor Stephen McCabe

Education Reform

In June the Deputy First Minister announced that the Education Bill published last year would not be taken forward. Instead work would continue to ensure that there is a fully empowered education system through clear guidance, a new evaluation strategy and a refreshed system of Devolved School Management. A strong Local Government partnership has worked closely with partners over the year to ensure that a non legislative approach to education reform was the priority. Work will continue over the next year to engage with those working in the education system.



Rural School Closures

Scottish Ministers have given a commitment to work with COSLA to consider how the guidance on rural school closures can be potentially streamlined and better aligned with other requirements for community consultation. Local authorities will be involved in a rural schools' round table at COSLA in September to consider the issues from their perspective and to inform discussions with the Scottish Government. The Local Government discussion will be supported by ADES and SOLAR ahead of a wider summit on the issue in October.

Early Learning and Childcare

August marks one year to go until families across Scotland will be able to access 1140 hour of Early Learning and Childcare. Progress nationally is being tracked through the Joint Delivery Board which I co-chair with Maree Todd, the Minister for Young People, which is working to identify what further support can be provided to the ELC Teams.



Features

Every month Inside COSLA will cover a different feature related to one of COSLA's ten priorities.

Our key priorities highlight the crucial issues facing councils and entail the support that they need from us to achieve better outcomes across the country.

Previous features include; *Public Health Reform, the Local Governance Review, and the UK's exit from the European Union.*

This month we've chosen to focus on Effective Shared Services by covering the Business Gateway Annual Review. This priority underlines COSLA's commitment to continuously improving the myjobscotland, Trading Standards Scotland, and Business Gateway services we provide directly for councils and their partners.

Over the coming months we'll focus on other key COSLA priorities such as; *Local Government funding, education and children's services, strong, safe and sustainable communities, local economies and inclusive growth, and a united voice for Local Government.*

THE COSLA PLAN 2017-22



Click here to download a copy of our 2017-18 Priorities Update report, which provides an overview of the work that we have been doing to address the priorities that Convention has set.

Business Gateway Annual Review

Managed and delivered by Scotland's Local Authorities, Business Gateway forms part of a range of economic development and business support activity that Councils deliver in partnership with enterprise agencies and other key players in Scotland's business support landscape. In July Business Gateway unveiled its annual review for 2018-2019 which shows that last year it provided support to 44,808 customers, assisting organisations across the business spectrum from growth firms to start-ups.

The number of new businesses created over the last 12 months with Business Gateway support was 9,083, with half of those assisted being led by women. Seven per cent of start-ups were from ethnic minorities, nearly double the proportion of people from ethnic minority groups in the population.



The figures also demonstrate Business Gateway's commitment to working with clients across the whole of Scotland with more than a quarter (26%) of new start-up firms and 25% of growth firms supported coming from the country's rural areas.

A key element of the service again this year has been the technology training programme DigitalBoost which helps companies develop or enhance their digital capabilities, offering support in a variety of areas including website design and social media.

More than 5,000 people attended DigitalBoost workshops in 2018-19 with more than 7,000 guides downloaded and over 2,500 online tutorials viewed.

[Click here to download a copy of Business Gateway's Annual Review 2018-19](#)

Programme for Government

Last week the Scottish Government published its Programme for Government (PfG) for 2019/20 entitled “Protecting Scotland’s Future”. The Programme sets out the key legislative and policy priorities that the Scottish Government plans to progress over the coming period. It is focused around the following four themes, each of which include coverage, to varying degrees, of the implications of the UK departure from the European Union.



1. Ending Scotland’s Contribution to Climate Change
2. A Successful, Fair and Green Economy
3. Improving Outcomes Through our Public Services
4. Communities Where Everyone is Valued, Protected and Respected

In particular the PfG highlights the following key commitments:

- A Green New Deal’, harnessing the power of the Scottish National Investment Bank, a £3billion Green Investment Portfolio and a Green Growth Accelerator – what the Climate Change Emergency Response Group (CERG) has termed a ‘Green City Deal’ – to attract green finance to Scotland
- Investing over £500 million in improved bus priority infrastructure to tackle the impacts of congestion on bus services and raise bus usage
- Decarbonising Scotland’s railways by 2035 and making the Highlands and Islands the world’s first net zero aviation region by 2040
- Developing regulations so that new homes from 2024 must use renewable or low carbon heat

Programme for Government

- Targeting a minimum of £30million of support for renewable heat projects
- Bringing forward the date for the first Scottish Child Payments to Christmas 2020
- Making the first JobStart Payments in spring 2020
- Announcing the first wave of new or refurbished schools via a £1bn school investment programme
- Providing £15million of funding for more services and staff for additional support for learning
- Putting in place a Women's Health Plan to tackle women's health inequalities
- Providing an additional £20million of funding to help tackle the drugs emergency
- Continuing to support mental health, with a 24/7 crisis support service for children and young people and their families.
- A community wellbeing service enabling self-referral for children and young people and a £5 million investment in a community perinatal mental health service across Scotland
- Taking forward planning to mitigate the worst consequences of a 'no deal' Brexit

Programme for Government

The above represents the headline information and as expected a number of proposals build on ongoing work for COSLA and councils.

Examples of COSLA's impact include the programme announcing the Transient Visitor Levy Bill and a further £2 million investment in Gypsy/Traveller sites to improve the quality of life.

There is a clear intention to focus the work through the National Performance Framework but at this relatively early stage the potential impact of a number of proposals set out in the Programme is not yet certain. As such COSLA officers will be working with civil servants to understand the fuller detail and financial implications for Local Government.

The Programme recognises areas where Scottish and Local Government have shared competencies and sets out where the intention of the Scottish Government is to work in partnership. COSLA is and will continue to be engaged in proactive work to secure a strong role for Local Government in the associated processes of policy development, reform, and any legislation that will follow.

A fuller analysis of the programme will be provided to Leaders at the end of September.



Scottish Government
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Local Government Post-Brexit

As the UK prepares to exit the European Union, this does not mean that Scottish local government will withdraw from our relations with our European counterparts.

Scotland's councils need a positive, meaningful connection with the EU. We want to continue to work, cooperate, and learn from the experiences of other Local Government associations. This is why we will continue, post-Brexit, to remain members of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG).

The EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) has proposed that regardless of Brexit, a UK-CoR Contact Group will be established. This will bring together local, regional and devolved elected members from across the UK and EU and will ensure that political dialogue and cooperation continue.

COSLA has been instrumental in shaping this new group and in March, COSLA's Convention agreed that COSLA's political leadership and outgoing Scottish CoR members would be represented in this new body. COSLA is currently working with colleagues in the UK Government about what practical arrangements Local Government will have to take.

Following the mandate provided by COSLA's Convention in March, COSLA is currently undertaking a scoping exercise of the engagement opportunities Scotland's councils will have with our European counterparts. This open-ended exercise aims to help councils develop a shared understanding of the available opportunities of international engagement that go well beyond the EU.

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