

Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party - political cooperation agreement

Implications for Local Government

Background

The Scottish Government and the Scottish Green party published their [policy programme](#) and [cooperation agreement](#) on 20th August 2021. The agreement includes a shared policy programme agreed by both parties this includes areas that are:

- explicitly agreed as priorities
- Specific set of excluded areas, where parties agree to disagree
- general presumption that parties will work together to seek agreement on areas not specified

Additionally that the Scottish Green Party will:

- support the Scottish Government in budget votes
- Supporting the Scottish Government in votes of no confidence

Policy Framework implications for Local Government.

Key implications for Local Government include:

Finance

- Establish Citizens' assembly on local government funding:
 - A citizen's assembly will consider the funding of local government through Council Tax and how to develop 'a fairer, more inclusive and fiscally sustainable form of local taxation'.
 - This process will be steered by a working group which COSLA will be invited to sit on.
 - A timescale of a minimum of 18 months to 'establish, recruit, deliver and report', with recommendations debated in parliament within 6 months
- Working with councils to tackle known tax avoidance tactics in empty property relief and charity relief.
- develop a fiscal framework for local government and the devolution of empty property relief on 1 April 2023.

Economy

- introduce a requirement on public sector grants to pay at least the real Living Wage to all employees, subject to limits on devolved competence.
- Introduce a Community Wealth Building Bill, which will focus on encouraging diverse and inclusive local economies, finance, land, and ownership models.
- Use tax powers over Landfill Tax to ensure they are in line with Net Zero ambitions

Housing

- Deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in remote, rural and island communities
- By 2025 introduce ‘an effective national system of rent controls, with an appropriate mechanism to allow local authorities to introduce local measures’.
- Give local authorities the ability to manage the impact of second homes and bring empty homes back into use
- Tackle homelessness by rolling out housing first.

Child Poverty

- Double the Scottish Child Payment in the lifetime of this Parliament, including ‘an ambition to accelerate the implementation of that commitment, including looking at options for staged increases’
- Provide ‘bridging payments’ to eligible children of £520 in both 2021 and 2022
- £10m to increase access to money advice services, focusing on schools and health settings
- Explore with councils’ options to automate benefits and improve passporting.
- Independent review of the Scottish Welfare
- Extend financial support to people subject to No Recourse to Public Funds

School Education

- at least 3,500 additional teacher and 500 classroom assistants over and above the 1,400 recruited during the pandemic.
- A programme of education reform, incorporating the recommendations in the OECD report into CfE, and the conclusions of the work of Professor Ken Muir, the adviser on replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Work with SNCT to ‘ensure appropriate career progression and pathways for teachers to specialise in ASN’. Develop an accredited qualification and registration programme
- for Additional Support Needs assistants
- a ‘guarantee of access’, in school, to the mental health and wellbeing support

National Care Service

- “promote and support the consultation on establishing a National Care Service and support the resulting legislation and accompanying guidance and introduce legislation by June 2022’, this will include:
 - “improved national accountability, where Ministers are responsible for the delivery of adult social care services as they are for health services”.
 - “an ability for the Scottish Government to be able to direct and set standards to improve outcomes for people, while ensuring appropriate local input and engagement”.
- a system of national collective bargaining on pay, terms and conditions within the social care sector.
- “ongoing and regular engagement at a local level, with all partners, will be necessary to ensure effective system re-design and stability of services for people throughout the transformation period”.
- “in establishing a National Care Service, including any transfer of financial resources from local authorities to reformed integration boards, we shall take into consideration the impact on local authorities’ ability to resource and deliver other services’.

Mental Health

- double the budget for community based mental wellbeing services for children and young people to £30 million.

Transport

- increase the proportion of Transport Scotland's budget spent on Active Travel initiatives to £320m by 204-25
- local authorities will be encouraged to deliver more 'Safe to School' initiatives.
- a Community Bus Fund will be introduced, to local transport authorities to improve local public transport in their areas and explore the full range of options set out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, including municipal bus services.

Energy

- “developing and agreeing through consultation a series of phased targets starting in 2024, with the most difficult buildings like hospitals being decarbonised by 2038, and for all publicly-owned buildings to meet zero emission heating requirements, with a backstop of 2038.”
- to enable local government and housing associations to provide whole home retrofits where needed, helping to upgrade the most inefficient and expensive to heat social homes to the highest possible standard in one leap.

Planning

- Collaborate on Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), including:
 - 20-minute neighbourhoods
 - bringing vacant and derelict land and property back into productive use
 - meet the housing requirements of people living in Scotland, including where there are pressures arising from second home ownership

Next Steps

We understand the Cabinet has agreed with proposed policy programme and cooperation agreement. Both political parties have due diligence to go through before the cooperation deal is ratified, but is expected to be in place for the beginning of the Parliamentary term.