



Convention Item 02

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COSLA CONVENTION

Friday 31st March 2023, 11am

At Verity House, Edinburgh and via MS Teams

Present:

COSLA President	Cllr Shona Morrison
COSLA Vice-President	Cllr Steven Heddle
Aberdeen City Council	Angela Scott
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Alex Nicoll
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Ian Yuill
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Miranda Radley
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Emma Farquhar*
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Barney Crockett
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Anne Stirling
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Gwyneth Petrie
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr John Cox
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Mark Findlater
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Ross Cassie
Aberdeenshire Council	Jim Savege
Angus Council	Cllr Beth Whiteside
Angus Council	Cllr Brenda Durno*
Angus Council	Cllr Craig Fotheringham*
Angus Council	Cllr Kenny Braes
Angus Council	Mark Armstrong*
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Daniel Hampsey
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Jim Lynch
Argyll and Bute Council	Cllr Robin Currie
Argyll and Bute Council	Pippa Milne
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Adam McVey
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Alys Mumford
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Joan Griffiths*
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Iain Whyte
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Lesley MacInnes
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Ellen Forson
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Janine Rennie*
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Martha Benny
Clackmannanshire Council	Nikki Bridle
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Duncan MacInnes
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Kenneth Macleod
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Paul Steele
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Malcolm Burr
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Katie Hagmann
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Archie Dryburgh
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Richard Brodie
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Gail Macgregor
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Stephen Thompson
Dundee City Council	Cllr Craig Duncan

Dundee City Council	Cllr Heather Anderson
Dundee City Council	Cllr Ken Lynn
Dundee City Council	Cllr Kevin Keenan
Dundee City Council	Cllr Willie Sawers*
Dundee City Council	Gregory Colgan
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Douglas Reid
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Jim McMahon
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr John McFadzean
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Maureen McKay
East Ayrshire Council	Eddie Fraser
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Stewart MacDonald*
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Gordan Low
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Vaughan Moody
East Dunbartonshire Council	Gerry Cornes
East Lothian Council	Cllr Norman Hampshire
East Lothian Council	Monica Patterson
East Renfrewshire Council	Lorraine McMillan
East Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Gordon Wallace
East Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Andrew Anderson*
East Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Tony Buchanan
Falkirk Council	Cllr Euan Stainbank*
Falkirk Council	Cllr Cecil Meiklejohn
Falkirk Council	Cllr James Bundy
Falkirk Council	Cllr Paul Garner
Falkirk Council	Kenneth Lawrie
Fife Council	Cllr Alan Knox
Fife Council	Cllr Brian Goodall
Fife Council	Cllr David Ross
Fife Council	Cllr Kathleen Leslie
Fife Council	Cllr Lesley Backhouse
Fife Council	Cllr Rosemary Liewald
Fife Council	Steve Grimmond
Glasgow City Council	Annemarie O'Donnell
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Blair Anderson
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Fyeza Ikhlaq
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Jon Molyneux
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Kieran Turner
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Roza Salih
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Soryia Siddique
Glasgow City Council	Cllr Susan Aitken
Highland Council	Cllr Alasdair Christie
Highland Council	Cllr Bill Lobban
Highland Council	Cllr John Finlayson
Highland Council	Cllr Ken Gowans
Highland Council	Cllr Raymond Bremmer
Highland Council	Malcolm Macleod*
Inverclyde Council	Cllr Elizabeth Robertson
Inverclyde Council	Cllr Natasha McGuire
Inverclyde Council	Cllr Stephen McCabe
Inverclyde Council	Louise Long
Midlothian Council	Cllr David Virgo
Midlothian Council	Cllr Kelly Parry
Midlothian Council	Cllr Russell Imrie
Midlothian Council	Dr Grace Vickers
Moray Council	Cllr Donald Gatt
Moray Council	Cllr Graham Leadbitter
Moray Council	Cllr Kathleen Robertson
Moray Council	Roderick Burns
North Ayrshire Council	Cllr Joe Cullinane
North Ayrshire Council	Cllr Marie Burns

North Ayrshire Council	Cllr Shaun Macaulay
North Ayrshire Council	Craig Hatton
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Alan Masterton*
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Andrew Duffy-Lawson
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Angela Campbell
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Kirsten Larson
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Lorraine Nolan
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Paul Kelly
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Tracy Carragher
North Lanarkshire Council	Derek Brown*
Orkney Islands Council	Cllr Heather Woodbridge
Orkney Islands Council	Cllr James Stockan
Orkney Islands Council	Oliver Reid
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr Stewart Donaldson*
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr Grant Laing
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr John Duff
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr Peter Barrett
Perth and Kinross Council	Thomas Glen
Renfrewshire Council	Laura McIntyre*
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Alison-Ann Dowling*
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Iain Nicolson
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Jim Paterson*
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr John Shaw
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Neill Graham
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr Elaine Thornton-Nicol
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr Euan Jardine
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr Scott Hamilton
Scottish Borders Council	David Robertson
Shetland Islands Council	Cllr Andrea Manson
Shetland Islands Council	Cllr Moraig Lyall*
Shetland Islands Council	Cllr Emma Macdonald
Shetland Islands Council	Maggie Sandison
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Brian Connolly
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Brian McGinley
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Martin Dowey
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Peter Henderson
South Ayrshire Council	Eileen Howat
South Lanarkshire Council	Cleland Sneddon
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Alex Alison
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Maureen Devlin*
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Joe Fagan
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr John Ross
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Katy Loudon
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Maureen Chalmers
Stirling Council	Carol Beattie
Stirling Council	Cllr Chris Kane
Stirling Council	Cllr Rachel Nunn*
Stirling Council	Cllr Scott Farmer
West Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Clare Steel
West Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Karen Conaghan
West Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Lawrence O'Neill
West Dunbartonshire Council	Peter Hessel
West Lothian Council	Cllr Damian Doran-Timson
West Lothian Council	Cllr Robert De Bold*
West Lothian Council	Cllr Kirsteen Sullivan
West Lothian Council	Cllr Lawrence Fitzpatrick
West Lothian Council	Graham Hope

Apologies

Aberdeen City Council	Angela Scott
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Ryan Houghton
Angus Council	Cllr Bill Duff
Angus Council	Cllr Derek Wann
Angus Council	Margo Williamson
City of Edinburgh Council	Andrew Kerr
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Cammy Day
City of Edinburgh Council	Cllr Kevin Lang
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Kenneth Earle
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Dawn Roberts
Dundee City Council	Cllr Steven Rome
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Alan Moir
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Andrew Polson
East Lothian Council	Cllr Lachlan Bruce
East Lothian Council	Cllr Lyn Jardine
East Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Owen O'Donnell
East Renfrewshire Council	Lorraine McMillan
Falkirk Council	Cllr Anne Hannah
Glasgow City Council	Cllr George Redmond
Highland Council	Kate Lackie
North Ayrshire Council	Cllr Tom Marshall
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Alan Stubbs
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Jim Logue
North Lanarkshire Council	Des Murray
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr Eric Drysdale
Renfrewshire Council	Alan Russell
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Iain McMillan
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Jacqueline Cameron
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr David Parker
Shetland Islands Council	Cllr Davie Sandison
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Gerry Convery
Stirling Council	Cllr Neil Benny
West Lothian Council	Cllr Janet Campbell

**Denotes Substitute Provided*

Public Session

1. President Introduction

Cllr Morrison formally opened the meeting and thanked delegates for attending in person and virtually.

Apologies were noted.

2. Draft Minute Convention Meeting Friday 28th October 2022

A correction to the minute was noted - Cllr Low was noted as an apology on the meeting which took place on Friday 28th October 2022 when he was in fact present. Cllr Virgo was also recorded incorrectly as a delegate from Inverclyde Council when this should have been Midlothian.

The Minute was agreed as an accurate record with those changes made following the meeting.

3. COSLA Budget 2023/24

This report sought approval from Convention for the COSLA operating budget for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.

Cllr Daggart, Chair of COSLA's Audit Committee, informed Convention that in March 2021, a four-year Budget was approved covering 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025. This paper asks Convention to approve an updated third year of that Budget, as recommended by the Audit Group, following their meeting on 9th March.

Convention was asked to note that very few budget headings have changed from the figures initially approved two years ago. Amendments have been made to incorporate items like the Pay Award agreed in December 2021 and November 2022, and the recent increases in energy costs. Strong financial performances during the first two years of the four year budget have also been reflected, meaning there is no overall net change to the bottom line. Cllr Daggart added that the Audit Group was planning a programme of work for the next 12-18 months, to ensure a focus on financial governance and risk.

Convention delegates queried how the rising energy costs were likely to affect Verity House. Officers noted that COSLA takes advantage of a contract that Scottish Government had negotiated to protect prices. .

Convention:

- i. Approved an updated third year of that Budget, as recommended by the Audit Group, following their meeting on 9th March; and
- ii. Noted the potential need for members to be approached for an additional contribution due to the increasing requirement to obtain legal opinions on behalf of member Councils in relation to areas like the National Care Service, Education reforms, and Employers' responsibilities.

4. COSLA Plan

This paper noted that Convention delegates would recall in June 2022, following the first meeting of Convention since the 2022 Local Elections, it had been agreed a new COSLA plan should be drafted to guide the work COSLA does for Local Government in Scotland. Following Leaders agreement in November 2022, Convention had asked that the plan come back to the next Convention meeting for formal endorsement.

Convention:

- i. Endorsed the final COSLA Plan 2022-2027 as approved by Leaders in November 2022.

5. European Charter on Local Self Government

This paper provided Convention with a further update on the incorporation of the European Charter on Local Self- Government into Scottish Legislation.

An amendment in the following terms was proposed by Councillor Barrett, seconded by Councillor Ross.

Replace recommendation (iii) with:

- (iii) To agree the Presidential team, take the earliest opportunity to impress upon the newly appointed First Minister and Minister for Local Government Empowerment the importance of prioritising the Incorporation of the European Charter into Scots Law in support of the First Minister's clearly stated commitment to securing a meaningful New Deal with Local Government; and*
- (iv) Further, to agree to seek from the Minister for Local Government Empowerment, a clearer timetable of when the necessary Bill will be re-submitted to the Scottish Parliament for its reconsideration.*

The Amendment was unanimously agreed by Convention Delegates.

Accordingly, Convention:

- i. Noted the lack of apparent progress through the Scottish Parliament since the last meeting of either of the Bills to incorporate the UNCRC and the European Charter of Local Self-Government into Scots law;
- ii. Agreed that COSLA continue to engage with Mark Ruskell MSP, on expediting the development and progress of the European Charter Bill; and
- iii. Agreed the Presidential team take the earliest opportunity to impress upon the newly appointed First Minister and Minister for Local Government Empowerment the importance of prioritising the Incorporation of the European Charter into Scots Law in support of the First Minister's clearly stated commitment to securing a meaningful New Deal with Local Government; and
- iv. Further, to agree to seek from the Minister for Local Government Empowerment, a clearer timetable of when the necessary Bill will be re-submitted to the Scottish Parliament for its reconsideration.

6. Ethical Standards Commissioner- Presentation

Convention Delegates welcomed a presentation from Iain Bruce who had now been appointed as Ethical Standards Commissioner approved for the next six years.

Convention Delegates welcomed the presentation and highlighted that there had been a long period in which complaints were being investigated and queried if there was anything being done to reduce the time these were taking to process. Iain Bruce confirmed that there had been a high turnover of staff and recently two new full time investigating officers had been recruited, therefore the time frame should be reduced.

Convention Delegates queried what was being done to tackle sexual harassment towards Councillors. Iain Bruce confirmed the investigating team had been trained by lawyers and were in continued engagement with rape crisis Scotland on how best to support those individuals who have been targeted by this harassment and work will remain ongoing.

Convention Delegates highlighted they would welcome an accelerated process to find resolutions with a less legal approach as individuals can often feel like they are being prosecuted as there was increasing pressure mounting on Councillors. Iain Bruce

echoed concerns and noted this is something Local Government could raise with Parliament to reassess the framework.

Convention Delegates thanked Iain Bruce for the helpful presentation and questions, it was also noted Mr Bruce's contact details had been circulated with the slides and he would be happy to receive any further questions.

7. Spokesperson's Updates

COSLA Spokespersons provided an overview and updated to Convention Delegates of some of the recent work they had been involved in.

Vice President, Cllr Steven Heddle

Cllr Heddle noted he had been continuing work on COSLA's commitment to strengthening local democracy, therefore it would be imperative to secure the incorporation of the European Charter into Scots Law. It was also highlighted Cllr Heddle would continue to be involved in strengthening the relationship between local and National Government and working on the Special Interest Group Barriers to elected office.

Resources Spokesperson, Cllr Katie Hagmann

Cllr Hagmann noted it had been a busy few months, working to secure sustainable funding for Local Government, negotiating pay and working on the digital agenda. Cllr Hagmann highlighted work would continue with building relationships with the new Scottish Government cabinet and work will remain ongoing on the Fiscal Framework for Local Government as well as co-chairing the Joint Digital Strategy Board.

Health and Social Care Spokesperson- Cllr Paul Kelly

Cllr Kelly highlighted work had been ongoing with the National Care Service Bill and in December Leaders had taken the view this should be paused, since the Scottish Government has delayed Stage 1 on the bill until June. This decision was welcomed and hoped this would come with the opportunity for meaningful and detailed discussion. Cllr Kelly also outlined the work COSLA and LAs had been involved in managing pressures across the Health and Social Care system this winter and that the learning would be used as we plan and prepared for ongoing pressures across the system.

Children and Young People Spokesperson- Cllr Tony Buchanan

Cllr Buchanan detailed that February marked the third anniversary of the publication of The Promise report and noted there had been a great deal of progress, however, remains a lot of work still to do. It was noted the Board are also engaged with the independent review of qualifications and examinations. It was noted work will remain ongoing to shape the formation of new national education bodies to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland.

Environment and Economy Spokesperson- Cllr Gail MacGregor

Cllr Gail Macgregor highlighted work would remain ongoing in various areas which are key priorities such as place, planning, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Levelling Up, waste and recycling and climate change. COSLA will also

be engaging with SCOTS and ACTO to prioritise work on active travel, public transport and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Community Wellbeing Spokesperson- Cllr Maureen Chalmers

Cllr Chalmers noted work had continued with the Scottish Government to continue to tackle violence against women and girls through our equally safe structures including Violence Against Women Partnerships. Work will also continue to promote wellbeing through sports and culture, meetings have taken place with Councillors, Ministers and Officials given the crisis facing the sector. It was also highlighted tackling the cost-of-living crisis remains a priority of the Board. Cllr Chalmers also highlighted she had enjoyed chairing the Trading Standards Scotland Governance Board learning about the important work being done to support consumers.

Convention delegates welcomed the updates and queried what plans were in place to reach out and begin building relationships with new Ministers. Cllr Morison noted COSLA had welcomed an invite for herself to meet with the New First Minister and Deputy First Minister later in the afternoon. It was also noted that Officers would be sending letters from the Spokespeople in the coming days, congratulating the new Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries and requesting meetings to progress key policy areas that were important to Local Government.

8. COSLA Excellence Awards

This paper highlighted that Leadership Sounding Board (LSB) had agreed that an in-person Annual COSLA Conference and Excellence Awards should take place for the first time since 2019. A date of Thursday 28 and Friday 29 September 2023 at the Crieff Hydro Hotel has been secured for this purpose.

Convention Delegates welcomed this update and looked forward to discussing, debating and celebrating the work of Local Government across both events.

Convention delegates noted the request to promote the event widely and that COSLA's Communications team would be happy to provide support and promotional material where required.

9. Date of next meeting of Convention

As has been the case in previous years, it is planned to hold Convention in person after Conference, on Friday 29 September. This means that Convention will be held a month earlier than previously planned, and diary invites would be amended accordingly.

Cllr Morrison closed the meeting at 1:15pm, thanked all members for attending and looked forward to seeing delegates in person at Conference in September.