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OCTOBER 2019, ISSUE 6

# 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 sixth 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.



For those of you who are reading the copy of **Inside COSLA** found inside your conference delegate pack, please can I welcome you to the **2019 COSLA and Improvement Service Annual 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 former **Prime Minister Gordon Brown** joining myself and **Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government** in speaking at this year's event.

However, in addition to these political heavyweights, our Conference wouldn't be complete without the **Excellence Awards**. Applicants from across Scotland's 32 councils have again applied in their hundreds this year, highlighting projects that are setting new standards of excellence in all our service areas throughout Scotland.

Alongside COSLA's **Vice President Graham Houston** and a host of guest judges from the Parliament, NHS and the media I spent a very enjoyable two days in mid-September judging the 15 finalists who made it to the last stage of the process. Those two days once again brought home to me how much fantastic and innovative work is carried out by Local Government while delivering essential services everyday throughout Scotland.

September also saw me meet with **Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack MP** for the first time in his new role.

Last month the **Scottish Parliament's** pre-budget scrutiny got underway and a team from COSLA, comprising our **Resources Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor** and senior **COSLA** officials, stressed to the **Local Government and Communities Committee** the need for the long-term financial sustainability of Local Government. The **COSLA** team also stressed Local Government's unique role in designing and delivering the vital services which underpin and provide the lifeblood to our communities.

With the **31st October** almost upon us, the **COSLA Vice President Councillor Graham Houston** and I are engaging in weekly calls with Aileen Campbell on behalf of **COSLA** and Local Government, to discuss issues around Brexit.

As I will echo in my speech to Conference this year, **COSLA** is you – our membership, you give us our mandate and everything we do is done on your behalf. 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.

**COSLA President Councillor Alison Evison**



# Leaders' Recap

## Spending Review Update

Leaders noted COSLA's engagement thus far to lobby the Scottish Government for an increased local government settlement. Leaders asked that COSLA lobby the Scottish Government for the Local Government settlement to include inflation plus 3%. Additionally all new commitments and duties must be fully funded by the Scottish Government.

## Distribution: Treatment of Indicators

Leaders agreed the treatment of indicators; and changes to the quantum arising from the Spending Review (for both revenue and capital).

## EU Settlement Scheme Applications

Leaders agreed that councils should feedback to COSLA any concerns and issues they are experiencing with the EUSS. In addition they agreed that councils recognise the need for local awareness raising and messaging about the EUSS, and consider more localised means of publicising the scheme; and to encourage their council staff to access the COSLA/International Organisation for Migration support service for vulnerable EEA citizens applying for status.



## Equally Safe - 16 Days of Activism Campaign

Leaders endorsed the approach being taken to design the COSLA 2019 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence (or VAWG) Campaign, in line with its aim to encourage a co-ordinated approach across Local Authorities, with other public sector and expert VAWG sector stakeholders.

## Engagement with Scottish Parliamentary Committees

Leaders agreed the draft engagement plan for a formal partnership approach to engage with Scottish Parliamentary committees.

**Programme for Government**

Leaders noted the initial officer analysis of potential implications for Local Government and local democracy which the Programme for Government has in relation to COSLA's key principles.

**Governance Arrangements for Public Health Scotland**

Leaders noted the update on the progress of the Public Health reform programme; and agreed that Leaders will be sighted on and asked to agree the development of the Strategic Priorities for Public Health Scotland in the coming months. Leaders agreed an amendment that 50% of Public Health Scotland's board membership should be representatives from COSLA.

**Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan**

Previously, Leaders considered a joint action plan with the Scottish Government to improve the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers. After submitting recommendations which have now been agreed to, Leaders have approved proceeding with the plan on that basis.

**Family Leave for Councillors**

Leaders endorsed the Family Leave Guidance for circulation to Scottish Councils for adoption on a voluntary basis; and agreed to COSLA lobbying for an amendment to The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 to allow Councils local discretion and greater flexibility in managing the payment to Councillors in the event of them requiring leave.

**Digital Transformation Update**

Leaders noted the update regarding digital transformation in relation to the Spending Review; agreed to the approach outlined to guide ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government's Digital Identity Scotland programme.



# Spokespersons' Update

## Community Wellbeing

### **COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)**

#### **Councillor Kelly Parry**

##### **Challenge Poverty**

Councillor Parry addressed the National Conference on Local Child Poverty Action in September. Her presentation covered the need to challenge unacceptable child poverty; supported the ambition of the Scottish Government to reduce child poverty levels; set out the crucial role that local authorities have to play and celebrated their successes; and challenged the Scottish Government on the need for new investment to sustain efforts and to achieve the needed step-change in approach and outcomes. COSLA will also take part in Challenge Poverty Week, highlighting what approaches local authorities are taking to tackle poverty in their communities.



##### **Participatory Budgeting Officer Conference**

Officers organised the first COSLA National Participatory Budgeting Officer Conference. This was an opportunity for local authority staff to come together and share their experiences of Mainstreaming Participatory Budgeting in Scotland. COSLA organised workshops based around issues local authorities had raised in response to a PB Training Needs Survey.

### **COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)**

#### **Councillor Elena Whitham**

##### **Gypsy/Traveller Event**

COSLA is working with the Women's Voices Gypsy/Traveller Group to host an event bringing local leaders and the Gypsy/Traveller community together to explore how to improve local leadership and the lives of the Gypsy/Traveller community. The session will involve a discussion of national commitments to improve the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers and the afternoon session will be a chance to consider local actions with community members and decision-makers.





# Environment and Economy

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Steven Heddle**



### **Transport (Scotland) Bill**

The Transport (Scotland) Bill is completing stage 3 on 9 October. COSLA is issuing a briefing to all MSPs prior to the debate setting out our overall views on the Bill and our positions in relation to specific provisions which have implications for Local Government. COSLA are focusing specifically on lobbying for councils to have the widest possible powers and flexibility to deliver bus services locally and reasserting our in-principle support for Workplace Parking Levies.

### **Pre-Budget Scrutiny Evidence Session on Roads Maintenance**

Councillor Steven Heddle and Environment and Economy Chief Officer Robert Nicol gave evidence to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee as part of their pre-budget scrutiny on roads maintenance. COSLA's evidence highlighted the impact of cuts to budgets on roads maintenance as well as stressed the need for adequate resources to cope with current pressures on our transport networks and prepare appropriately for the challenges ahead.

### **Climate Change**

With partners in the Sustainable Scotland Network, COSLA hosted a meeting on 17 September to discuss Local Government's response to the climate emergency and the long term goal of achieving carbon neutrality . The output from this event will be discussed at the COSLA Environment and Economy Board on 17 October.



# Health and Social Care

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Peter Johnston**



### **Public Health Reform**

Public Health Reform continues to be a genuine collaboration between National and Local Government. There is recognition of the significant contribution Local Government makes to improving health and wellbeing through a range of services. COSLA are delighted with the appointment of Angela Leitch as the first Chief Executive of Public Health Scotland. Angela brings significant Local Government experience to the role, joining the organisation from East Lothian Council where she has been Chief Executive since 2011.

### **Review of progress under integration**

Alongside the Scottish Government COSLA has joint political leadership and performance oversight of Health and Social Care Integration. COSLA has been jointly leading on delivering the Review of Progress Under Integration Authorities, with the aim of increasing the pace of Integration and delivering better outcomes for our communities. Throughout 2019-20 the 25 proposals made in the Review of Progress Under Integration should be implemented.

### **National Suicide Prevention Plan (NSPLG)**

This group has been established to help drive implementation of the Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2018). The plan sets out a target to further reduce the rate of suicide by 20% by 2022 (from a 2017 baseline). Recommendations pertaining to Local Government will be reported to COSLA. The first annual report has been published and guidance on local suicide prevention planning over the coming months. This will be tested in a number of areas and learning will be incorporated before it is finalised and guidance on local suicide prevention planning will be produced over the coming months.



# Resources

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor**



### **Teachers' Career Pathways**

Work on the Teachers' Career Pathways is set to get underway following the SNCT agreement on 26th September to establish three working groups covering Lead Teacher and Career Progression, Headship and Beyond and National Model for Sabbaticals. COSLA will be represented on all three groups, with Resources Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor taking the political lead. COSLA also participated in a joint meeting alongside the SJC trade unions with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Derek Mackay, MSP to lobby him in respect of future pay negotiations emphasising the point that we, as COSLA Employers, value all of the local government workforce equally. The support offered at the meeting by the trade union side to our demands for a fair settlement for local government in the upcoming Spending Review were much appreciated.

### **Parliamentary Evidence**

COSLA was invited to the opening oral evidence session of the Local Government and Communities Committee on the 25th September. Councillor Macgregor was supported at the session by Vicki Bibby (Acting Head of Resources at COSLA) and there was also representation from SOLACE, Directors of Finance and the Accounts Commission. This was an important opportunity to discuss the written evidence previously submitted to the Committee (and shared widely with all Councillors and key stakeholders including Professional Associations, Unions, the third Sector) in more detail and make the case for the need to invest in Local Government both now and in the longer term.

### **Professional Associations**

COSLA Officers continue to engage Professional Associations across Local Government where discussion was focussed on the four key themes for COSLA's spending review campaign agreed by Leaders: well-being, tackling child poverty, addressing climate change and inclusive economic growth. There was consensus on the truly unique role of Local Government and the need for protection of core revenue and capital budgets and longer-term certainty in relation to budgets, allowing a focus on transformation to tackle the very real challenges ahead.





# Children and Young People

## **COSLA Spokesperson**

**Councillor Stephen McCabe**



## **Additional Support for Learning**

Angela Morgan, former Chief Executive of Includem, has been appointed to Chair a review of the implementation of Additional Support for Learning in schools and the ways that children and young people with additional support needs progress in their learning. The review will develop recommendations for COSLA, our member Councils and Scottish Government. Angela will be attending COSLA's Children and Young People Board in November.

## **Young Scot and COSLA Collaboration**

Young Scot presented to the October Board, reflecting upon the successful collaboration with COSLA since September 2018. Through our joint efforts to raise awareness of Young Scot services, such as the National Entitlement Card, there is strong evidence of how Young Scot and COSLA continue to support local priorities.

## **Rural Schools**

COSLA officers from the Children and Young People and Local Government Finance teams have held a round-table discussion with local authorities on the issue of rural school closures. Discussions from the round-table will inform the Local Government approach to a possible refresh of the Guidance related to the closure of rural schools.



# Local Government and Attainment - Young Scot

A year ago, Young Scot launched the 'Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership'. This was a partnership between North Ayrshire Council, The Highland Council, High Life Highland, Renfrewshire Council, Transport Scotland and the Improvement Service.

This ground-breaking project enabled the Local Authorities to use the Young Scot National Entitlement Card (Young Scot NEC) to give extra entitlements to young people living in deprived communities who are facing barriers to their attainment.

The extra entitlements included travel tickets, holiday food provision, access to leisure activities, and help to reduce the cost of the school day. These were selected as they are known to improve health and wellbeing – drivers to improving attainment, reducing inequality and challenging rural poverty.



This ground-breaking project built on the successful outcomes of Renfrewshire's Youth Services Model – which used the Young Scot NEC to provide free travel for young jobseekers and care leavers.

The Young Scot NEC and other services were promoted to the entire community. The cards were also used to access the extra entitlements. This approach created a non-stigmatising way of supporting the young people.

These successful new models of delivery are now ready to be adapted for Local Authorities across Scotland and Young Scot is now working with North Lanarkshire, Falkirk and Dundee in phase two of the project.

To find out more, contact attainment @young.scot or **click here**.

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emailed to every Councillor in Scotland every month*