
JUNE 2019, ISSUE 4

Inside COSLA

The Local Government Monthly Communication



for
**Inclusive
Growth**



to
**Tackle
Inequalities**



for
**Prosperous
Communities**

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President's Welcome

Welcome to our fourth 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 Local Government.

At COSLA Leaders this month, we expressed sympathy for the sad passing of Colin Mair, the former Chief Executive of the **Improvement Service**.

Many councils have raised their concerns about the suspension of payments under the **European Social Fund** and the impact that this will have on vulnerable members of our communities. I have spoken with **Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government**, about this and officers are continuing to meet with the aim of reaching a resolution.

The Scottish Government has now responded positively to the request I made for funding for councils for resilience work in relation to Brexit. A total of **£1.6m** has been allocated for this work, with each council getting **£50,000**.

Last week, the joint commitment of the spheres of national and local government to the **National Performance Framework** was illustrated when I jointly opened the **Scottish Leaders' Forum** with the **Deputy First Minister, John Swinney**.

Earlier this month I launched the second stage of the **Local Governance Review**, a joint review led by COSLA and the Scottish Government considering how powers, responsibilities and resources are shared across Scotland's public sector and with communities. By making the voice of local people heard across all public services through devolved decision making, we can make progress towards addressing the huge social and financial costs of the persistent inequality that still exists.

On 17th May we recognised and celebrated the **International Day Against Homophobia, Bi-phobia and Transphobia**. Since 2004, this day has been used to draw attention to the violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexuals, transgender, intersex people and people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics. As local decision makers it is essential that we make ourselves aware of the needs of people from across our communities. I was especially proud to see many of councils across Scotland recognise **IDAHOBIT Day 2019** by flying the Pride flag outside local authority buildings.

I would like to give my support to **South Lanarkshire Councillor Graeme Campbell** in relation to the terrifying experience he has recently endured. Violence of any kind against our elected representatives is unacceptable and there is an unequivocal need to stand together in incidents such as these. Last year the **Local Government Information Unit** published initial guidance on the personal safety of councillors and **COSLA's Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group** will examine what more can be done to protect councillors.

Finally, applications for the **2019 COSLA Excellence Awards** closed on the 31st May 2019. All applications will now be judged by a group of external assessors before being whittled down to a final group of 15 projects. As I am one of the judges for the finalist projects I am really looking forward to hearing how councils are transforming local services, improving outcomes and reducing inequalities.

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



COSLA President Councillor Alison Evison



Vice President's Update

Open Government Steering Group

As a member of the Open Government Steering Group, our group has devised a work plan for the next two years.



The aim will be to build upon the collaborative work already carried out across all jurisdictions; establish a process to share learning across the UK; to establish effective, effective ways to lead and spread Open Government – through collaborative dialogue between governments, civil society and experts.

It will have a number of working groups to develop options for the models of leadership and guidance which can support Open Government becoming the way of working across public services. It will consider to what degree that this spread is dependent upon access to the benefits of direct membership of OGP.

Brexit work with Local Government Associations

COSLA continues to work with the English, Welsh and Northern Irish Local Government Associations on Brexit matters. As a result of joint activity all four have been taking part in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government led meetings (on behalf of the UK Government) to ensure we are as best prepared as possible for exiting the European Union. The Local Government Association's Brexit Task Group, which continues to meet regularly, provides an opportunity for officials from the four Associations to exchange information.

Leaders' Recap

Scotland's council Leaders met in Edinburgh on Friday 31st May to discuss COSLA's direction and provide a political mandate for the work carried out by COSLA officers.

Devolved School Management Guidelines

At their meeting in February the Children and Young People Board agreed that good progress had been made in developing the DSM Guidelines. Members also agreed an approach that required local authorities to take action in some areas and consider action where it was recommended. Leaders agreed that the DSM Guidelines should go forward for approval by the Deputy First Minister.

Fiscal Empowerment

This paper updated Leaders on progress against the commitments on Local Government finance set out by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work at Stage 1 of the Scottish Budget 2019/20, with a focus on the commitments



to Council Tax Reform and developing a Fiscal Framework. It also provided an update on the next iteration of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as well as looking forward to the coming Spending Review. Leaders noted and approved the work.

Non-Domestic Rates

Leaders agreed the evidence submission to the Local Government & Communities Committee on the NDR Bill, the funding distributions for standardised billing implementation from April 2020 and applying best practice in publishing NDR relief recipients locally, that officers undertake joint work on options for devolving NDR Empty Property Relief, with a report coming to Leaders in June. It was agreed that officers undertake exploratory work on improving NDR IT infrastructure, with the Scottish Government, Digital Office and Council officers.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Leaders agreed that the proposed revisions to the Council Tax Reduction Regulations are implemented, in order that current levels of entitlement can be maintained in light of Universal Credit implementation.

Supporting Destitute Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds

Leaders agreed to work with the Scottish Government on the development of a joint national strategy that can strengthen the way in which services tackle destitution in a devolved context, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 13 below; that COSLA develop a proactive lobbying campaign with the other local authority associations that can help to secure necessary changes in UK policy, as set out in paragraph 15 below; and; that progress on this work is reported through COSLA's governance structures, as required.

Early Learning and Childcare Expansion - Eligibility for Two Year Olds

Leaders agreed that secondary legislation is brought forward to ensure eligibility for 2-year olds is maintained; noted the reasons for the proposal to increase the income threshold for eligible 2-year olds within secondary legislation; noted the potential impacts on demand; and noted that the impact of the increase in the income threshold will be closely monitored by the ELC Finance Working Group and any significant issues brought back to Leaders for consideration.

Education Reform

Leaders noted the decision of the Children and Young People Board; noted the discussions in relation the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) funding; and agreed the proposed COSLA position.

Mental Health

Leaders agreed to support the funding of suicide prevention planning test areas; agreed the joint response to the Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce recommendations; and agreed COSLA officers work with Scottish Government officials on plans for a new Children and Young People's Mental Health programme board.



Digital Transformation

Leaders agreed that COSLA should seek a meeting with Kate Forbes MSP, the Minister for Digital Economy, to discuss our position on digital.

Local Governance Review Update

Leaders noted the recent progress of the LGR, in particular, around the COSLA three strands of empowerment – community, functional and fiscal; and agreed the key points identified by the LGR Special Interest Group (SIG) to take into the joint political oversight arrangements; and agreed a further paper comes back to Leaders, following the joint political oversight meeting, setting out the next steps.

Distribution

Leaders considered and agreed recommendations from the Settlement and Distribution Group in relation to four specific distribution areas: Access to Counselling in Schools, Access to Sanitary Products in Schools, Appropriate Adults Statutory Service and Alcohol Personal Licence Holder Renewal.



Spokespersons' Update

Community Wellbeing

COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)

Councillor Kelly Parry

Migrants - No Recourse to Public Funds

We have published new Scottish guidance to assist local authorities when they are interpreting their legal duties and seeking to safeguard migrants and asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds. It highlights specific considerations for working with children and young people, adults with disabilities, and survivors of trafficking, that may require a targeted response.



Stay in Scotland Campaign

As part of our commitment to ensure EU citizens recognise they are welcome and valued in Scotland, the Community Wellbeing Board agreed to promote the 'Stay in Scotland' campaign. We are working with Scottish Government, Home Office and other key stakeholders to ensure all EU citizens know about and can access the EU Settlement Scheme.

COSLA Spokesperson (Job-Share)

Councillor Elena Whitham

Homelessness Prevention & Strategy Group

As part of our commitment to find an end to homelessness throughout Scotland I am joint-chairing the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group where we will be discussing and priorities and plans for the Ending Homelessness Together Fund.



Environment and Economy

COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Steven Heddle

Workplace Parking Levy

The Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) amendment has been officially lodged by John Finnie MSP as the Transport Bill has entered stage 2. COSLA has submitted written evidence on the amendment to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. Our submission emphasised our in principle support for WPL as a discretionary power for local authorities.



Waste

With the Scottish Government having formally announced a Deposit Return Scheme, our Board will be considering how the impact this will have on Local Authorities should be addressed. It will also consider how we should approach the UK Government's proposal for a new Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, which could potentially bring significant monies to Scottish Local Authorities. We are continuing intensive work with the Scottish Government on finding a practical and financially viable way forward on the Landfill Ban. Our aim is to take a longer term view of the collective impact of these developments, and work with the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to develop a more strategic approach.

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Amendments to the Bill have been published which seek to reintroduce performance provisions which were opposed by COSLA and the Local Government and Communities Committee and removed at stage 2. These included proposals for an improvement coordinator to monitor "impropriety" and "corruption" in Local Authorities' planning services. Following pressure at both political and officer levels from COSLA, the amendments have now been revised to take out reference to "corruption." COSLA will continue to lobby parliament to ensure the final Bill delivers a locally focused, outcomes driven planning system for Scottish Local Authorities.



Health and Social Care

Interim COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Stuart Currie



Public Health

The Reform of Public Health continues to be a central part of our work and through the 'whole systems working group' we are constantly trying to raise awareness of how councils and their community planning partners can benefit from the reform. Perhaps the most visible aspect of the reform is the establishment of Public Health Scotland and we were delighted to announce last week the appointment of Jim McGoldrick as Shadow Chair. This is a significant step forward.

Integration

The last week in May saw the annual 'NHS Event' take place at Glasgow's SECC and – in a demonstration of our continued, shared commitment to integration – the 'Event' was opened by both the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland, Malcolm Wright and our own Chief Executive Sally Loudon. This is the first time in the event's 14-year history that the COSLA CEO has appeared on stage and the opening session provided an opportunity to present the work to date on the Review of Progress Under Integration.

Mental Health

Mental health continues to be a busy policy area and a priority for COSLA and this month Cllr Currie was involved in launching a new mental health and suicide prevention training resource developed by Scottish Government and the NHS. Cllr Currie also spoke at the 'NHS Event' on the importance of local government in improving mental health outcomes for our communities, stressing the need for a shift towards prevention in the system.



Resources

COSLA Spokesperson

Councillor Gail Macgregor

Non-Domestic Rates Bill

COSLA officers were invited to the Local Government and Communities Committee during May to give evidence on the

Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill and written evidence for Stage 1 was agreed by Leaders at the end of May. COSLA broadly welcomes the Bill but have outlined two areas of concern to the Committee around ALEOS in parks being liable for non-domestic rates, and around ensuring that the revaluation and appeals processes are fully funded. Officers will continue to work on the Bill as it progresses through Parliament.



Fiscal Empowerment: Commitments from Stage 1 of the 2019/20 Scottish Budget

It has been confirmed that Councillor Macgregor will co-Chair the cross-party political group which is being convened to take forward the Scottish Government's commitment to finding a replacement for Council Tax. This is very welcome. As agreed by Leaders, it is essential that Local Government play a leadership role in taking forward this commitment and that this commitment is intrinsically linked to the development of a Fiscal Framework.

Settled Industrial Relations

Successfully concluded pay settlements with the four local government bargaining groups. This has now settled industrial relations around pay until 20201 and invested over £1.7bn in our workforce and the Scottish economy over the three years of the deal.



Children and Young People

COSLA Spokesperson
Councillor Stephen McCabe



Independent Care Review

The Independent Care Review aims to identify and deliver lasting change in the care system and transform the wellbeing of children and young people. COSLA and local authorities are supportive and engaged in the work of the Review to date. The Children and Young People Board were pleased to welcome Fiona Duncan, the Independent Chair of the Review, to their May meeting where she provided an update on the work of the Review.

DYW Programme Priorities

The Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme, a joint COSLA & Scottish Government priority, is now well over the halfway point and it remains a key priority for the Children and Young People Board. The lack of access to funding from the apprenticeship levy (into which all Local Authorities pay) limits the support that local authorities can provide to young people in their role as employers. COSLA is committed to maximising the amount that councils can access from the levy.

Youth Justice

COSLA officers will continue to engage with partners through the Youth Justice Integration Board and bilateral meetings with Scottish Government officials.



Features

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

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

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

This month we've chosen to focus on Equality, Representation and Diversity by covering the Equally Safe Strategy. This priority underlines COSLA's commitment to developing the diversity of local elected representatives, addressing barriers, and encouraging and supporting a wider range of people to vote and come forward as candidates, and identifying changes in culture and practices that further open up Scotland's democracy.

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

THE COSLA PLAN 2017-22



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

Equally Safe

As co-owners of and our commitment to the Equally Safe Strategy, COSLA is determined to create a Scotland whereby women are equally represented on the political stage.

Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women is founded on the understanding that gender inequality is both a cause and a consequence of gender-based violence.

Every one of the 118 actions in the **Equally Safe Strategy's Delivery Plan** are designed to create a Scottish society where women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, and politically, and where women and men have equal access to power and resources.



A core part of this agenda is to dismantle barriers that currently work against women being equally represented in positions of political leadership across national and local spheres of government. Women currently make up only 24% of local councillors, 16% of council leaders and 19% of local council committee conveners, so urgent progress is required.

COSLA have been actively supporting key International Awareness Raising Campaigns, including the **UN Women's International 16 Days of Action** and the **White Ribbon Campaign**. In addition we have promoted opportunities for Members, Office Bearers and staff members to develop greater awareness and understanding of the gendered analysis of violence and abuse and the scope of the strategy.

Whilst there remains much to do, this work, together with the input and drive from our member councils, will allow us to realise our ambitions to make Scotland truly Equally Safe.

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