



There will be a meeting of the **COSLA Convention** on **Friday 31st March 2023** at 1100hrs at Verity House, Edinburgh and via MS Teams.

Sally Loudon
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Public Session

1. Introduction from COSLA President
2. Draft Minute from Convention Meeting on Friday 28th October 2022
3. COSLA Budget 2023/24
4. COSLA Plan- final sign off
5. European Charter on Local Self Government
6. Ethical Standards Commissioner - presentation
7. Spokesperson's updates
8. COSLA Excellence Awards 2023
9. Date of next meeting of Convention (Sep 2023)
10. AOB

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COSLA CONVENTION

Friday 28th October 2022, 11am

Via MS Teams

Present:

COSLA President	Cllr Shona Morrison
COSLA Vice President	Cllr Steven Heddle
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Ian Yuill
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Miranda Radley
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Sandra Macdonald
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Anne Stirling
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Jim Gifford*
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Stewart Adams*
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Ross Cassie
Aberdeenshire Council	Jim Savege
Angus Council	Cllr Beth Whiteside
Angus Council	Cllr Bill Duff
Angus Council	Cllr Derek Wann
Angus Council	Cllr Kenny Braes
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Daniel Hampsey
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Jim Lynch
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Gary Mulvaney*
City of Edinburgh Council	Andrew Kerr
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Adam McVey
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Lezley Cameron*
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Iain Whyte
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Kevin Lang
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Kenneth Earle
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Duncan MacInnes
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Paul Steele
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Gail Macgregor
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Katie Hagmann
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Carlyne Wilson*
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Richard Brodie
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Paul Garrett*
Dundee City Council	Cllr Craig Duncan
Dundee City Council	Cllr Heather Anderson
Dundee City Council	Cllr Ken Lynn
Dundee City Council	Cllr Kevin Keenan
Dundee City Council	Cllr Steven Rome
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Douglas Reid
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Jim McMahon
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Maureen McKay
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Vaughan Moody
East Dunbartonshire Council	Gerry Cornes
East Lothian Council	Cllr Lachlan Bruce
East Lothian Council	Cllr Lyn Jardine
East Lothian Council	Cllr Norman Hampshire
East Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Gordon Wallace

East Renfrewshire Council
East Renfrewshire Council
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Glasgow City Council
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Glasgow City Council
Highland Council
Highland Council
Highland Council
Inverclyde Council
Inverclyde Council
Inverclyde Council
Inverclyde Council
Midlothian Council
Moray Council
Moray Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Orkney Islands Council
Orkney Islands Council
Orkney Islands Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Borders Council
Shetland Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council

Cllr Owen O'Donnell
Cllr Tony Buchanan
Cllr Anne Hannah
Cllr Cecil Meiklejohn
Cllr James Bundy
Cllr Paul Garner
Cllr Alan Knox
Cllr Brian Goodall
Cllr David Ross
Cllr Lesley Backhouse
Eileen Rowand*
Cllr Blair Anderson
Cllr Fyeza Ikhlaiq
Cllr George Redmond
Cllr Jon Molyneux
Cllr Kieran Turner
Cllr Roza Salih
Cllr Soryia Siddique
Cllr Susan Aitken
Cllr Alasdair Christie
Cllr Derek Louden*
Cllr Raymond Bremmer
Cllr Elizabeth Robertson
Cllr Stephen McCabe
Louise Long
Cllr David Virgo
Cllr Russell Imrie
Cllr Graham Leadbitter
Roderick Burns
Cllr Shaun Macaulay
Cllr Alan Stubbs
Cllr Andrew Duffy-Lawson
Cllr Angela Campbell
Cllr Kirsten Larson
Cllr Lorraine Nolan
Cllr Paul Kelly
Des Murray
Cllr Heather Woodbridge
Cllr James Stockan
John Mundell
Cllr Eric Drysdale
Cllr Stewart Donaldson*
Cllr John Duff
Cllr Peter Barrett
Cllr Iain McMillan
Cllr Iain Nicholson
Cllr Jacqueline Cameron
Cllr John Shaw
Cllr Elaine Thornton-Nicol
Cllr Euan Jardine
Cllr Scott Hamilton
Cllr Andrea Manson
Cllr Davie Sandison
Cllr Emma Macdonald
Maggie Sandison
Cllr Martin Dowe
Cleland Sneddon
Cllr Alex Alison
Cllr Maureen Devlin*
Cllr Joe Fagan
Cllr John Anderson*
Cllr Katy Loudon
Cllr Maureen Chalmers

Stirling Council
Stirling Council
Stirling Council
Stirling Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Council

Carol Beattie
Cllr Chris Kane
Cllr Rachel Nunn*
Cllr Scott Farmer
Cllr Clare Steel
Cllr Karen Conaghan
Cllr Lawrence O'Neill
Peter Hessel
Robert de Bold *
Cllr Kirsteen Sullivan
Cllr Lawrence Fitzpatrick
Graham Hope

Apologies

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Angus Council
Argyll and Bute Council
Argyll and Bute Council
City of Edinburgh Council
City of Edinburgh Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Clackmannanshire Council
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Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
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Dundee City Council
East Ayrshire Council
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East Renfrewshire Council
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Fife Council
Fife Council
Glasgow City Council
Highland Council
Highland Council
Highland Council
Highland Council
Inverclyde Council
Midlothian Council
Midlothian Council
Moray Council
Moray Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Perth and Kinross Council

Cllr Alex Nicoll
Cllr Ryan Houghton
Cllr Gwyneth Petrie
Cllr John Cox
Cllr Mark Findlater
Margo Williamson
Cllr Robin Currie
Pippa Milne
Cllr Alys Mumford
Cllr Cammy Day
Cllr Lesley MacInnes
Cllr Ellen Forson
Cllr Martha Benny
Nikki Bridle
Cllr Kenneth Macleod
Malcolm Burr
Cllr Linda Dorward
Cllr Stephen Thompson
Dawn Roberts
Gregory Colgan
Cllr John McFadzean
Eddie Fraser
Cllr Alan Moir
Cllr Gordan Low
Monica Patterson
Lorraine McMillan
Kenneth Lawrie
Cllr Kathleen Leslie
Cllr Rosemary Liewald
Steve Grimmond
Annemarie O'Donnell
Cllr Bill Lobban
Cllr John Finlayson
Cllr Ken Gowans
Donna Manson
Cllr Natasha McGuire
Cllr Kelly Parry
Dr Grace Vickers
Cllr Donald Gatt
Cllr Kathleen Robertson
Cllr Joe Cullinane
Cllr Marie Burns
Cllr Tom Marshall
Craig Hatton
Cllr Tracy Carragher
Cllr Grant Laing
Thomas Glen

Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Borders Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Stirling Council
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Council

Alan Russell
Cllr Neill Graham
Cllr David Parker
David Robertson
Cllr Brian Connolly
Cllr Brian McGinley
Cllr Peter Henderson
Eileen Howat
Cllr Gerry Convery
Cllr John Ross
Cllr Neil Benny
Cllr Damian Doran-Timson
Cllr Janet Campbell

**Denotes substitutes provided*

Public Session

1. Introduction from COSLA President

Councillor Morrison welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all members for attending.

Apologies and substitutions were noted.

2. Draft Minute Convention Meeting 17th June 2022

The minute was agreed as an accurate record.

3. Appointments to Outside Bodies

This paper sought Convention's approval of COSLA's appointments to a range of outside bodies.

Convention:

- i. Agreed formally that Cllr Macgregor continue in her role as COSLA representative on the LAMIT Council for this Local Government term;
- ii. Agreed that the outstanding vacancy on the Children in Scotland Board of Directors be filled by Cllr Clare Steel;
- iii. Agreed that the outstanding vacancies on the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) Council be filled from the membership of COSLA's Children and Young People Board, and that the final decision regarding these appointments be delegated to COSLA's Spokesperson for Children and Young People; and
- iv. Noted the update provided in paragraphs 13 - 15 regarding COSLA's representation on the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board, Teachers Pension Board, and Teachers' Scheme Advisory Board.

Following this meeting of Convention successful appointments have been made to the previously noted outside bodies.

Two positions have been filled on the Teachers' Scheme Advisory Board by Cllr Frances Murray (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) and Cllr David Richardson (East Ayrshire Council). Members will note work is ongoing to fill remaining positions across both the Teachers' Pension Board and Teachers' Scheme Advisory Board.

Cllr John Finlayson (Highland Council) and Cllr Paul Finnegan (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) have also been nominated for the GTCS Council, with Laurence Findlay (Aberdeenshire Council) representing Directors of Education.

4. COSLA's Audited Financial Statements for Year Ending 31 March 2022-FINAL

Councillor Doggart from City of Edinburgh Council introduced himself as the new chair of COSLA's Audit Group.

He confirmed that the Financial Statements had been scrutinised by the Audit Group at the September meeting, as well as by external auditors.

Convention Members welcomed the paper and appendices.

Convention:

- i. Approved and adopted the Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 March 2022;
- ii. Approved the associated Letter of Representation;
- iii. Confirmed the Chief Executive should sign both documents on behalf of Convention; and
- iv. Noted the composition of COSLA's new Audit Group, following the Local Government elections in May 2022.

5. COSLA Plan 2022-2027

This paper presented a new COSLA Plan up to 2027 following the Local Government elections, based on the six themes set out in 'Blueprint for Local Government' (as previously agreed in June by Convention).

Members welcomed the paper, however, raised concerns that potential opportunities for Local Government were not fully captured and that Local Government's role in innovating and transformation needed to be emphasised more explicitly. Some other concerns around lack of emphasis in relation to financial sustainability were raised.

Members suggested that re-establishing a better working relationship between Local Government and the Scottish Government could be beneficial in realising the aims of the Plan.

Amendment

An amendment in the following terms was proposed by Councillor Aitken, moved by Councillor Reid.

Insert additional priority.

Innovate for Sustainable Transformation

Local Government builds on its record of delivering transformational change to recognise and respond to the financial crisis facing local economies, households and public services.

Why:

The combined impact of recovery from a global pandemic, Brexit, rising interest rates, and soaring inflation in energy, food and other essential costs, are placing pressures of a huge scale on local communities and businesses and creating a cost-of-living emergency for hundreds of thousands of households. All these factors also severely affect Local Government resources, even as the need for ever greater mitigations and new types of services emerge. The need for innovation and collaboration within and between local government and our partners in response to this crisis has therefore taken on new urgency and importance in extraordinary times.

We will:

- *Work with the Scottish Government to map the role, function and interaction of existing statutory services and new and emerging vital areas of operational delivery for local government, such as significantly expanded food provision*
- *Demonstrate leadership with partners in other public services, the third sector and elsewhere to break down the barriers caused by organisational silos and facilitate deployment of our shared existing resources, assets and services in a way that maximises their combined impact in supporting households and communities in need*
- *Work with the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that investment into and by local government supports swift and bold local action in response to changing circumstances and removes potential constraints on local innovation.*

Members discussed the terms of the amendment and related issues, noting that there was much detail for Convention simply to agree. Some members suggested that the matter be delegated to Leaders' meeting to allow officers the opportunity to consider the implications of the suggested priority and the accompanying discussion, and whether this proposed amendment was the best means to represent that within the finalised Plan. The mover and seconder agreed to this action and withdrew the motion.

Convention:

- i delegated reconsideration of the COSLA Plan to the next ordinary Leaders' meeting, asking that, in preparing a revised draft of the Plan for that meeting, officers consider the points made in the amendment and by others during the course of the discussion; and
- ii agreed that the final Plan be submitted to the next Convention meeting for formal endorsement.

6. European Charter of Local Self Government

This paper highlighted concern and regret regarding the lack of urgency with how this and the related UNCRC Bill processes had progressed.

It was highlighted that the Scottish Government remain committed to supporting a revised Bill and this had been set out in the Programme for Government, however, with little tangible positive action since. The President had written to Scottish Government to

seek clarification on the position and received a response from Mr Macpherson, Minister for Social Security and Local Government. In which Scottish Government's commitment to the Bill was reiterated.

Mr Macpherson indicated that he would welcome a tripartite meeting with Mr Ruskell and COSLA.

Members highlighted concerns on timescales and delays. COSLA officers confirmed they would continue to seek clarity from Ministers and would work to hold Scottish Government to its commitment to support Mr Ruskell in bringing the Bill forward via the Reconsideration Stage. Similar representations would be made around progressing the UNCRC Bill.

Amendment

An amendment in the following terms was proposed by Councillor Barrett, moved by Councillor Ross.

Convention expresses its disappointment with the lack of progress in taking forward suitable amendments to enable the Bill. COSLA Convention remains strongly committed to incorporating the provisions of the European Charter for Local Self Government into Scots Law and, accordingly, demands an early meeting with both Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, and Mark Ruskell MSP, in order to agree the timetable for expediting the Scottish Government's Programme for Government commitment and to bring an amended Bill forward via the Reconsideration Stage by, at latest, next Convention in March 2023.

This was agreed unanimously.

Accordingly, Convention expressed its disappointment with the lack of progress in taking forward suitable amendments to enable the Bill. COSLA Convention remained strongly committed to incorporating the provisions of the European Charter for Local Self Government into Scots Law and, accordingly, demanded an early meeting with both Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, and Mark Ruskell MSP, in order to agree the timetable for expediting the Scottish Government's Programme for Government commitment and to bring an amended Bill forward via the Reconsideration Stage by, at latest, next Convention in March 2023..

Councillor Morrison concluded the meeting at 12:10pm and thanked all Convention delegates for attending.

COSLA Draft Budget FY23-24

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Convention for the COSLA operating budget for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.

At Convention in March 2021, a four-year Budget was approved covering 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025. This paper asks Convention to:

- i) approve an updated third year of that Budget, as recommended by the Audit Group, following their meeting on 9th March; and
- ii) note the potential need for members to be approached for an additional contribution due to the increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on behalf of member Councils in relation to areas like the National Care Service, Education reforms, and Employers' responsibilities.

References

Other relevant reports:

- 22-02-25 Convention Paper, Item 06 COSLA Budget 2022/23
- 21-03-26 Convention Paper, Item 08 COSLA Budget 2021/22 to 2024/25

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March 2023



COSLA Draft Budget FY23-24

Proposal

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Convention for the COSLA operating budget for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.
2. At Convention in March 2021, a four-year Budget was approved covering 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025. This paper asks Convention to:
 - i. approve an updated third year of that Budget. The updated position takes account of a number of factors, such as the Pay Awards from the last two years, the lack of uprating of National Insurance thresholds, and increases to energy costs.
 - ii. note the potential need for members to be approached for an additional contribution due to the increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on behalf of member Councils in relation to areas like the National Care Service, Education reforms, and Employers responsibilities.

Proposed Budget for Year Ending 31 March 2024 (Appendix A)

3. The four-year budget reflected Senior Management's view that taking a longer-term approach would allow for the effect of the virtually overnight disappearance of Conference Centre income (due to the COVID pandemic) to be spread over a longer time period, making it easier to absorb. The approach was driven by the goal that COSLA's general reserves, depleted by the impact of COVID, should return to a similar, prudent level by the end of the four years.
4. Some assumptions for the four-year period need replacing with actual experience. For example, the increased rate for employer pension contributions notified by Lothian Pension Fund (LPF) in April 2021; the introduction, by LPF, of a new approach to strain costs from February 2022; and the SJC Pay Awards agreed in December 2021 and November 2022. Relevant updates have been made to the Budget proposed for Year Ending 31 March 2024.
5. Other assumptions have been updated to accommodate anticipated changes. For instance, the implementation of the IT support contract with Consider IT to replace the previous IT Officer and build in resilience to the organisation; higher energy prices; and the increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on behalf of member Councils in relation to areas like the National Care Service, Education reforms, and Employers responsibilities. If this last requirement continues to increase, it may be necessary to approach members about an additional contribution.
6. The travel budget has also been increased to pre-pandemic levels. This was discussed at Audit Group, and clarification given on the rationale – namely that recent experience

shows that staff are beginning to be asked to attend some face to face meetings to complement the activity taking place remotely. This mirrors the increasing activity in the Conference Centre, reflecting a general desire to return to face-to-face events.

7. Actual results from Year One (FY21-22), and forecast results from Year Two (FY22-23), exceed the budgeted position for those years, by £445,000 and £250,000 respectively. This is partly the result of robust management and controlling of expenditure, particularly vacancy management, but also helped by higher-than-expected revenues from the myjobscotland recruitment website.
8. £465,150 of these 'better-than-forecast' results have been incorporated into Year three, ensuring that the bottom line matches that originally proposed, meaning that, despite all the loss of income and cost pressures, increases to membership fees can be held at the level budgeted in the four year scenario, approved by Convention in March 2021. The balance of the 'better-than-forecast' results allows a prudent sum (circa £230,000) to be retained for contingencies.
9. The main risk to the overall outcome is the performance of the Conference Centre. It is budgeted to contribute £276k to COSLA's bottom line in FY23-24. Senior Management receive regular updates on the performance of the Conference Centre, and likely future direction, so will be able to take mitigating action if it looks unlikely to achieve the target.

Conclusion

10. Convention is asked to:
 - i. approve the updated third year of the previously approved four year Budget, as presented in **Appendix A**; and
 - ii. note the potential need for members to be approached for an additional contribution due to the increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on behalf of member Councils in relation to areas like the National Care Service, Education reforms, and Employers responsibilities.

March 2023

APPENDIX A	FY23-24 Budget Approved by Convention in March 2021	FY23-24 Amended Budget for approval	Change	Comments
EXPENDITURE				
Staff Costs				
Salaries	2,178,600	2,360,000	181,400	Original Budget assumed 1% Pay Awards. FY21-22 was around 2%. FY22-23, 5%. A further 5% assumed for FY23-24
National Insurance	245,400	290,000	42,100	Consequent on Salaries increase
Pension Costs	674,400	804,000	129,600	Consequent on Salaries increase, plus increased contribution rate, and change to strain cost funding
Travel Costs and Expenses	9,800	20,000	10,200	Reflecting a return to pre-pandemic levels
Staff Training & Development	9,800	9,800	-	
Health & Safety	3,920	3,920	-	
Other Staff Costs	4,900	4,900	-	
Sub-total	3,126,820	3,492,620	365,800	
Property Costs				
Rents, Rates	588,100	588,100	-	
Service Charges	11,000	10,900	-	
Buildings Insurance	3,800	3,800	-	
Repairs & Maintenance	44,100	44,550	-	
Heating & Lighting	34,300	60,000	25,700	Reflecting increased energy bills
Conference Centre upkeep	39,200	39,200	-	
Sub-total	720,500	746,200	25,700	
Operational Expenses (overheads)				
Stationery & Printing	10,100	10,100	-	
Postage	500	500	-	
ICT (Licenses, Software, Hardware)	83,310	148,310	65,000	Reflecting the IT support contract that is replacing the former IT Officer
Annual Subscriptions	4,650	4,650	-	
General Insurance	16,660	16,660	-	
Communications	20,780	20,780	-	

Audit Fee	7,000	7,000	-	
Other professional fees	9,800	100,000	90,200	Increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on matters such as NCS, Educational Reforms, Employer responsibilities.
Sub-total	152,800	308,000	155,200	
Other Expenditure				
Depreciation	60,000	50,000	(10,000)	Smaller items (for example, laptops) being used for longer and now expensed upon purchase
Office Bearers' allowances	109,500	109,500	-	
Office Bearers' expenses	14,700	14,700	-	
Research Studies	4,900	4,900	-	
Catering - internal	4,900	4,900	-	
Catering - external	105,000	105,000	-	
Catering Staff	35,250	50,000	14,750	Reflecting increased costs due to pay rises.
Conference Centre	18,750	18,750	-	
Bank Charges	1,960	1,960	-	
Miscellaneous	1,480	1,480	-	
myjobscotland	450,850	550,850	100,000	Reflecting inflation linked price rises and investment in additional functionality.
International	29,400	29,400	-	
Sub-total	836,690	941,440	104,750	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,836,810	5,488,260	586,450	
Income				
Room Hire/Daily Delegate Rate	225,000	225,000	-	
Catering	187,500	187,500	-	
Annual Conference/Excellence Awards (net)	15,000	15,000	-	
Event Management	7,500	7,500	-	
Health Improvement Grant	50,000	50,000	-	
myjobscotland	330,000	350,000	20,000	Assumes levels of activity similar to FY21-22 and FY22-23.
Deposit Interest	20,000	50,000	30,000	Reflecting current higher interest rates.

Management Fee	188,800	350,000	161,200	Reflecting FY22-23, including Local Government Digital Office
TOTAL INCOME	1,023,800	1,235,000	211,200	
Net Expenditure	3,813,010	4,253,260	375,250	
Member Subscriptions	3,283,828	3,283,828	-	
Recruitment Portal (myjobscotland) Fees	516,400	491,500	(24,900)	Based on FY21-22 and FY22-23 experiences
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(12,782)	(477,932)	(465,150)	
Absorbed by Property Reserve	58,000	58,000	-	
Improved FY21-22 & FY22-23 results		465,150	465,150	Actual results for FY21-22 and the forecast results for FY22-23 outperform the approved Budget for those years
Transferred to General Reserve	45,218	45,218	-	Achieving no worse than this position is the primary focus of SMT, rather than individual budget lines

COSLA Plan 2022-2027**Summary and Recommendations**

In June 2022, after the first COSLA Convention meeting since the 2022 Local Elections, COSLA Convention agreed that a new COSLA Plan should be drafted to guide the work we do for Local Government in Scotland for the subsequent five year administrative period. The Plan presents a high-level framework which sets out the strategic direction and ambitions for COSLA for the current Local Government term (Appendix I) and is based on the Blueprint for Local Government, previously agreed by Convention. After discussion, and agreement that endorsement of the final draft be delegated to Leaders, a number of suggested amendments were received from Convention and from members of Leadership Sounding Board which were incorporated into the final draft plan.

In November 2022 COSLA Leaders approved the final COSLA Plan 2022-2027 and agreed for it to be submitted to the next Convention meeting for formal endorsement.

COSLA Convention is invited to endorse the final COSLA Plan 2022-2027 as approved by Leaders in November 2022.

References

Previous reports:

- 22-11-25 Item 04 – COSLA Plan
- 22-10-28 Item 05 – COSLA Plan
- 22-06-17 Item 10 – COSLA’s strategic context and priorities for the new COSLA Plan
- 22-02-25 Item 06 – COSLA’s strategic context and priorities post-election
- 21-03-26 Item 03 – Local Government Blueprint
- 17-06-30 Item 09 – COSLA Plan 2017/18 – 2021/22

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March 2023

COSLA Plan 2022 – 2027

Background & Purpose

1. In June 2022 COSLA Convention agreed that a new COSLA Plan should be developed and that it should be based on the priorities set out in the Blueprint for Local Government; but updated to reflect the present post Covid-19 operating context. It was also agreed that the Plan would be subject to regular review in order to respond to any changes in context and guide the work we do for Local Government in Scotland during the next five-year administrative term.
2. Following a review of a draft and input from Convention in October, and from Leadership Sounding Board in November, the draft Plan was presented to Leaders in November. General agreement and support for the priorities, outcomes, and actions was secured.
3. The Convention meeting in October had offered a range of suggested revisions and enhancements to the draft plan; significantly the suggestion to emphasise the importance of encouraging innovative approaches within Councils to addressing the challenges we face. Convention agreed to continue consideration of the Plan to allow officers to accommodate the suggestions made by Convention; and agreed that endorsement of the final draft be delegated to Leaders. This allowed for a revised draft COSLA Plan to be presented to, and approved by, Leaders last November on the basis that an update report would be taken to the meeting of Convention today.

What is changing?

4. Below is a summary of the revisions accommodated within the approved COSLA Plan as a result of the suggestions made by Convention in October.
 - The COSLA Plan places emphasis on the current severe strategic and operational pressures and threats faced by Local Government in Scotland; whilst acknowledging that the Plan will be reviewed, at least annually, to accommodate changes of these pressures over the next 5 years.
 - The requirement to emphasise the value of innovation in terms of the development of policies and services which respond to the multiple crises facing local economies, households and public services has been given prominence in the Plan.
 - The general tone and language used in the Plan is robust and assertive in championing the position and interests of the role of Local Government.
 - Convention will be provided with updates on progress toward the Priorities set out in the Plan and success criteria can be designed to be integral to that reporting process.
 - A number of specific changes to wording throughout the draft Plan were also made in line with suggestions provided by Convention.

5. COSLA Convention is invited to endorse the final COSLA Plan 2022-2027 as approved by COSLA Leaders in November 2022.

March 2023



COSLA

COSLA



Plan

2022-2027

*Our vision and priorities for Local Government
and Communities across Scotland*

Introduction



Council services never stop, delivering 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Councils are constantly working to provide the services that are crucial to the very fabric of our local communities and ensuring the well-being of individuals, families, and society. Councils are key to supporting local economic development and recovery, and to providing the local democratic accountability needed to ensure that services are delivered according to the needs and priorities of local people.

COSLA is the national membership organisation for Scottish Local Government. Comprising all of Scotland’s 32 councils, COSLA sets the strategic direction for Local Government to best deliver for Scotland’s communities. To do this COSLA’s staff work with a network of professional advisors and partners.

Local Government and communities continue to face unprecedented and serious challenges. This requires a robust, strategic framework to guide our work for the next few years, so this COSLA Plan sets out our vision, high-level ambitions, and priorities. We do this on behalf of all councils in Scotland, to improve the lives of people in our local communities.

our Vision



“COSLA will work relentlessly to ensure that Scottish Local Government has the powers and the resources it needs to deliver the highest quality services that enable everyone to live well locally.”



To achieve this vision, we will focus on six priorities:



our Current Context



Right now, we face a combination of social and financial challenges never seen in modern times. The current cost crisis exacerbates the threats already posed to local democracy, including years of real terms reductions in settlements, an increase in ring-fenced and directed funding, and very real threats to local services and accountability, for example those now proposed in the National Care Service Bill.

Protecting the most vulnerable members of our communities, our staff and our assets will take significant energy and resolve especially as Scottish Government has set out its intentions for the next 4 years in the 'Resource Spending Review' - Local Government will see a "flat cash" settlement, which in reality will mean cuts to services, unless we think differently about Local Government's role and services into the future.

There are many threats and challenges in our current operating context - some of which are shown in the diagram opposite. Holding onto COSLA's 5 core principles (shown in the centre of the diagram) will become all the more important in this context.



our Priorities



Over the next 5 years, COSLA's work will focus on 6 key priority areas. Below are some of the actions that we will undertake to progress these priorities - further detail of this work is set out in COSLA's Boards plans and will regularly be updated and shared with our key stakeholders and partners.

In order to achieve the outcomes we seek, COSLA will enhance and broaden the scope of our partnership working arrangements, strengthen our existing links with professional associations, and initiate shared programmes of work aimed at enabling transformation for our member councils across Scotland.



Strengthen Local Democracy



Through a renewed relationship with Scottish Government, based on trust and mutual respect, Local Government is empowered to lead and act to ensure local democracy in Scotland delivers effective and inclusive representation of the range of needs and views expressed by our diverse communities.

Why?

Democracy matters, and nowhere more so than at the local level. It enables every person to be able to express their views and embrace their rights in a fair and just society. That is why individuals and communities must be empowered through strong local democratic decision-making processes and be engaged and involved. A well-functioning relationship between Scottish Local Government and the Scottish Government that is based on subsidiarity and recognises the sovereignty of people is essential to delivering better outcomes.

We Will:

- Secure the adoption of the European Charter for Local Self-Government in Scots Law.
- Re-establish an open, honest, and functioning, trusted local and central government relationship.
- Strengthen and rebalance the relationship between Local Government and the people of Scotland and ensure subsidiarity.
- Work with Scottish Government to re-establish and complete the Local Governance Review.
- Continue our work to tackle barriers to elected office for under-represented groups, to ensure elected members are representative of the communities that they serve.
- Support the work toward enabling all communities to be able to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and their communities.

Secure Sustainable Funding



In order that communities continue to get the support and high-quality services they need, we will work to ensure that Local Government is funded fairly and has multi-year financial settlements. This would mean more certainty for not only our workforce but for our communities and the services they rely on every day.

Why?

The constant cycle of single year budgets, and annual cycle of justifying why Local Government requires investment is exhausting for everyone – for our councillors, for our senior managers, for our staff on the front line who are continually being faced with savings targets, and for our communities who see the core service that they rely on being cut back each year. We want Local Government to be enabled to take a strategic and long-term approach to budgets that focuses on prevention – this would save valuable resource across the whole of the public sector. Importantly, this would also support councils to recruit, retain, and invest in their workforce as Fair Work employers.

We Will:

- Enable a focus on **person-centred, outcomes-focused services** by developing a 'fiscal framework' – the funding rules between Scottish and Local Government that create certainty, stability and transparency and allow investment in Local Government's workforce, services, and communities across Scotland
- Explore and develop a range of options for councils to be **more fiscally empowered**, reducing reliance on Scottish Government grant and allowing our members to focus spend on what matters locally.

Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families & Communities



Local Government develops sustainable outcome-focused services with support for wellbeing at the core. Any services provided by the National Care Service are subject to local democratic control, enhance local outcomes and focus on the needs of local people.

Why?

Social care and social work are vital to our communities; and local authorities are at the heart of the design and delivery of these services. The proposal to remove the staff functions and assets in these from Local Government to a National Care Service with accountability to Ministers will have a significant and detrimental impact on locally designed services that meet the needs of the very different communities across Scotland. We cannot wait for a National Care Service which is focussed on structural change at the expense of investment in our social care and social work services now when the system is already under severe pressure.

We Will:

- Influence the passage of the National Care Service Bill to ensure that staff functions and assets remain within Local Government and thus subject to vital local democratic accountability.
- Continue to argue for investment into Local Government in order to support the delivery of a rights-based, preventative approach to health and social care.
- Work at pace to improve the support for the social work and social care workforces.
- Continue to take forward and develop the Joint Statement of intent with a focus on Fair Work and ethical commissioning.

Deliver a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy



In line with the principles of a 'just transition', Local Government makes a meaningful contribution to the 2030 climate change target and is a key leader and driver of local economies.

Why?

The imperative to transition to a net zero economy is a direct response to worsening climate change. It requires fundamental change to many aspects of the economy and society over the next two decades and more, which will need to be delivered in as fair a way as possible. This priority also recognises that there is an economic and societal benefit of taking action on climate change, and that inaction will lead to worse outcomes, including increasing levels of poverty.

We Will:

- Work with Scottish Government and our Local Government partners to ensure just transition is well coordinated at the national level.
- Focus on those high carbon sectors which have the strongest connection to the economy and society e.g. transport and heat.
- Argue for greater investment in Local Government which can be used to fund local net zero projects and programmes.
- Work in partnership to deliver a streamlined and more effective business support landscape;
- Work in partnership to develop and deliver the actions within the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

Enhance Education & Support for our Children & Young People



Local Government secures the best education for all our children and young people and provides wider learning and support while tackling poverty and social inequality.

Why?

Local Government sets the conditions which support our children and young people to grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding, enhancing their life chances through our early years provision, education and by supporting families when they need it. We include children and families in decisions about their lives and protect their rights, dignity, and wellbeing. Schools and learning environments are loving, respectful and encouraging and everyone can learn, play, and flourish. Children and young people have hope for the future and opportunities to fulfil their dreams.

We Will:

Have at the forefront of our minds the social inequality and factors which mean children and young people do not have an equal starting point in life. We will do this by ensuring Local Government remains directly responsible and accountable for services and supporting the changes and improvements necessary to their:

- Learning opportunities – supporting children and young people to achieve the best possible educational outcomes, including working to close the poverty-related attainment gap, and improving the overall standards of attainment which have been impacted by the effects of the Covid pandemic.
- Care and wellbeing – Keeping the Promise Scotland made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults, and their families, and supporting all children and young people's mental and physical health.
- Rights and protection – Making sure that children's rights are protected, supporting incorporation of UNCRC into Scots law, and keeping children and young people safe and protected from harm.

Support the Most Vulnerable in our Communities



Local Government supports individuals and families through focussing on the realisation of human rights and tackling poverty and inequalities, particularly where the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Cost-of-Living crisis is impacting negatively on their life opportunities and chances.

Why?

Everyone should have access to sufficient food, clothing, and housing, and warmth, and we should strive for continuous improvement in living conditions for those who are most marginalised. In order for those most vulnerable in society to be part of healthy and happy communities, we must nurture and protect our local resources, environments and all who live in them. Local Government plays a central role in this regard and by working in partnership with colleagues across the public and third sector, we can support and empower those who are at most risk of exclusion and poverty.

We Will:

- Work to ensure that councils are empowered and resourced to maximise their role in preventing poverty.
- Support Local Government's work on strengthening employability services to help those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market.
- Work with partners to develop policies which reduce homelessness and improve access to quality housing.
- Work with councils in their delivery of benefits and financial support, and to develop further the relationship with Social Security Scotland.
- Drive the system changes needed to realise the human rights of all those living in our communities.
- Proactively shape and deliver programmes which support people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK, and work to address the risks of exclusion and destitution faced by migrants.
- Support and strengthen the community justice model to safely reduce offending, while ensuring that we protect, support, and improve outcomes for victims and witnesses of crime.
- Work to strengthen, support, and promote community wellbeing through broadening sport, leisure, and cultural access.



COSLA

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European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

Summary and Recommendations

This paper provides a further update on the incorporation of the European Charter on Local Self-Government into Scottish legislation.

This paper invites Convention:

- i. to note the lack of apparent progress through the Scottish Parliament since the last meeting of either of the Bills to incorporate the UNCRC and the European Charter of Local Self-Government into Scots law;
- ii. to agree that COSLA continue to engage with Mark Ruskell MSP, on expediting the development and progress of the European Charter Bill; and
- iii. to agree to seek an early meeting with the relevant Scottish Government Ministers once the composition of the new Administration is known, to reinforce the need to progress these Bills.

References

Previous reports:

- 28-10-2022 Item 06 European Charter of Local Self Government
- 22-06-2017 Item 11 European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill - Update

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March 2023

European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Convention with a further update on COSLA's understanding, as it has developed since Convention last October, on work being done to secure amended European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) and UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bills, such that they comply with the requirements detailed by the Supreme Court of Justice necessary for them to receive Royal assent and be passed into Scots Law. The Scottish Government has been clear that it will not seek to progress the European Charter Bill until the UNCRC Bill is passed.

Background

2. Members of Convention will be fully aware that COSLA has supported the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill throughout the entire process of consultation, development, introduction, and progression through all parliamentary phases to date. Previous reports have detailed the following key milestones which are bulleted for brevity below.
 - UK Government lodged a case with the UK Supreme Court arguing that some of the sections of this (and the UNCRC) Bill relate to the power of the UK Government and Parliament to legislate and act in Scotland in areas of reserved competence.
 - In October 2021, the UK Supreme Court announced the decision that various sections of the Bills would be outside the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. So, royal assent could not be given to the Bills which were returned to the Scottish Parliament for further consideration.
 - In May 2022, the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, delivered a Ministerial Statement to Scottish Parliament regarding both the European Charter on Local Self-Government and UNCRC Incorporation Bills.
 - The Deputy First Minister advised that the Scottish Government intended to return the UNCRC Bill to Parliament via the reconsideration stage and would seek to make the necessary changes to the Bill to address the Supreme Court judgement.
 - The Deputy First Minister advised that the Scottish Government would engage with Mark Ruskell MSP, the member now leading the European Charter Bill, to support him in taking the Bill forward; Mr. Ruskell confirmed his intention to seek reconsideration for this Bill.
 - In the Programme for Government published in September 202, the Scottish Government committed to "supporting the European Charter Bill" and to "work closely with Mark Ruskell MSP, as the designated member in charge of that Bill, to support him in bringing it back for the Reconsideration Stage."
 - Prior to Convention in October, the President wrote to Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, copied to Mr Ruskell, emphasising our concerns and requesting a meeting to agree a timetable for an acceleration of progress on this matter.
3. Convention will also have noted that the processes and competencies associated with submitting a Bill for Reconsideration are 'uncharted territory' for the Scottish Parliament and

Government. Further, it is appreciated that the work required likely extends beyond the simple deletion of the sections in question and requires ensuring that there are no unintended consequences through impacts on links to related legislation/sections. Nevertheless, the extended delay to progress is a significant concern and disappointment.

4. Following Convention in October, on 19 December the COSLA Vice President met with Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Social Security and Local Government and Mark Ruskell MSP to reiterate COSLA's support for the Bill and Convention's strongly expressed concerns regarding the lack of progress made toward reconsideration of an amended Bill. Discussion also focussed on establishing a timetable for expediting this work and bringing an amended version of the Bill forward via the Reconsideration Stage.
5. The main points established through that discussion – in December – are set out below.
 - Scottish Government remains committed to supporting a revised Bill as stated in the Programme for Government, but we have seen little tangible positive action.
 - Mr Macpherson has reiterated the Scottish Government's commitment to the Bill but advises that the UK Supreme Court judgements on both the European Charter Bill and the UNCRC Bill are complex, and that, in order to ensure any amendments to these Bills do not attract further challenge, the work cannot be rushed.
 - Mr Macpherson also stated that the European Charter Bill "should take place" after the UNCRC Bill has been Reconsidered and passed thereby benefitting from the experience gained from the Reconsideration process for the UNCRC Bill and ensuring that any lessons learned can be applied, to ensure a seamless progression and passing of the European Charter Bill.
 - Officials had indicated separately that, ideally, Ministers would have liked the UNCRC Bill to be passed before the end of 2022 – clearly this has been delayed.
 - The intention then was that Mr Ruskell commence the Reconsideration Stage for the European Charter Bill "early in the new year" – again this has been delayed.
 - Mr Macpherson indicated that he would welcome further tripartite meetings with Mr Ruskell and ourselves (see attached letter).
 - The Vice President reiterated the Convention's disappointment with the lack of progress in taking forward suitable amendments to enable the Bill. He also sought clarification on why the Government could not proceed meantime on the basis that the principles of the Bill were in operation.
6. The matter was further discussed at the recent combined Strategic Review Group/Monthly Relationship meeting, between the COSLA Presidential Team and Shona Robison, Ben Macpherson and Tom Arthur, Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth, on 22 February 2023.
7. During this meeting, the Scottish Government reiterated a strong commitment to the Bill. In addition, there was general acknowledgement that the timescales for the European Charter Bill progressing through the Parliament were not solely in the gift of the Scottish Government, albeit that progress could not even start until the Government indicated it and Mr Ruskell were ready to do so. COSLA's Presidential Team stressed that COSLA was prepared to do all that we could do to assist (e.g., in a lobbying role). Mr Macpherson confirmed a number of the points discussed during the meeting in a letter to Cllr Heddle (Appendix I).

Current Position

8. Securing the adoption of the European Charter for Local Self-Government into Scots law remains a priority area for COSLA, as stated in the COSLA Plan 2022-2027. COSLA's President and Vice President and COSLA's officers have, repeatedly and at every opportunity, stated our willingness to work with the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government to press forward on drafting the amendments required to enable the Bill to pass in compliance with the UK Supreme Court judgement.
9. Convention remains strongly committed to incorporating the provisions of the European Charter for Local Self Government into Scots Law and, once the new Scottish Government Administration is in place, we will seek an early meeting with the relevant Ministers expediting the resolution of this matter to bring amended Bills forward via the Reconsideration Stage as soon as possible.

Next Steps

10. Following this meeting, COSLA will continue to engage with Scottish Government and Mark Ruskell MSP, on expediting the development and completion of the European Charter Bill approval process. Similarly, representations will be made around completing the UNCRC Bill.

March 2023

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Councillor Steven Heddle
COSLA Vice President

Sent by email: megan@cosla.gov.uk

CC: Mark Ruskell MSP
Mark.Ruskell.msp@parliament.scot

20 February 2023

Dear Steven,

Thank you for the productive tripartite meeting we had with Mark Ruskell MSP on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (the “ECLSG Bill”) at the end of last year.

I have sympathy with your position and share your frustration that we have not been able to start the parliamentary process of reconsidering the Bill. However, as I said both at the meeting and in previous correspondence, the Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to supporting the ECLSG Bill so it can be incorporated into domestic legislation as soon as practicable.

As you are aware, the Scottish Government’s position is that reconsideration of the ECLSG Bill should take place after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (the “UNCRC Bill”) has been reconsidered. Mark Ruskell MSP – the member in charge of the Bill – is also in agreement with this approach. We are engaging with the UK Government about the amendments to the UNCRC Bill to establish if they are broadly content that the amendments bring the Bill within legislative competence and to reduce the risk of another referral to the Supreme Court. This engagement has and continues to be constructive. There was a members’ business [debate](#) in the name of Martin Whitfield MSP on 7 February 2023 where you can find further information on the latest position of the UNCRC Bill and discussions with the UK Government. I know COSLA are also members of a steering group on the UNCRC Bill where you will also continue to be kept up to date on developments.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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I agreed at our meeting to provide you with an indicative timetable for progressing the ECLSG Bill. I have attached the various stages and milestones associated with this as an Annex to this letter. However, at this juncture, I am unable to provide you with the speculative dates for taking forward the various steps. We cannot pre-empt the timetable for the UNCRC Bill or undermine any discussions with the Scottish Parliament, who decide on the timetabling for each Bill.

You also raised the possibility of, in the interim, issuing a joint statement or enacting a 'de-facto' European Charter of Local Self-Government until the ECLSG Bill receives Royal Assent. I have considered this proposal but believe this is unnecessary. I say this for two substantive reasons. Firstly, the Scottish Government is already bound to the Charter by UK ratification in 1998. Secondly, we are also jointly committed to delivering a New Deal for Local Government, which will include an outcomes focused Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement with Local Government will make clear the outcomes we are jointly focussing on, and how we will work together to oversee those outcomes, and ensure clear mutual lines of accountability for achieving them.

I have copied this letter to Mark Ruskell MSP for information, and Scottish Ministers look forward to continuing to work with you both on this important issue.

Best regards,



BEN MACPHERSON

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Steps to be taken towards Reconsideration	Points to note/estimated time required
Finalise draft amendments following outcome of UNCRC discussions.	No agreed timeline for this due to ongoing discussions with UKG.
Share draft amendments with UKG for views on compatibility and impact on SC judgment.	We have no control over when UKG might respond but we'd hope the earlier work on UNCRC will be helpful.
Following discussion/agreement with UKG, share amendments with Mark Ruskell MSP.	
Mark Ruskell to consider amendments with NGBU and seek feedback from Brodies – who originally drafted the Bill for Andy Wightman.	We have no control over this but potentially around four weeks.
Ongoing engagement with COSLA – tripartite ministerial meeting.	To be agreed with COSLA.
Parliamentary Admissibility and Parliamentary timetabling.	Engagement with Parliamentary clerks on admissibility and timetabling.
Motion lodged in Parliament seeking parliamentary agreement to Reconsider the Bill.	
Motion debated.	Approximately one week after motion lodged.
Sharing amendments with Committee.	Day following motion is debated.
Parliamentary Committee scrutiny.	The LG Committee may or may not wish to schedule time to consider.
Reconsideration Stage.	Formal consideration of amendments and debate on whether to approve the Bill.
Period for challenge pending Royal Assent.	4 weeks.
Royal Assent.	5.5 weeks after reconsideration.
Commencement.	6 months after Royal Assent.

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Ethical Standards Commissioner

Summary and Recommendations

The post of Ethical Standards Commissioner, an independent regulator, is currently held by Ian Bruce. Supported by a small team and working to statutory guidelines his role is to investigate complaints of misconduct referred to him whilst complying with any directions given by the Standards Commission for Scotland. The Commissioner has agreed to make a short presentation to Convention on his role and remit.

COSLA Convention is invited to note the presentation and ask any questions and make any comments as appropriate.

References

- No previous reports.

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March 2023

Ethical Standards Commissioner

Background & Introduction

1. The Ethical Standards Commissioner is an independent regulator appointed by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, approved by MSPs and underpinned by legislation. Created in 2013 this full-time post is currently held by Ian Bruce who was appointed Acting Commissioner in April 2021.
2. The Commissioner is supported by a team of people working within a remit to encourage fairness, good conduct and transparency in public life in Scotland. They investigate complaints about the behaviour of MSPs, local authority councillors, and board members of public bodies and about lobbyists, and look into how people are appointed to the boards of public bodies in Scotland.
3. The office of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (formerly known as the Chief Investigating Officer) was established by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. The Commissioner and his team undertake functions set out the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner Act 2002, the Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, and the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016.
4. Whilst independent of the Standards Commission for Scotland – the independent body that has the purpose of advancing high ethical standards in public life through the promotion and enforcement of Codes of Conduct for councillors – the Commissioner has a duty to investigate complaints of misconduct referred to him and must comply with any directions given by the Commission. We had also invited the Standards Commission to send a representative to today's meeting to present alongside the Ethical Standards Commissioner. However due to the combination of it being a small organisation and holidays, that has not proved possible. The intention is to have them speak at a future meeting.
5. The office of the Ethical Standards Commissioner is subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and, in addition, produces a range of documents and featured publication covering all aspects of their work¹.
6. The Ethical Standards Commissioner has agreed to make a short presentation to Convention today and will be happy answer any appropriate questions and issues which members may wish to raise.
7. COSLA Convention is invited to note the presentation and ask any questions and make any comments as appropriate.

¹ [Ethical Standards Commissioner – Guide to information](#)

March 2023

COSLA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

Summary and Recommendations

At their January meeting, Leadership Sounding Board (LSB) agreed that an in-person Annual COSLA Conference and Excellence Awards would take place for the first time since 2019. A date of Thursday 28 and Friday 29 September 2023 at the Crieff Hydro Hotel has been secured for this purpose.

The plan is for the COSLA Excellence Awards to be held on the first night of the Conference on Thursday 28 September which presents an excellent opportunity for Local Government to showcase the great work, talent and innovation across our councils and the exceptional people who deliver for our communities every day of the year.

Convention is invited to note the plans for this year's COSLA Excellence Awards and to promote them as widely as possible.

References

None. No Previous reports to Convention.

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March 2023

COSLA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

Purpose

1. This report provides COSLA Convention with an update on the plan to hold an in-person Conference and COSLA Excellence Awards in 2023 and asks members to promote the Awards within their individual Councils.

Background

2. The Annual Conference and Excellence Awards have run as a joint event for over 15 years. By doing so, both Events enjoy a greater attendance and exposure for Members, partner organisations and finalists alike. There are also economies of scale from hosting two events together, in the one venue.
3. In January 2023 COSLA’s Leadership Sounding Board agreed that the Excellence Awards should return to being held in-person, for the first time since 2019, as part of the COSLA Annual Conference, which will take place in the Crieff Hydro Hotel on September 28 and 29.
4. Each Award Category is sponsored by a major sponsor and in returning to an in-person event we hope to get a return to the usual number of entries of between 180 and 200 that we were experiencing pre- Covid.

Proposed Format and Timeline

5. The COSLA Excellence Awards are about recognising the great work, talent and innovation across our Councils and the exceptional people who deliver for our communities every day of the year.

Aligned to the new COSLA Plan, the five categories for this year’s awards are as follows:

- *Category 1: Service Innovation and Improvement*
- *Category 2: Achieving Better Outcomes for the Most Vulnerable in Partnership*
- *Category 3: Tackling Inequalities and Improving Health and Wellbeing*
- *Category 4: Strengthening Communities and Local Democracy*
- *Category 5: Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy*

A timeline for the Awards is presented in the table below:

Report to Convention – Friday 31st March 2023
Applications will open on Monday 3rd April following Convention
Application deadline for entries will be Wednesday 31st May
Judging, led by a team from COSLA, Solace Scotland, The Improvement Service and representatives from Local Government Professional Associations, will take place over the summer, shortlisting to a final three in each category.

Finalists will be invited to present to an adjudication panel at COSLA's offices in Edinburgh on either Wednesday 23rd or Thursday 24th August
All finalist teams will be invited to the awards ceremony on Thursday, 28 September 2023 at Crieff Hydro Hotel, Perthshire where the winners will be announced.

Next Steps

6. Although there has been some activity, promotion of the Awards will formally commence on 3rd April and work will continue to secure sponsorship and ensure that the sale of delegate places for both the conference and awards are maximised. Efforts by Convention delegates and member Councils to promote the event would be welcomed and COSLA's Communications team are happy to provide support and promotional material where required. The weekly Elected Member Bulletin, sent to all Councillors, will be used to promote the event.
7. The Award Winners will be featured in COSLA's Communication Campaigns such as 'This is Local Government' going forward.

March 2023