



MINUTE OF MEETING OF LEADERS (APPROVED)

Friday, 30 April 2021 at 1100hrs
Microsoft Teams

Present

COSLA President	Councillor Alison Evison
COSLA Vice President	Councillor Graham Houston
Aberdeen City Council	Angela Scott
Aberdeen City Council	Councillor Tom Mason (Substitute)
Aberdeenshire Council	Jim Savege
Aberdeenshire Council	Councillor Andy Kille
Angus Council	Margo Williamson
Angus Council	Councillor David Fairweather
Argyll and Bute Council	Douglas Hendry (Substitute)
Argyll and Bute Council	Councillor Robin Currie
City of Edinburgh Council	Andrew Kerr
City of Edinburgh Council	Councillor Claire Millar
City of Edinburgh Council	Councillor Adam McVey
Clackmannanshire Council	Nikkie Bridle
Clackmannanshire Council	Councillor Ellen Forson
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Malcolm Burr
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Councillor Roddie Mackay
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Fiona Lees
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Rob Davidson
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Gail Macgregor
COSLA Spokesperson	Gregory Colgan
Dundee City Council	Councillor Willie Sawers (Substitute)
Dundee City Council	Eddie Fraser
East Ayrshire Council	Councillor Douglas Reid
East Ayrshire Council	Gerry Cornes
East Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Vaughan Moody
East Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Andrew Polson
East Dunbartonshire Council	Monica Patterson
East Lothian Council	Councillor Stuart Currie
East Lothian Council	Councillor Norman Hampshire (Substitute)
East Lothian Council	Lorraine McMillan

East Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Tony Buchanan
Falkirk Council	Kenneth Lawrie
Falkirk Council	Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn
Fife Council	Steve Grimmond
Fife Council	Councillor David Alexander
Fife Council	Councillor David Ross
Glasgow City Council	Annemarie O'Donnell
Glasgow City Council	Councillor Angus Millar (Substitute)
Highland Council	Donna Manson
Highland Council	Councillor Margaret Davidson
Inverclyde Council	Aubrey Fawcett
Inverclyde Council	Councillor Stephen McCabe
COSLA Spokesperson	Dr Grace Vickers
Midlothian Council	Councillor Derek Milligan
Midlothian Council	Councillor Kelly Parry
COSLA Spokesperson	Roderick Burns
Moray Council	Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Moray Council	Craig Hatton
North Ayrshire Council	Councillor Joe Cullinane
North Ayrshire Council	Des Murray
North Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Paul Kelly (Substitute)
North Lanarkshire Council	Karen Greaves (Substitute)
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor Steven Heddle
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor James Stockan
COSLA Spokesperson	Barbara Renton
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor Peter Barrett
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor John Duff (Substitute)
Perth and Kinross Council	Ken Graham (Substitute)
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Iain Nicolson
Renfrewshire Council	Michael Cook
Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Sandy Aitchison (Substitute)
Scottish Borders Council	Maggie Sandison
Scottish Borders Council	Councillor Steven Coutts
Shetland Islands Council	Eileen Howat
Shetland Islands Council	Councillor Peter Henderson
South Ayrshire Council	Cleland Sneddon
South Ayrshire Council	Councillor John Ross
South Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Scott Farmer
South Lanarkshire Council	Joyce White
Stirling Council	Councillor Jonathan McColl
West Dunbartonshire Council	Graham Hope
West Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick
West Lothian Council	
West Lothian Council	

Apologies

Aberdeen City Council
Argyll & Bute Council
Dundee City Council
East Lothian Council
Glasgow City Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Perth & Kinross Council
Orkney Islands Council
Renfrewshire Council
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Borders Council
Stirling Council

Councillor Douglas Lumsden*
Pippa Milne*
Councillor John Alexander*
Councillor William Innes*
Councillor Susan Aitken*
Councillor Paul Kelly*
Councillor Murray Lyle*
John Mundell*
Sandra Black*
Cllr Shona Haslam*
Netta Meadows*
Carol Beattie

**Denotes substitute provided*

Public Session

1. Introduction

The President welcomed those present and provided guidance on how the meeting would be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams. Apologies and substitutes had been noted separately for the Minute.

Private Session

The President welcomed the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Gregor Smith, who had been invited to discuss emerging COVID restrictions and the national lockstep approach. Leaders had agreed that further discussion was necessary with Scottish Government around the rationale for the lockstep approach to reduce COVID-19 restrictions. A briefing paper from the Scottish Government had been circulated to aid discussion.

A number of questions from Councillors were addressed and both COSLA officers and Scottish Government officials agreed to take these on board.

Public Session

2. Draft Minutes of Leaders' Meetings (papers LD/21/70, LD/21/71, LD/21/72, LD/21/73, LD/21/74, and LD/21/75 refer)

Draft Minutes approved subject to some minor amendments.

3. UK Government Levelling Up Fund (paper LD/21/76 refers)

Leaders considered and discussed an update on the 'Community Renewal Fund' and 'Levelling Up Fund' which were announced as part of the UK Budget in March 2021.

An amendment to the recommendations was proposed by Councillor Ellen Forson and Seconded by Councillor Rob Davidson, which was agreed. Accordingly, Leaders:

Noted the information outlined in the report, updating Leaders about the Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund;

Delete recommendations (ii) and (iii) and replace with

- (ii) Express concerns that the initial criteria for the priority areas was set by the UK Government without consultation with COSLA, meaning that many areas with the greatest needs have not been prioritised and agree that COSLA Officers continue to engage in this process, including to make the case for a greater allocation of funding in order to ensure that no community loses out, and feedback key issues to Leaders; and
- (iii) Agree that, allied to the work being pursued by the Presidential team through their regular meetings, COSLA's Resources Spokesperson Councillor Gail Macgregor, and COSLA's Environment and Economy Spokesperson Councillor Steven Heddle, seek meetings with relevant UK Government Ministers, to discuss the future relationship between the UK Government and Local Government on these and future funding programmes.

4. Learning Estate Investment Programme (paper **LD/21/77** refers)

The paper provided Leaders with an update on the Learning Estate Investment Programme and an overview of Phases 1 and 2. It also highlighted key programme risks. COSLA officers responded to a number of questions.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the joint developments on the Learning Estate Investment Programme, including the outcome-based funding model, and on joint governance;
- (ii) noted the progress with Phases 1 and 2 of the programme;
- (iii) noted the key programme risks; and
- (iv) noted next steps

5. Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity (paper **LD/21/78** refers)

The report asked Leaders to approve COSLA becoming a signatory of the Edinburgh Declaration which is an international statement calling on nation governments to adopt an ambitious post 2020 global diversity framework that involved devolved and Local Governments at the COP15 global summit for biodiversity in October 2021.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed that COSLA sign the Edinburgh Declaration;
- (ii) agreed that the Environment and Economy Spokesperson writes to Scottish Government setting out Local Government's political commitment and call for effective consultation in the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy; and
- (iii) agreed that COSLA recognises the benefits of integrating nature into local planning, management and governance and the importance of placemaking and place-based approaches to achieving this goal.

6. Heat and Energy Policy (paper **LD/21/79** refers)

The paper sought Leaders' approval for COSLA's response to the Heat in Building Strategy. A point of clarification was raised in relation to operation costs referenced in page three of the report and COSLA officers would confirm before publication.

Leaders:

- (i) noted that the Environment and Economy Board discussed the consultation response at the meeting on 23 April 2021 with the recommendation to endorse the SOLACE response with additional emphasis on some key points;
- (ii) noted that given the significance of this agenda, Leaders were being asked to agree the final submission to Scottish Government; and
- (iii) agreed that COSLA respond to Scottish Government as proposed in paragraphs 4 and 5 in the paper.

7. New Plan for Immigration (paper **LD/21/80** refers)

The paper asked Leaders to consider the UK Government's proposed approach to immigration policy as contained in its New Plan for Immigration consultation and to agree COSLA's response for submission. COSLA officers were asked to place more emphasis on human trafficking in the response.

Leaders:

- (i) provided comment on COSLA's draft response to the UK Government's New Plan for Immigration consultation; and
- (ii) agreed the response for submission to UK Government.

8. Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Visa (paper **LD/21/81** refers)

The paper updated Leaders on the progress of the Hong Kong BNO Visa, which opened on 31 January 2021.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the new UK-wide programme of £43.1m funding to support the integration of holders of the new Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Visa, which included a specific allocation to COSLA's Strategic Migration Partnership; and
- (ii) considered and agreed the next steps as set out in the paper.

Private Session

9. Local Government Finance Update (paper **LD/21/82** refers)

The report provided Leaders with an update on work to progress the Service Concession Flexibility and a review of capital accounting.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed that Leaders review the outcome of Stage 1 of the review of capital accounting before it progressed to Stage 2 (if required);
- (ii) noted that a Working Group would be established to progress work on a fiscal framework, with formal agreement of a developed framework being sought from COSLA Leaders at a later date;
- (iii) noted the updates in relation to COVID-related Health and Social Care and Education funding; and
- (iv) noted the role and remit of the Settlement and Distribution Group and the work being done to ensure that membership remained representative, and to re-affirm their support for the previously agreed funding principles.

10. Pay Claim Update (paper **LD/21/93** refers)

This item was brought forward on the Agenda. The report provided Leaders with an update on the pay claim discussions to date and provided some outline costs associated with Leaders' requests.

Amendment

An Amendment to the recommendation was proposed by Councillor David Ross and seconded by Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick.

Councillor Douglas Reid, seconded by Councillor Jonathan McColl moved the recommendations in the Report.

Vote

Motion – 14

Amendment - 18

Accordingly, Leaders agreed the Amendment as follows:

1. Note the extraordinary lengths local government staff have gone to in order to maintain services and support individuals and communities over the course of the pandemic and express our appreciation of their continuing efforts.
2. Note our continued disappointment that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has declined the request to meet with them to discuss funding of an enhanced pay offer to local government staff.
3. Note the response from councils that based on the current local government settlement, an enhanced pay offer is unaffordable and would lead to cuts in services and jobs.
4. Note the response from the local government trade unions to the current pay offer and stress the urgency of a meeting with Scottish Government to discuss the funding of an enhanced offer.
5. Request additional baselined funding from Scottish Government to match the 4% offer to health staff (£168m) and non-recurring funding to make a £500 recognition payment to staff who have not received such a payment (£84m).
6. Instruct the President to contact the First Minister directly seeking a meeting to resolve this situation.

11. COVID Business Grants and Support Update (paper LD/21/83 refers)

This paper provided an update on development in Local Government delivery of grants to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders had previously agreed that Local Government should deliver additional national grant schemes at their meeting in December 2020.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the position with each of the business grant schemes outlined in the report and that all efforts were being made to ensure that businesses received much needed funding;
- (ii) agreed that COSLA continued to work through the new officer Business Support Steering Group;
- (iii) agreed that a meeting was sought early in the term of the new Scottish Government between the Spokespersons for Environment and Economy and Resources and the relevant Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers to discuss an economic recovery strategy; and
- (iv) agreed that the Scottish Government was asked to provide a further £12m of admin funding for 2021/22, to enable councils to continue to resource the delivery of business grant schemes over the coming months.

12. Local Employability Services – Policy Direction and Resourcing Update (paper LD/21/84 refers)

The paper provided the policy context to Scottish Government funding that Leaders would be asked to consider through the Distribution report later on the Agenda.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the policy context that underpinned the Scottish Government funding offer that Leaders were asked to agree in Agenda Item
- (ii) noted that the present Scottish and Local Government Partnership Agreement would be reviewed and that new politically co-led senior governance arrangements would be established in the coming few months; and
- (iii) agreed the proposed COSLA position set out in paragraphs 29 to 31 in the report.

13. Scottish Welfare Fund (paper **LD/21/85** refers)

The paper updated Leaders on recent political and officer discussions with Scottish government on the Scottish Welfare Fund. COSLA officers noted the suggestion to raise awareness of the scheme.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the outcome of the meeting between the COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People on the Scottish Welfare Fund, and subsequent communications;
- (ii) agreed the proposed position that COSLA engages constructively in the review of the Scottish Welfare Fund and that this was progressed at pace;
- (iii) agreed that COSLA should continue to press for a full review of funding, particularly as it related to administrative funding; and
- (iv) noted that any discussion around distribution would follow COSLA's financial governance principles and processes, with any decisions to be brought back to COSLA Leaders.

14. Revised Participatory Budgeting in Scotland (paper **LD/21/86** refers)

Leaders noted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon councils' progress towards the 1% Mainstream PB Agreement, and that the Community Wellbeing Spokesperson had written to the Cabinet Secretary to request flexibility within the programme to take this into account. COSLA officers have continued to work closely with local officers and colleagues in Scottish Government to progress this area of work.

The report and its accompanying appendices reflected both the recommitment of Leaders to the 1% agreement in January, and the extended timeframe to deliver upon the agreement. The expense of running PB was raised as was the need to see if further resources were available to support these costs. It was also noted that some programmes were needing to be redesigned and this was causing real unavoidable delays. It was stated there should be a sensible degree of flexibility to deliver without arbitrary timescales which would be unrealistic for many to meet. It was suggested that the Scottish Government should also embrace the ideas along with its agencies.

It was agreed that there should be a further political meeting, with a final sign off to be in conjunction with the Scottish Government. The intention was that the documents would be available to local officers in early May.

Amendment

An amendment was proposed by Councillor David Ross and seconded by Councillor Stephen McCabe:

Approve the amended draft and reporting template but given the continuing pressures of the pandemic on councils and the priority of supporting the recovery, seek further flexibility regarding the timescale for meeting the 1% target.

Councillor Douglas Reid, seconded by Councillor Scott Farmer moved the recommendations in the Report.

Vote

Motion – 14

Amendment - 18

Accordingly, Leaders:

- (i) approved the amended draft and reporting template but given the continuing pressures of the pandemic on councils and the priority of supporting the recovery, seek further flexibility regarding the timescale for meeting the 1% target; and
- (ii) noted that the COSLA Community Wellbeing Board would consider next steps at its forthcoming meeting on 12 May 2021.

15. Enhanced Summer Programme 2021 (paper **LD/21/87** refers)

Members were reminded that the aim of the enhanced summer programme was for local authorities to be able to flexibly build on to the existing offer, using a right-based approach to this work and drawing on existing good practice. Officers took note of the comment that consultation could have been more engaging.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the proposed Targeted Summer Offer for 2021; and
- (ii) agreed that local authorities would deliver the enhanced programme targeted at children and young people who had been most affected by the pandemic.

16. Expansion of Universal Free School Meals (paper **LD/21/88** refers)

This paper noted the phased expansion of universal free school meals for all primary pupils which was agreed by Scottish Government on 8 March 2021. Officers have since engaged with Scottish Government officials on this matter and the report provided further information on the phased programme and further detail on the funding and governance of the programme.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed the phasing of the expansion of universal free school meals for primary pupils, as agreed by the Children and Young People Board at their April 2021 meeting;
- (ii) agreed that Local Government engages in the proposed Governance Programme Board and that this was jointly chaired by COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson, and a Scottish Minister with portfolio responsibility for Education; and
- (iii) agreed that Local Government participate in an officer-led Programme Operation Group to monitor the additional capital and resource costs and level of actual take-up of universal free school meals.

17. Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act (paper **LD/21/89** refers)

The paper asked Leaders to consider and agree recommendations from the Settlement and Distribution Group in relation to a number of distribution areas.

Leaders:

- (i) noted the current status of the Act; and
- (ii) agreed the proposed approach for funding and reporting.

18. Joint Investigative Interviewing of Children in Scotland (paper **LD/21/90** refers)

This paper provided Leaders with an update regarding the outcome of discussions on funding with Scottish Government in respect of implementation of the Joint Investigative Interviewing model in Scotland. Leaders had previously agreed that the funding offered by Scottish Government should only be accepted on the basis that there is an ongoing commitment to local funding for implementation.

Leaders noted that there are significant resource implications in implementation of the new model and that there has not yet been sufficient recognition of this. Officers were asked to continue pursuing this in ongoing discussions with Scottish Government.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed that the £2.2m for national roll-out was accepted and distributed as soon as possible; and
- (ii) agreed COSLA officers continue to work with the Scottish Government and Local Government partners to ensure that Ministers received a more detailed costed proposal in respect of local implementation costs.

19. £500 Payment – Personal Assistants (paper **LD/21/91** refers)

This paper provided Leaders with an update on discussions that have taken place in relation to the £500 payment for Personal Assistants employed directly through a supported person using self-directed support.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed that the local authority or Health and Social Care Partnership act was the payment agent for direct payment employers based on the conditions set out in paragraph 9 in the paper; and
- (ii) noted that discussions were ongoing about the most appropriate mechanism to do this.

20. Distribution (paper **LD/21/92** refers)

Members noted that late the previous day, COSLA had been asked by Scottish Government to delay a decision until May in relation to £8.65m of Parental Employability Support Funding. Group Leaders had been informed of this the previous night.

Leaders:

- (i) agreed the recommendations in the report, with the exception of the Parental Employability Support funding (£8.65m), which was deferred to the May meeting.

21. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held at 1100hrs on Friday, 28 May 2021 via Microsoft Teams.

Close

The President closed the meeting at 1355hrs by thanking Members for their attendance.