

DRAFT MINUTE OF MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY BOARD

Friday 5 June 2020 at 10.30am
via Microsoft Teams

Present

Cllr Steven Heddle (Spokesperson)	COSLA Spokesperson
Cllr Jeff Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council
Cllr Aileen Morton	Argyll & Bute Council
Cllr George Gordon	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Donald Balsillie	Clackmannanshire Council
Cllr Donald Crichton	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Cllr Archie Dryburgh	Dumfries & Galloway Council
Cllr Jim Roberts	East Ayrshire Council
Cllr Norman Hampshire	East Lothian Council
Cllr Altany Craik	Fife Council
Cllr Anna Richardson	Glasgow City Council
Cllr Duncan Macpherson	Highland Council
Cllr David Bremner	Moray Council
Cllr Alex Gallagher	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Meghan Gallacher	North Lanarkshire Council
Cllr Graham Sinclair	Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Angus Forbes	Perth & Kinross Council
Cllr John McNaughtan	Renfrewshire Council
Cllr Mark Rowley	Scottish Borders Council
Cllr Ryan Thomson	Shetland Islands Council
Cllr John Anderson	South Lanarkshire Council
Cllr Evelyn Tweed	Stirling Council
Cllr Cathy Muldoon	West Lothian Council
Forbes Barron	HOPS
Irene Beautyman	Improvement Service
Gerry McCartney	NHS Health Scotland
John Binning	Regional Transport Partnership
Ewan Wallace	SCOTS
Pamela Smith	SLAED
Nicola Gill	ATCO

Apologies

Cllr Ron Sturrock	Angus Council
Cllr Alan Ross	Dundee City Council
Cllr Graeme McGinnigle	East Dunbartonshire Council
Cllr Alan Lafferty	East Renfrewshire Council
Cllr John Patrick	Falkirk Council
Cllr Colin Jackson	Inverclyde Council
Cllr Russell Imrie	Midlothian Council
Cllr Brian McGinley	South Ayrshire Council
Cllr Iain McLaren	West Dunbartonshire Council
Jim Valentine	SOLACE
Steve Grimmond	SOLACE

1. Welcome and Apologies

Cllr Heddle welcomed Board Members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. Minute of the 14 February Board and Matters Arising

The minute of the previous meeting of 14 February 2020 was agreed as an accurate record.

3. Environment and Economy Board Plan

This item presented Board Members with the Environment & Economy Board Plan and offered an opportunity for COSLA officers to update the Board on additional work undertaken since February and in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Board noted the update on R100 and related matters and agreed to the contents of the Board Plan.

4. Covid-19 - Economic & Environmental Recovery and Renewal

This paper provided an update on the environmental and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. An in-depth discussion followed. The Board noted that a Special Interest Group (SIG) has been established, chaired by the Vice President, which will discuss Local Government recovery from the pandemic. It was felt that the Board should have a role in feeding into the SIG. In addition, COSLA officers will be writing to Benny Higgins, who is the Chair of the economic advisory group set up by Scottish Government. The Board noted that the need for a place based recovery is at the forefront of discussions.

The Board:

- i. Agreed the COSLA position as set out in paragraphs 20-21, and
- ii. Discussed how individual Local Authorities are planning for the recovery in the short, medium and longer term.
- iii. Noted the establishment of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) which has issued a call for evidence
- iv. Agreed COSLA writes to the AGER chair setting out the views of the Board on establishing economic & environmental recovery and renewal and that this will incorporate the COSLA position agreed in recommendation i, and
- v. Noted Annex A which is the SOLACE response to the AGER

5. Covid-19 - Business Support Update

Hugh Lightbody, Chief Officer – Business Gateway, provided a verbal update on this item. The Board noted that Business Gateway's focus since the beginning of this crisis has been in getting resources to business in order to assist and provide support through this time. Key in this has been a Non-Domestic Rates-based grant which Local Government has mobilised to deliver to businesses, with a focus on small businesses, retail, hospitality and tourism. Tens of thousands of applications for this grant have been received and processed.

From the early stages of this outbreak, there has been a project group involving Local Government Finance, COSLA colleagues and the Scottish Government. This group discusses an ongoing issue log every week and as the grant programme has evolved over time. In addition to the Local Government delivered grant support, the enterprise agencies have launched the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and a hardship fund has also been introduced aimed at creative, tourism and hospitality businesses.

Board Members thanked Hugh for the update and noted the contents of the report.

6. Covid-19 - Employability Response

This report brought the Board up to date with recent discussions on employability at COSLA Leaders' Meetings and asked the Board to endorse the direction of travel on the Local Government employability position.

The key elements of this paper will be ensuring flexibility so that interventions and support which reflect local needs can be delivered; setting out approaches which complement services provided by national agencies; and seeking additional Scottish Government resource. There are specific implications of the COVID-19 outbreak on young people, who may be leaving education with the intention of seeking job opportunities which no longer exist.

The Board:

- i. Endorsed Local Authority employability work as an essential service both as an ongoing crisis prevention service and as an integral part of a wider pandemic recovery;
- ii. Noted the partnership work in setting out early employability responses to the pandemic, and the COSLA endorsement of those; and
- iii. Endorsed a direction-of-travel of a Local Government response proposition.

7. Covid-19 - Waste Update

This paper provided an overview of how waste services have responded to the COVID-19 crisis and the challenges which have been presented. The paper noted that councils have performed extremely well with residual waste collections having been maintained although some recycling and special collections are interrupted. Cllr Heddle spoke to the Cabinet Secretary and with SOLACE and trade unions, to enable household waste recycling centres to open on Monday 1 June in a coordinated fashion. The Board expressed its thanks to Councils' waste operators and staff involved in waste management.

The Board:

- i. Noted that all 32 councils have maintained essential waste services throughout Covid-19, in the face of significant challenges that this presents;
- ii. Noted that Leaders committed to a coordinated reopening of Household Waste Recycling Centres from the 1 June 2020, and
- iii. Commented from a local perspective on challenges facing waste services as we begin the process of easing lockdown restrictions

8. Covid-19 – Transport Update

This report provided an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on transport, setting out the work done by COSLA, and providing members a sense of the challenges as Scotland emerges from lockdown. Members were invited to consider and discuss what emerging challenges we expect for Local Government due to COVID-19 in order to inform COSLA's future work. There was a discussion on the how the pandemic had impacted on transport on rural and island communities as well as more urban areas. The impact on ferry services was specifically noted.

There was a discussion on the £30 million Spaces for People funding. The Board was informed that Transport Scotland and Sustrans have advised that Places for Everyone projects where money has already been committed will not be affected.

The Board:

- i. Provided feedback on emerging transport issues and recovery planning over local responses in each council, and
- ii. Endorsed the proposed COSLA position and next steps set out at paragraphs 23 – 25

9. Covid-19 – Planning Update

This report updated Members on interventions made to date to ensure that the planning system can continue to operate. COSLA Officers sought endorsement of a flexible approach to discretionary enforcement in restart/recovery phases, for example, in applications for street furniture to allow restaurants to open and the operating seasons for caravans.

There was a discussion on the impact of the pandemic on the operation of the planning system locally. It was specifically noted that some Local Authorities have managed to maintain planning application meetings through holding meetings virtually.

The Board:

- i. Noted the measures which have been adopted to date to ensure the planning system continues to function effectively during the response to Covid-19; and
- ii. Agreed to support Local Authorities in adopting flexible solutions to the recovery phase.

10. Europe and International Update

This paper provided Members with an update on ongoing negotiations as to the UK and EU's future relationship, and on wider international work.

The Board noted that work is ongoing to press for a timetable on lifting the suspension of ESF and ERDF. In another matter Cllr Gallagher offered to provide a presentation on Community Wealth Building to the Board. This offer was accepted.

The Board:

- i. Noted the developments around UK-EU negotiations;
- ii. Considered the COSLA position on level playing field between the UK and the EU; and
- iii. Noted progress on COSLA engagement for the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow which has been postponed to next year.

11. Date of Next Meeting: 4 September 2020

In closing the meeting, Cllr Heddle thanked Board Members for their contributions.