

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## Introduction

Welcome to the latest Elected Members Bulletin, your weekly update from COSLA covering issues related to COVID-19. Information and resources can also be found on COSLA's social media accounts, with the **Facebook account** and **Twitter account** updated on a regular basis. The COSLA website can be found at **cosla.gov.uk** and the **KHub** for Elected Members is also regularly updated.

The current number of COVID-19 cases and the risk level can be found on the **Scottish Government Website**. **NHS Inform** continues to be the source of up-to-date public health information. All Scottish Government COVID-19 related guidance can be found on **their website**.

Help and support for those experiencing domestic abuse is available at **https://sdafmh.org.uk** The helpline number is **0800 027 1234**.

## Key Messages

The First Minister has confirmed a **gradual introduction of Phase 2** of the route map for easing COVID-19 restrictions.

Face coverings **became mandatory on public transport** on Monday (June 22).

Households are to be sent information explaining **how the Test and Protect system works** and setting out what to do if someone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **You Matter Too**

During this exceptionally challenging and unpredictable time, we would like to thank you for your tremendous dedication and efforts in serving your constituents and communities.

We are all too aware of the pressure being put on councillors at the moment and that your wellbeing is important.

There is information available on our Knowledge Hub ([link above](#)) on mental health, well-being and support that we hope you find useful at this time.

## **Finance**

Councils have submitted information on the cost impact on Local Government of COVID-19 for the first three months and are now working on returns which will show an early estimate of the full-year cost impact.

We continue to work with the Scottish Government to explore fiscal flexibilities required to ensure councils remain financially sustainable during 20/21 and beyond, including borrowing powers.

Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Macgregor, has a call with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Kate Forbes MSP, on Wednesday (June 24) when she will discuss further an agreed joint approach to Treasury to seek necessary approvals.

On Friday, Leaders will consider a recommendation from the Settlement and Distribution Group in relation to £27.6m announced last week for the continued provision of food over the summer period. Once again, the proposal is that money will be targeted at pupils entitled to Free School Meals, and vulnerable families and individuals in the wider community.

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **Education and Skills Committee**

Children and Young People Spokesperson, Councillor Stephen McCabe, provided evidence at the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee last week.

Councillor McCabe spoke about the impact of the pandemic on education in Scotland and took part in discussions surrounding the planned reopening of schools in August.

You can watch a **[recording of the meeting here](#)**.

## **Responding to the Economic Crisis**

COSLA is working with the Scottish Government as it develops its economic responses to the pandemic. It is important to ensure that a Local Government role is reflected in investment decisions, and that local businesses and those in our communities, who were always struggling and will be hardest hit, will be a priority.

We are finalising a joined-up and ambitious Local Government business support and employability proposition for consideration by Leaders to submit to Scottish Government.

We are working across COSLA Boards and through discussions with SOLACE and SLAED. This will make clear what Local Government can offer, how we are uniquely positioned to deliver place-based, holistic support and complement the work of national agencies.

It will also highlight our experience in delivering both through the pandemic generally and in economic response.

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **Violence Against Women and Girls - Covid-19**

The Scottish Government's Justice Analytical Services has published a new report on domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) during COVID-19 lockdown for the period March 30 to May 22.

It presents qualitative evidence on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on women and girls experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence.

The paper also outlines emerging trends that have been identified from research on the experience of individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse.

## **Trading Standards**

Trading Standards Scotland is part of COSLA. In the latest edition of their **Scam Share bulletin**, they outline scams which have been reported by consumers across Scotland, including those related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

There is some very useful information for local communities, covering issues such as doorstep scams, a tax rebate scam and suspicious emails to be wary of while working from home.

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **Business Gateway**

Business Gateway continues to adapt and offer new ways for businesses to engage with the service while also networking and sharing knowledge and experiences at this time.

Next week the national unit will host the second in a new series of live webinar panel discussions, 'Back to Business, Restarting the Tourism Sector' on Wednesday, June 24, 1-2pm.

Chief Officer of Business Gateway, Hugh Lightbody, will be joined by panellists Riddell Graham, Director of Industry and Destination Development, VisitScotland; Anna Miller, Head of Tourism, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and Jemma Reid, Project Manager, Midlothian and Borders Tourism Action Group. The panel will discuss what we know so far about how businesses operating in the tourism industry can prepare and plan for getting back to business safely post COVID-19.

### **You can register here to take part.**

The first webinar had over 300 registrations so we expect places to fill up fast.

This week Business Gateway has also launched **a brand new podcast series - Connections.**

This series explores the challenges facing business in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phillip Lockwood-Holmes, a managing partner at Whitespace, interviews fellow business leaders and Business Gateway advisers about issues facing businesses such as cashflow, accessing the right financial support, maintaining mental and emotional wellbeing, managing furloughed staff, flexible working, innovation and diversification.

Episode 1 features Jamie Watt of Innovair and Business Gateway advisor John MacGillvray.

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **Knowledge Hub**

The **Knowledge Hub Group 'Wellbeing during COVID-19'** offers a suite of Information providing local authorities with support to ensure continued employee wellbeing during the pandemic.

The library has a range of resources covering Mental Wellbeing, Physical Wellbeing, Financial Wellbeing, Working from Home and Resilience.

The KHUB is keen to expand the materials available and welcomes additional content, as well as encouraging local authorities to share these resources with their staff.

## **Appearances**

COSLA's Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, Councillor Kelly Parry, appeared on BBC Debate Night Extra last week. **[You can listen to the show here.](#)**

# Elected Members Briefing



23 June 2020

## **Summary**

The Local Government workforce and partners across sectors are working hard to support our communities. We continue to highlight this across our social media channels using #CouncilsCare and it is heartening to see communities working together to look after each other. Retweets and follows would be greatly appreciated.

Further briefings will be issued, however our social media channels, Khub and website will be continually updated.

If you or your officers require any clarity from COSLA officers on policy matters, please contact the team in the usual way. If you are not sure who to direct your email to, please contact COSLA member support: [membersupport@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:membersupport@cosla.gov.uk)

Thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time.

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23 June 2020

## Local Authority Delivery of Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic

STATISTICS TO DATE

STATISTICS LAST WEEK

### Shielding

167,000

shielding individuals  
in contact with their  
council



184,000

calls made by individuals to  
wellbeing lines or helplines

### Business Grants

89,000

Business Grant  
applications made  
to date



£850M  
of Business Grants  
awarded by Councils  
in total

### Free School Meals

156,000

free school meals  
provided for children



140%

of those  
eligible

### Child Protection

2,415

children with Child Protection plans  
had face-to-face contact with a  
social worker over the last 2 weeks



### Adult Protection

1,218

Wellbeing referrals  
made over the last  
week



627

Risk referrals made  
over the last week



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