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Cabinet Secretary for Communities and
Local Government

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COSLA Leaders
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Dear Colleagues,

Update on Community Choices 1% Framework Agreement.

When the Community Choices 1% Framework Agreement was jointly launched in October 2017 it was a milestone in Scotland's participatory budgeting (PB) journey. There is much to celebrate and to build upon as we consider the PB journey we have jointly taken to date. We remain committed to PB as an enabler for active participation of citizens in local decision making which helps support our shared aspirations to become real. So far over 122,000 voters have had a direct say on the dispersal of more than £6.6 million, with around 47,000 people attending PB events across the country. Much of this is due to the hard work and dedication of local authority officers working in collaboration with communities, the third sector and key national organisations who are helping to deliver the PB national support programme.

Prior to the pandemic, over the last few years local authorities were making steady progress to meet the ambitions set out in the Framework Agreement. One result of the pandemic is that we have not been able to achieve all we had planned. Since March 2020, local authorities have redirected their efforts and resources in response to the public health crisis and many have had to pause PB activity due to the emergency response. This period has seen incredible work between communities, local authorities and voluntary sector to support people, and local authorities have worked to ensure that critical support and services were available to those who needed it most. These efforts underline the importance of community empowerment and participation in Scotland. We believe that PB has an important role to play to ensure that in response to the crisis, services are rebuilt and redesigned to suit local needs and circumstances. Mainstream PB is a central part of our social renewal, ensuring that everyone gets a chance for meaningful participation in decision making.

Despite the pressures experienced in recent months, some councils have continued to progress and develop PB programmes. The overall situation makes it challenging for local authorities as a whole to meet the 1% commitment and we recognise a need for some flexibility over the target's date. For those councils who will experience

delays, COSLA will be available to offer support and assistance to help meet the 1% target over a slightly longer period.

To better understand progress, COSLA will work with local authorities to review progress as at March 2021 on PB activity, which will form the basis of a report to the Scottish Government in Spring 2021. This report will explore the positive impact Mainstream PB is having on local communities, the details of the budgets involved to date, how PB is being designed into COVID recovery and renewal efforts, local authorities strategic mainstreaming approach and the important role of digital engagement via the CONSUL digital platform. It will benchmark mainstream PB activity against which to review progress at the end of March 2022.

Despite the delay we remain committed to making progress and meeting the target while adhering to the principles of PB required to empower communities and make a difference in people's lives. The newly established national PB Strategic Group will help inform the role PB has in the Covid-19 recovery phase and how it fits within broader reform of democracy and community empowerment.

We would like to also take this opportunity to thank officers for their ongoing work to promote PB within their local councils and for their continued innovation in embedding mainstream PB methods as part of their work with local communities. Scotland's resilience has been predicated on the work of our communities and in return, they deserve to see us work hard to empower and give agency to them. We encourage all local authorities to continue to work as hard as they practicably can to deliver on the framework agreement as soon as it is possible.



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