

Elected Members Briefing



27 May 2020

Introduction

Welcome to the latest Elected Members Bulletin, your weekly update from COSLA covering issues related to COVID-19. Information and resources can also be found on COSLA's social media accounts, with the **Facebook account** and **Twitter account** updated on a regular basis. The COSLA website can be found at **cosla.gov.uk** and the **KHub** for Elected Members is also regularly updated.

The current number of COVID-19 cases and the risk level can be found on the **Scottish Government Website**. **NHS Inform** continues to be the source of up-to-date public health information. All Scottish Government COVID-19 related guidance can be found on **their website**.

Help and support for those experiencing domestic abuse is available at **https://sdafmh.org.uk** The helpline number is **0800 027 1234**.

Key Messages

A **route map setting out a phased approach to easing lockdown restrictions** has been published by the Scottish Government, giving details of a gradual four phase move out of the current state of **lockdown**.

Extra financial support will be given to social care workers in Scotland during the Coronavirus emergency. The Scottish Government has stepped in to provide additional funding to ensure all social care workers receive enhanced sick pay where they have received a positive COVID-19 test.

COSLA has produced guidance for Councils in relation to agency workers whose assignments have been disrupted by the response to COVID-19.

The Scottish Government's Business Support Fund has been increased by £40 million to provide additional support for key sectors of the Scottish economy.

Elected Members Briefing



27 May 2020

Finance

COSLA's Finance team is currently working with Directors of Finance to review the second iteration of the cost collection exercise.

As Councils now approach the end of May, the financial impact of COVID is becoming clearer, with many costs now confirmed and new costs emerging.

The next exercise will look at the impacts for the full financial year, set against the recently published Scottish Government COVID-19 Route Map.

As part of work to support the re-opening of schools and ELC, a subgroup is to be established to examine the additional costs that will be incurred by Local Government.

This was agreed as part of the Education Recovery Group's Strategic Framework published last week.

Test and Protect

Test and Protect – Scotland's approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support' strategy – was announced by the First Minister this week.

It is a public health measure designed to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the community and will help the country gradually change the restrictions that help to suppress the virus. Instead, the aim will be to contain it, so that society and the economy can avoid a return to lockdown and adapt to a new normal.

The Test and Protect approach is designed to help interrupt chains of transmission in the community by identifying cases of COVID-19, tracing the people who may have become infected and supporting them to self-isolate.

'Test, trace, isolate, support' is an important public health measure that many countries have or are putting in place to ensure low levels of transmission of the virus in the community in the next phase. For more information, visit the **[Scottish Government's website](#)**.



27 May 2020

Return to Schools

As you may be aware, the **decision has been made to reopen schools on August 11**, subject to continuing scientific advice that it is safe to do so.

The decision was reached following meetings of the Education Recovery Group which is co-chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Cllr Stephen McCabe, COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People.

In all local areas, officers should now be finalising their local phasing plans to support the return plans appropriate to the requirements of your area.

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings will open over the summer. We will continue to provide support for key workers by maintaining the provision of Education hubs during this time.

Scientific evidence has been published by the Scottish Government **and can be viewed here**.

Family Leave Guidance for Councillors

As the result of recommendations from COSLA's Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group and negotiations with Scottish Government, amendments to the Local Government (Scotland) Act to make provisions for Councillors taking a leave of absence came into force in April.

The regulations remove the caps both on the number of Councillors who can receive certain types of remuneration and the total budget for this in the event of leave being required. The effect is that, in the event of maternity, paternity or adoption leave of for example, a Councillor who has been granted leave can continue to receive remuneration, but that remuneration can also be paid to another Councillor for undertaking duties in their absence. **The statutory instrument can be found here**.

Family Leave Guidance for Councillors, developed for voluntary adoption by Scottish Councils has also been amended to reflect this change.

Elected Members Briefing



27 May 2020

Debate Night Extra

COSLA President, Councillor Alison Evison, joined the BBC Debate Night Extra panel last week to discuss COVID-19, care homes, schools and the role of COSLA. **[You can listen to the session here](#)**

COSLA's Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Gail Macgregor, will also be appearing on the panel on Wednesday, June 3.

Business Gateway

Last week the Scottish Government published its decision-making framework, 'Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis', which will see initial steps out of lockdown when Phase 1 begins on Thursday, May 28.

In line with this, Business Gateway is working closely with the Government to share appropriate guidance with businesses operating in different sectors on how to return to work in line with the guidelines when it is safe to do so.

Furthermore, the Business Gateway National Unit is engaging with Scottish Government and other enterprise agencies on a joint campaign to push forward this back to work guidance. This information will also dictate many of the new resources available and topics covered in the Business Gateway webinar programme in the coming weeks and months, now exceeding 10,000 sign ups over the past two months.

Elected Members Briefing



27 May 2020

Knowledge Hub

COSLA's Knowledge Hub for Elected Members is regularly updated. To use, you have to register first. Here's how:

- Go to <https://khub.net/sign-up> and complete the registration form – you will be sent an email verification;
- Click the link in the email you receive to verify your account then go to <https://khub.net> and sign in with the password you created at registration;
- Once you've logged in, go to the group direct to request to join: <https://khub.net/group/scottish-electedmembers-coronavirus-network>. It will recognise a council email and automatically accept the request.

Trading Standards Scotland

Trading Standards Scotland is part of COSLA. In the latest edition of their **Scam Share bulletin**, they outline scams which have been reported by consumers across Scotland, including those related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

There is some very useful information for local communities, covering issues such as counterfeit goods, council tax scams and unfair pricing.

Elected Members Briefing



27 May 2020

Summary

The Local Government workforce and partners across sectors are working hard to support our communities.

We continue to highlight this across our social media channels using **#CouncilsCare** and it is heartening to see communities working together to look after each other. Retweets and follows would be greatly appreciated.

Further briefings will be issued, however our social media channels, **KHub** and **website** will be continually updated.

If you or your officers require any clarity from COSLA officers on policy matters, please contact the team in the usual way. If you are not sure who to direct your email to, please contact COSLA member support: **membersupport@cosla.gov.uk**

Thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time.



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