

Social Renewal Advisory Board

Summary and Recommendations

This paper updates Leaders on Phase Two of the work of the Social Renewal Advisory Board and seeks agreement on COSLA's continued manner of involvement, as members of the Board begin the process of drafting final recommendations and a report.

This paper invites Leaders to:

- i. Note the Social Renewal Advisory Board's proposed 'Reporting Approach and Framework', as outlined at paragraphs 7 – 10, and the potential implications for Local Government of this process; and
- ii. Agree that Cllr Evison and Cllr Whitham continue to represent COSLA on the Social Renewal Advisory Board, but without any direct involvement in drafting the final report, and now withdrawing from the supporting Policy Circles.

References

Previous reports on Social Renewal:

- Leaders 31 July 20 (Item 11): Social Renewal

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Social Renewal Advisory Board

Purpose

1. To update Leaders on Phase Two of the work of the Social Renewal Advisory Board and to seek advice on COSLA's position and involvement as the Board begins drafting its final recommendations and report.

Current COSLA Position

2. On 9 June 2020, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People announced the creation of a Social Renewal Advisory Board. The focus of the Board is on reducing poverty and disadvantage, embedding a human-rights based approach and advancing equality.
3. COSLA is currently represented formally on the Board by President, Cllr Alison Evison. In recent meetings, Cllr Elena Whitham has also been able to attend and will continue to for the remaining meetings. Additionally, SOLACE is represented by Fiona Lees, Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council.
4. Cllr Evison, Cllr Parry and Cllr Whitham, along with a range of COSLA and local authority officers, represent Local Government on the nine supporting Policy Circles, which are Access to Food; Housing System; Financial Security; Age and Disability; Third Sector; Communities and Volunteering; Community-Led and Place Based Renewal; Cross Cutting Delivery and Addressing Low Income.
5. Through COSLA's participation in the Board and Policy Circles much has been learned from people and organisations, helpful in understanding some of the impacts and implications on Covid-19 in our communities. As an example, awareness and understanding of the importance of Place Based Approaches and Equalities and the impact for people and communities across the country has increased and indeed was the subject of a presentation to COSLA Community Wellbeing Board.
6. In Phase One of the work each Policy Circle provided the Board with recommendations for the Programme for Government (PfG). Whilst not all recommendation were included in the published PfG, many are being further discussed by Policy Circles for inclusion in the final report of the Social Renewal Advisory Board, now due to be published mid-December, which will focus on long-term priorities and recommendations.

What is changing?

7. At the meeting of the Board on 7 October, members discussed a paper on the proposed 'SRAB Reporting Approach and Framework' presented by Ms Campbell and Ms Somerville. The Cabinet Secretaries proposed that a small sub-group from the Board, an Editorial Board, be established to draft the final report.

'Key features of proposed reporting'

8. The paper indicated that Board members would take responsibility for delivering an independent report, based on the discussions in circles and at the Board in Phase 2. Other material – community listening events, deep dives, organisational ideas etc – could also be included as desired.
9. The paper advised that the Cabinet Secretaries now intended to step back, as politicians, from any involvement in the drafting of the report. The intention is that the report and its recommendations will be the independent views of Board members, drawing from the work of circles. Members were encouraged to think of recommendations that might apply not just to Scottish Government but also Local and UK Government, and the third sector. Cabinet Secretaries could be consulted if the Board wishes, on the viability of particular proposals or the package of choices/challenges/recommendations as a whole, but this would not be a requirement of the process. The Board would decide.
10. Ultimately the recommendations will be considered by Ministers and Scottish Government envisage there would be a formal response to the report early in the new year.

Proposed COSLA Position

11. Leaders will note that both Cabinet Secretaries have made clear their plans to 'step back' from any involvement in drafting the final report leaving Cllr Evison and Cllr Whitham in a challenging position on the Board. All Board members have been asked to provide comment on the proposed reporting framework and a further update will be presented to Leaders once feedback is available and further processes agreed.
12. It is proposed that, effectively, Cllr Evison and Cllr Whitham mirror the actions of the Cabinet Secretaries going forward. This means they would remain members of the Social Renewal Advisory Board and attend meetings where the Cabinet Secretaries were present but, as politicians, step back from participating in drafting the final report which could include both positive and challenging recommendations for Local Government. The Cabinet Secretaries, Cllr Evison and Cllr Whitham will have opportunities to participate in discussions with the Editorial Board and have access to drafts if comments are sought from politicians.
13. It is also proposed that Cllr Evison, Cllr Whitham and Cllr Parry withdraw from participating in Policy Circles where recommendations will be discussed in more detail and proposed to the Board.
14. COSLA and local authority officers shall continue to participate in each Policy Circle and represent the interests of Local Government throughout the drafting of recommendations. COSLA Officers have shared the Blueprint for Local Government in each Policy Circle and remain committed to making and reinforcing the connections between the priorities for Local Government and Social Renewal in Scotland.
15. On publication of the final report both COSLA, through Leaders, and Scottish Government will provide a formal response, a similar approach taken to the 'Advisory Group on Economy Recovery' report, in January 2021.

Next Steps

16. Cllr Evison and Cllr Whitham will continue to represent COSLA on the Social Renewal Advisory Board but remove themselves from the report writing process. The Board

meets again on 4 November with a further two meetings scheduled. COSLA Officers shall continue to represent Local Government on each of the Policy Circles and influence recommendations, where possible.

17. Further reports on the progress of the Social Renewal Advisory Board will be presented to Leaders as required.

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