

---

FEBRUARY 2020, ISSUE 7

# Inside COSLA

*The Local Government Communication*



for  
**Inclusive  
Growth**



to  
**Tackle  
Inequalities**



for  
**Prosperous  
Communities**

---

## What's Inside?

President's Welcome

Leaders' Recap

Spokespersons' Update

Spending Review Campaign



# President's Welcome

Welcome to our seventh edition of our elected members' communication – 'Inside COSLA'.

Thank you all for returning to read 'Inside COSLA' our regular update to all elected members in Scotland.

This communication, started last year following demand from you the membership, is an opportunity for COSLA to showcase the varied and extensive work we carry out on behalf of Scottish Local Government.

The months of January and February were dominated by our Spending Review Campaign (see the feature later on in this edition of 'Inside COSLA') and arguing for Local Government to get the required resource for our wide and varied work standing up for our communities.

Together, Resources Spokesperson Gail MacGregor, Vice President Graham Houston and I have been pushing the Scottish Government to recognise Local Government in this year's budget. The Stage 1 announcement was particularly disappointing considering COSLA's lobbying. However, we have continued to meet with the Scottish Government, Kate Forbes MSP and the parliament to achieve a better deal for councils at Stage 2 and 3.

Our campaign is calling on the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to invest in essential services, because Local Government is the heart of sustainable communities. We are the only part of the public sector that can deliver the whole systems approach. Our vision for our communities is that they are sustainable, vibrant places to live, work and visit. Fair funding for Local Government must be a Scottish Government priority. Going forward and building on this, we will further highlight the impact we have as a sphere of Government in Scotland.

The four key strands of our Spending Review Campaign – Child Poverty, Inclusive Economic Growth, Wellbeing and Climate Change – will be key pieces of work in this coming year.

I would also like to commend the work of our cross party Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group.

This has recently resulted in Family Leave Guidance for Councillors being circulated to councils for voluntary adoption and the development of our Engaging Young People in Local Democracy Toolkit, aimed at the youthwork sector, to increase understanding of Local Government and engagement with local democratic processes.

Positive negotiations with Scottish Government have also seen amendments to the Local Governance Scotland Act 2004 being laid in parliament that would relax regulations around payments to councillors in the event of a senior councillor requiring leave.

Subject to parliamentary processes we expect to see these regulations come into force later this year.

The Special Interest Group work also addresses the intimidation and abuse of elected members; I spoke at the Civility in Public Life conference in Westminster in December to highlight these behaviours and the threat they pose to democracy.

Intimidation and abuse is being experienced by councillors across the UK and we look forward to working in partnership with the LGA, WLGA and NILGA to challenge these issues together over 2020.

I hope you enjoy this edition of 'Inside COSLA'.



# Leaders' Recap

## Spending Review Update

Leaders heard about the actions taken by COSLA in relation to the Spending Review Campaign and on the high-level media coverage to date. A summary was also provided on engagement activities with Parliament and Ministers to reflect both UK and Scottish Budget timescales. Links to our lobbying document – *Invest in Essential Services* – and the evidence we gave to the Local Government and Finance Committee can be found on the COSLA website.

## COSLA Priorities Update (Oct-Jan 2020)

Leaders were updated on the progress COSLA has made toward our priorities set by COSLA Convention. The COSLA Priorities drive forward the COSLA Plan and everything we do on councils' behalf.



## UK Exit from the EU - Update

This paper provided the latest updates on a number of strands of work currently being progressed by COSLA as we prepare for the UK's Exit from the EU such as Export Health Certificates, Rapid Poverty Mitigation Fund (new £7m for councils), as well as ongoing Risk Monitoring Work on behalf of local authorities.

## Replacement of EU Structural Funds - Scottish Government Consultation

This paper proposed key principles for the COSLA position on replacement of EU Structural Funds including: Scotland based; a central/local partnership; co-production; co-operation; commitment beyond a single Parliamentary term; available funds in line with existing European Structural Fund funding allocations; consolidation of the scope and resource; targeting of the territorial inequality; mainstreaming reporting and audit using existing domestic arrangements; and ability to opt into territorial cooperation programmes.

## **Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme**

This report provided Leaders with the proposals for the joint governance of Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme, along with the Scottish Government. This follows agreement in 2018 that Local Government would work in partnership with Scottish Ministers to deliver the ambitions of this programme. The report also highlighted the introduction of a Heat Networks Regulations Bill this year, as well as a consultation on new standards for Energy Performance Certificates for owner occupiers.

## **COSLA Representation on the Board of Public Health Scotland**

This paper provided Leaders with an outline of the process we will undertake to nominate COSLA representatives to the Board of Public Health Scotland. The Board of Public Health Scotland will comprise a combination of nominated individuals and others appointed through the Public Appointments process. There will be two COSLA nominations who will be ratified by Leaders.

## **Best Value - Draft Revised Guidance**

Having not been significantly revised since 2004, work on updating the Best Value Guidance for local authorities has now been completed. Leaders endorsed the revised Best Value Guidance and agreed to invite Graham Sharp, Chair of the Accounts Commission to a future meeting to present on the roll out of the Best Value audit to Integration Joint Boards. The Guidance will be sent out to all councils by the end of February.

## **Secure Care National Standards**

A set of new Secure Care National Standards have been developed to try to improve outcomes in experience of all young people before, during and after their stay in Secure Care. Leaders agreed that work will be taken forward between Scottish Ministers and the COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson to identify any resource implications, as well as any culture and practice changes required to implement these new standards.



## **Fair Work in Social Care**

Leaders agreed to explore the development of a strategic partnership with the Fair Work Convention as part of COSLA's positive engagement with the Fair Work agenda. Leaders also agreed to COSLA's involvement in the Fair Work in Social Care Group.

## **Suspension of European Social Fund Payments**

Leaders noted the results of intensive negotiations between the COSLA Environment and Economy Spokesperson and the Minister for Trade Investment and Innovation; and reiterated the importance of ESF in providing services to vulnerable disadvantaged people across Scotland; Leaders reinforced the COSLA position that it is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to underwrite any lost ESF monies as it has been the Scottish Government who alone decided the type and shape of the interventions that would deliver the EU Funding Programme 2014-20.

## **Tackling Intimidation and Abuse of Councillors**

Tackling intimidation and abuse is a high priority for COSLA's Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group and is a similarly pressing concern for our sister associations across the UK. This paper outlined a body of work proposed by the Special Interest Group to tackle this issue, working with partners across the UK to maximise resources and impact. Leaders agreed to progress this work.

## **Special Responsibility Allowances**

COSLA lobbied the Scottish Government for amendments to the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 to give councils greater flexibility to appropriately pay senior councillors on any form of extended leave e.g. maternity, paternity and adoption. Negotiations with Scottish Government have been successful and amended regulations that remove the relevant caps, were laid in Parliament in February. Subject to Parliamentary processes we expect to see these come into force later this year.

COSLA President, Councillor Alison Evison, said: "We welcome these amendments to legislation which will give greater flexibility to councils to pay any councillor requiring leave appropriately."



## **Health and Social Care: Improving Outcomes and Performance**

Leaders agreed to note the proposed principles underpinning an agreement between COSLA and Scottish Government to enhance joint accountability for performance in health and social care; and noted that the Scottish Government have intimated that any transfer from the health budget into integration authorities via the Local Government settlement will be contingent on such an agreement; noted the Scottish Government's position on additionality; agreed that the focus should be on improving outcomes for communities and local accountability; agreed the COSLA position and provide a mandate for the COSLA Spokesperson for Health and Social Care to agree the principles outlined with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport.



# Spokespersons' Update

## Community Wellbeing

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

#### **Councillor Kelly Parry**



#### **Partnership Summit on Employability**

This annual Ministerial Summit on employability has been retitled to recognise the formal commitment to a collaborative approach between Scottish and Local Government. Councillor Parry made a speech at the Summit on 5th February to reinforce Local Government's commitment to working not only with Scottish Government but also the third sector, business and with other public bodies. Councillor Parry asserted the need to position employability as a critical service in tackling poverty, promoting wellbeing and building stronger, sustainable communities.

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

#### **Councillor Elena Whitham**

#### **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans**

The COSLA Community Wellbeing Board members agreed at their January 2020 meeting to continue local authorities' longstanding commitments to tackling homelessness and maintaining an affordable housing supply. It was noted that due to uncertainties surrounding the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and the Social Housing new build programme after 2020/21, that COSLA would write to the Scottish Government seeking reassurances.



# Environment and Economy

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Steven Heddle**

### **Conference of the Parties (COP)**

COSLA continues to work to ensure Scottish Local Government participation in UN agreements for climate change and sustainable development over the course of several years.



Councillor Heddle represented COSLA at the COP25 UN Climate Summit in Madrid at the end of last year. He spoke at events facilitated by our European and International membership bodies as well as our Spanish counterparts. He will join Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Roseanna Cunningham and the UK Government COP Chair Alok Sharma MP in outlining the vision for a successful COP 26 Summit in Glasgow in November. COSLA is currently in active discussions to ensure that there is a strong Local Government presence in COP26. COSLA's recent work at COP25 Madrid provides grounds to initiate these discussions both at home and in Brussels with international partners.

### **European Social Fund Suspension (ESF)**

As discussed by Leaders, Councillor Heddle and the team have been working intensively with the Minister for Trade Investment and Innovation to ensure that money claimed by councils for ESF projects is paid and that further claims can be made. A key aim has also been to impress on the Scottish Government the need to commit to fully underwrite any monies lost by local authorities as a result of the suspension. The Minister agreed to resume payments for claims made and to process, verify and pay further claims made by councils. Work continues with the Scottish Government and Local Government partners on getting the suspension lifted.

### **Waste Summit**

COSLA and Scottish Government hosted a Waste summit at the end of the year which brought together senior representatives from the waste industry, third sector, Local and Scottish Government, to look at the challenges this sector faces and the contribution it can make to meeting Scotland's carbon reduction targets. COSLA's Environment and Economy Board will be considering the outcomes and considering next steps at a meeting of the Board on the 14th February.





# Health and Social Care

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Stuart Currie**



### **Integrated Workforce Plan**

In December, COSLA and the Scottish Government published the first national Integrated Workforce Plan for Health and Social Care. This represents a firm step towards improved understanding of workforce supply and demand issues across the whole system of health and social care. The national plan was published alongside guidance on local integrated plans, for Health and Social Care Partnerships.

### **Social Care Survey**

In related work, a research report on the local and national labour markets for social care is scheduled for publication in February. Commissioned by Scottish Government with support from COSLA, the research draws mainly from a large survey of social services workers and their employers. Very encouragingly, almost 80% of respondents indicated they wished to continue working in the sector.

### **Social Care Workforce Campaign**

Alongside supporting this existing valued workforce, there remains a need to encourage others to consider a career in social care. A major adult social care marketing campaign, 'There's more to care than caring,' was launched nationally on 27th January with COSLA disseminating the information to all media channels.



# Resources

## **COSLA Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor**



### **Spending Review**

Since the turn of the year, working with the Presidential Team, much of my time has been spent on COSLA's lobbying and media campaign to get fair funding for the essential services councils deliver. This lobbying work has urged Scottish Government to recognise Local Government in the Budget it will seek Parliamentary approval for later this month.

We also did work in lobbying all the political parties in the Parliament to get behind our call on the Scottish Government to invest in the essential services that councils provide – our role is unique in the governance of Scotland and in creating sustainable communities.

### **Non-Domestic Rates**

COSLA welcomes the passing of the Non-Domestic Rates Bill and as a result of key lobbying from COSLA officers, will work with the Scottish Government to take forward their commitment for joint work on the future of Non-Domestic Rates in Scotland.

### **myjobscotland**

The end of 2019 was a busy time for the myjobscotland team with a new programme board being approved by Leaders in November, and the upgrade of the platform which allows users to input their CVs as well as delivering a copy of their final application directly to their email account. Thanks to support in testing this new form from more than 20 councils, the implementation period was reduced by two weeks and went live a week before Christmas.



# Children and Young People

**COSLA Spokesperson**  
**Councillor Stephen McCabe**



## **ELC Parental Communications**

With less than eight months to go until we deliver the 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare, January saw the launch of the national public information campaign to encourage families to enrol their children. I was delighted to join the Minister for Children and Young People, and the children of Tower View Nursery in Glasgow, to speak to parents who are already benefiting from the increased hours.

## **School Food Regulations**

The COSLA Children and Young People Board asked officers to work with the Scottish Government to understand the challenges of implementing new regulations aimed at making food provided in schools healthier. We have engaged with councils and professional associations to gain an understanding of the costs and other challenges associated with the introduction of new regulations. This information has been taken into discussions with the Scottish Government and we will present the results of these back to the Board.

## **Counselling through Schools**

Over the last year, COSLA and Scottish Government have worked together on a range of issues relating to improving the support available for children, young people and families who may be experiencing difficulties relating to mental health. As part of this, funding was agreed so that local authorities could build on the support they provide by making counselling services available, accessible through schools, for children and young people over the age of 10. A set of principles for this were jointly agreed for delivery, importantly allowing for local flexibility and emphasising the need for counselling to be seen as one part of a holistic approach to improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The counselling commitment is funded by £12m for 2019/20 for part-year costs between August 2019 and March 2020, and £16m from 2020/21 for full year costs, which will be baselined into the Local Government Settlement thereafter.



# COSLA'S CAMPAIGN PUTS COUNCILS AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES

Since the turn of the year COSLA's lobbying and media campaign has urged the Scottish Government to recognise Local Government in the Budget it will seek Parliamentary approval for later this month.

COSLA is calling on the Scottish Government to invest in the essential services that councils provide – our role is unique in the governance of Scotland and in creating sustainable communities.

The campaign promotes a Vision where Scotland's communities are sustainable, vibrant places to live, work and visit. That requires investment from Scottish Government.



To cope with an uncertain context this year in relation to Budget timing, the campaign was designed to be agile and adaptable in order to maximise exposure and gain traction with stakeholders, media and Parliamentarians.

Our campaign launched on Monday 13th January with the publication of our 'Invest in Local Government' document and a series of press releases were issued to ensure the key messages of the campaign around investment and asks were clear. These attracted positive media interest.

A copy of the document can be found on the front page of the COSLA website at [www.cosla.gov.uk](http://www.cosla.gov.uk).

Over the course of the week, we published four themed documents, focused on our agreed priorities- inclusive economic growth, wellbeing, tackling climate change and addressing climate change. Each theme was supported with quotes from key stakeholders including UNISON, Aberlour and the Poverty Alliance. The media and parliamentary engagement was also supported with a range of social media activity - which proved to be reasonably successful.

On the day that the Draft Budget was presented to Parliament - a joint statement was issued immediately from the President Alison Evison and the Resources Spokesperson Gail Macgregor.

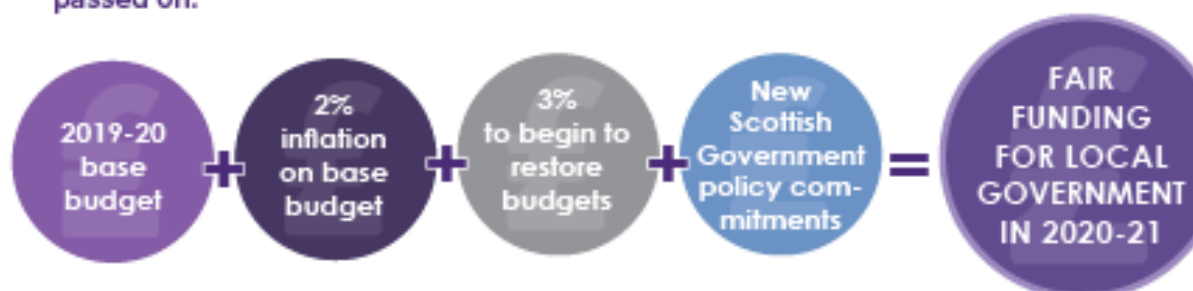
Our Phase 2 work included more media work, resulting in our most sustained and successful media campaign to date. Further lobbying of the Parliament and the political parties as well as giving evidence at committee together with SOLACE and Directors of Finance. Indeed we worked closely with all Professional Associations throughout our Spending Review campaign to this stage.

In case you missed it, our core asks and what this means in cash terms, as well as our asks for fiscal empowerment, can be found on the next page.

## What Local Government and communities need

We need fair funding for Local Government that looks across the whole system.

All signs are that the Scottish Government will see a cash increase and this must be passed on.



For **Revenue**, this means an additional £1,007m.

For **Capital**, this means an additional £157m.

	19-20 base budget	Inflation @ 2% (on base budget)	3% to restore budgets (on base + inflation)	Scottish Government commitments	FAIR FUNDING FOR 2020-21
<b>Revenue</b>	£10,078m	£202m	£308m	£497m	£11,085m
<b>Capital</b>	£709m*	£14m	£22m	£121m	£866m

\* excludes 19-20 Early Learning and Childcare (£175m), reprofiled money from 16/17 (£150m) and town centre fund

In addition, our asks for *fiscal empowerment* include:

1. Removal of any cap on Council Tax – this must be a truly local tax.
2. More powers for discretionary taxation.
3. Longer-term certainty in relation to budgets, allowing a focus on early intervention, prevention and transformation.
4. An end to small pots of money outside the main settlement.
5. Increased pace in relation to Local Government empowerment – fiscal, community and functional.



## **OUR INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT BUDGET WAS AS FOLLOWS**

We said we were disappointed that once again the Scottish Government has presented a Budget for Local Government that looks much better than the reality behind the figures.

Commenting following the Scottish Government's Budget announcement, COSLA's Resources Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor, said: "On the face of it this looks like a good Budget for Local Government with a cash increase of £495million in revenue funding and whilst we acknowledge this money, the reality behind this figure unfortunately is quite different.

"What we are left with when you factor in the Scottish Government commitments of £590million – is a cut to Local Government core budgets of £95 million. This is £95 million in hard cash that will need to be taken out of front line services for communities. We campaigned hard to ensure that this position did not happen – it is disappointing our message has not been listened to.

"When you add in a £117million cut to capital funding (which equates to a 17% cash cut) – a hit to both communities and growing the economy – you are left with a crisis for Local Government which is a long way from the picture being painted. This is even worse when seen in the context of an increasing capital Budget for the Scottish Government.

COSLA President, Councillor Alison Evison, added: "Local Government's core budget which provides our essential services has been cut as a result of today's budget. The budget reality that our

communities now face cuts to services, cuts to local jobs, cuts to the work councils do to tackle child poverty and respond to climate change.

“It is also extremely disappointing that we have seen no money for inflation or any other of the significant pressures we face in relation to demand COSLA will be raising these issues with the Scottish Government and all parties across the Parliament at the earliest opportunity to ensure that politicians can scrutinise the budget scrutiny fully. It is our communities that will suffer.

“Things cannot go on in this manner. More and more of what Local Government does is directed by the centre. As a result of the Scottish Government commitments that Local Government has to deliver, we are no longer able to respond to local priorities.”

Following the Budget announcement, COSLA published its “Budget Reality”, presenting the Local Government Settlement figures against the 2019/20 Budget Baseline.

We submitted written evidence at the Local Government and Communities Committee on the 19th February. This evidence reiterated our campaign messages and the need for fair funding.

COSLA will continue to press Scottish Government to invest in councils and will meet with the Government and all opposition parties ahead of Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the Budget Bill.

FEBRUARY 2020 | ISSUE 7



# Inside COSLA

*The Local Government Monthly Communication  
emailed to every Councillor in Scotland every month*