

For the benefit of people across Scotland, COSLA expects a UK government, working with their devolved governments, to respect the democratic mandate of Councillors and put the **LOCAL** back into Local Government by:

Fully supporting local democracy through the enactment of the European Charter of Local Self-government

● **What is it?**

The European Charter has nothing to do with the 'European Union'. Its purpose is to promote and protect the key role of councils, empowering them to lead and act independently, and enabling communities to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and their communities. These are the key principles of Local Self-Government.

It was developed in 1985 and is ratified by 47 Council of Europe member states these include; France, Spain, Germany and Italy. The Charter promotes democracy, de-centralisation, and local autonomy. By providing a set of common standards and principles, it aims to ensure that local self- government is protected and respected uniformly, contributing to overall stability and democratic governance. This will be done by re- establishing an open, honest and functioning relationship and encouraging communities to express their views on local issues through a strong local democratic decision- making process.

The adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government into domestic law is one of the fundamental priorities as outlined in the COSLA Plan 2022-27.

COSLA believes the Charter will support a more respectful relationship between Scottish Local Government and the Scottish Government, one that serves communities better; One that is based on being equal partners and that promotes decision making being taken closest to and involving the communities directly affected.

● **How does this work with the Verity House Agreement (VHA)?**

Some parts of the Verity House Agreement are directly and deliberately lifted from the Charter, to encourage it to be adopted immediately. But a fundamental difference is that the VHA is a voluntary agreement, where the Charter will have legal standing when adopted into Scots Law.

The Charter will supersede many the parts of the VHA. However, the VHA defines in detail the relationship and the future fiscal arrangements we aspire to, so will still be important and relevant.

● **What will the Charter do for communities in Scotland?**

It would give a legal underpinning to Local Government as a formal sphere of government alongside national government. The European Charter of Local Self-Government (Scotland) Bill is the legislative vehicle which will establish the Charter in law.

In turn, this will respect local government and empower communities to have more say and opportunity to participate and take decisions which are important to them and their local needs. This will also progress towards a democratic system which benefits from greater local engagement and confidence.

Germany and Italy, as part of the adoption of the charter, benefit from funding arrangements that ensures solidarity and parity in needs-based revenue between locations. Councils here would be able to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility in the local population's interest.

The Charter will also place a duty on Scottish Ministers to promote local self-government which further supports the aims of the Charter and Verity House Agreement local by default, national by agreement.



Unlock our potential