

Elected Members Briefing



16 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

Council Leaders **called for an extension to the UK - EU negotiations** beyond 31 December 2020 at the virtual Leaders meeting on Friday (June 12).

The Scottish Government has published **the first set of data from week one** of the COVID-19 Test and Protect system.

A new **Scottish Recovery Tourism Taskforce** has been established and will assist with the ongoing reset of the sector, with a provisional date of July 15 being set for when tourism businesses may be able to resume operations.



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Key Messages continued

COSLA issued a joint statement on Monday (June 15) from Councillor Stephen McCabe, CYP Spokesperson, and Councillor Gail Macgregor, Resources Spokesperson, regarding the **reopening of Scotland's schools**.

COSLA will be working closely with the Scottish Government on Thursday's (June 18) announcement regarding the move towards **Phase 2 on Scotland's route map** out of COVID-19 lockdown.

Finance

The second iteration of the cost collection exercise now shows a £145 million cost pressure for Local Government for the first full quarter of the financial year alone. When Leaders next meet, estimates of full-year cost pressures of dealing with COVID will be presented.

Councillor Macgregor, COSLA's Resources Spokesperson, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Kate Forbes MSP, have agreed a joint approach to the Treasury to seek additional funding and other financial strategies for the current financial year.

A draft joint letter has been sent to Ms Forbes for her consideration, and the President and Councillor Macgregor have a further call with Ms Forbes on June 16.

Leaders agreed that Scottish Government needs significant borrowing powers if they are to help Local Government and the wider public sector.

COSLA welcomes today's (Tuesday) announcement from the Scottish Government on the funding of food over the summer period. Officers will work with civil servants to establish an appropriate distribution, to be considered by Leaders asap.

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Reopening of household waste centres

Household waste recycling centres opened successfully in June in a coordinated fashion across Scotland, with around 80% of sites open within a few days of the Scottish Government's travel ban being lifted.

The opening was accompanied by a range of special measures including additional site attendants, traffic marshals, police liaison and dedicated local and national communication campaigns aimed at residents.

In the face of the practical challenges that COVID-19 presents, especially social distancing requirements, Councils have successfully maintained residual waste collections at all times. While a number of recycling services and special uplifts have been disrupted, these are starting to come back on stream.

Councils, COSLA and SOLACE are continuing to monitor the situation and working towards the reinstatement of full services.

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Social Renewal Advisory Board

On June 9, Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, and Shirley Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, announced the creation of a **Social Renewal Advisory Board**.

The board aims to build on the shifts in policy and practice that have been seen as a result of working across portfolios and in partnership across local and national government, the third sector and communities during the response to COVID-19.

The programme will focus on reducing poverty and disadvantage, embedding a human rights-based approach and advancing equality.

COSLA and SOLACE will be represented on the Board along with a number of third sector organisations including One Parent Families Scotland, Crisis, the Scottish Refugee Council amongst others.

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 COVID-19 contact tracing scams, face masks and online shopping.

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Housing and Homelessness

In early June, **the Housing Minister, Kevin Stewart, asked** the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)** to reconvene as part of the government's ongoing commitment to embedding an inclusive human rights based approach to homelessness and rough sleeping.

The remit of the reconvened group is to review recommendations from the Ending Homelessness Action Plan in light of the pandemic and ensure that a return to rough sleeping is avoided and that households are supported into settled homes.

The work of the reconvened HARSAG will focus upon the immediate support needs of those in emergency accommodation, what support is needed to ensure people are able to move on from emergency accommodation, how homelessness and rough sleeping can be prevented in the longer term and what wider changes are needed to ensure work to meet the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan is maintained.

The group will also consider recommendations of the **Everyone Home Collective** as part of their response. A blog of the first meeting **can be found here**.

COSLA will provide ongoing comment and feedback to the group over the coming months.

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Early Release of Prisoners Programme

Legislation to support the COVID-19 response for the early release of prisoners was enacted by Parliament in early May to protect the security and good order of prisons, as well as protect the health, safety and welfare of those accommodated or working in prison.

Prisoners in scope for early release were those serving sentences of under 18 months and also in the last three months of their sentence. Those ineligible were prisoners with a requirement for supervision and those convicted of violent, sexual or terrorism offences. Also excluded were prisoners serving a sentence for a COVID-19 related offence, or who had recently been imprisoned for domestic abuse.

Around 350 prisoners were released in three tranches from May 5 until the end of the month, with the prison population down to 6,869 on May 29.

COSLA officers - with the support of key advisers from SOLACE, Social Work Scotland (SWS) and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) worked with the Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service (SPS) officials as part of a co-ordinating group to plan, prepare and monitor the early release of prisoners from April to June.

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Appearances

COSLA's Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, Councillor Kelly Parry, will join the BBC Debate Night Extra panel tomorrow (Wednesday, June 17). **You can listen here**. Cllr Parry becomes the third Elected Member to do so, following President, Cllr Alison Evison, and Resources Spokesperson, Cllr Macgregor. Cllr Evison also took part in a SCVO opendoor webinar last week - **a recording is available here** - and appeared on BBC Newsdrive yesterday (Monday) to speak on the reopening of schools.

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

Thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time.

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Local Authority Delivery of Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic

STATISTICS TO DATE

STATISTICS LAST WEEK

Shielding

163,000

shielding individuals
in contact with their
council



166,000

calls made by individuals to
wellbeing lines or helplines

Business Grants

87,000

Business Grant
applications made
to date



£

£827M

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

2,383

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



Adult Protection

1,273

Wellbeing referrals
made over the last
week



570

Risk referrals made
over the last week



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