



LD/21/73

## MINUTE OF MEETING OF SPECIAL LEADERS (DRAFT)

Friday, 12 March 2021 at 1115hrs  
Microsoft Teams

**Present**

COSLA President	Councillor Alison Evison
COSLA Vice President	Councillor Graham Houston
Aberdeen City Council	Angela Scott
Aberdeen City Council	Councillor Douglas Lumsden
Aberdeenshire Council	Alan Wood (Substitute)
Aberdeenshire Council	Councillor Andy Kille
Angus Council	Margo Williamson
Angus Council	Councillor David Fairweather
Argyll and Bute Council	Pippa Milne
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	Richard Grieveson (Substitute)
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Rob Davidson
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Councillor Gail Macgregor
COSLA Spokesperson	
Dundee City Council	Gregor Colgan
Dundee City Council	Councillor John Alexander
East Ayrshire Council	Eddie Fraser
East Ayrshire Council	Councillor Elena Whitham (Substitute)
East Dunbartonshire Council	Gerry Cornes
East Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Vaughan Moody
East Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Andrew Polson
East Lothian Council	Monica Patterson
East Lothian Council	
COSLA Spokesperson	Councillor Stuart Currie
East Lothian Council	Councillor Norman Hampshire (Substitute)
East Renfrewshire 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 Ross
Fife Council	Councillor David Alexander
Glasgow City Council	Annemarie O'Donnell
Glasgow City Council	Councillor David McDonald (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	John Mundell
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 Murray Lyle
Perth and Kinross Council	Laura-Anne McIntyre (Substitute)
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Iain Nicolson
Renfrewshire Council	Tracey Logan
Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Shona Haslam
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	Clealand Sneddon
South Ayrshire Council	Councillor John Ross
South Lanarkshire Council	Brian Roberts (Substitute)
South Lanarkshire Council	Councillor Scott Farmer
Stirling Council	Joyce White
Stirling Council	Councillor Jonathan McColl
West Dunbartonshire Council	Donald Forrest (Substitute)
West Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan (Substitute)
West Lothian Council	
West Lothian Council	

**Apologies**

Aberdeenshire Council  
Dumfries and Galloway Council  
East Ayrshire Council  
East Lothian Council  
Glasgow City Council  
North Lanarkshire Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
Stirling Council  
West Lothian Council  
West Lothian Council

Jim Savege\*  
Gavin Stevenson\*  
Councillor Douglas Reid\*  
Councillor William Innes\*  
Councillor Susan Aitken\*  
Councillor Jim Logue\*  
Sandra Black\*  
Carol Beattie\*  
Graham Hope\*  
Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick\*

*\*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.

Before starting the formal business, Leaders were advised that civil servants had contacted Directors of Education earlier in the week to ask them to make council and school leisure facilities available for the return to school plans, which would take effect from Monday. COSLA officers had not been contacted or advised in advance of this request and, on being made aware of it, had raised serious concerns with senior civil servants.

Leaders were invited to notify COSLA of any local issues, which would then be conveyed to civil servants.

## **Private Session**

### **2. Local Government Finance Update (paper LD/21/54 refers)**

Since Leaders last met, UK and Scottish Budgets had been confirmed, providing long awaited and much need certainty for councils. The report updated Leaders on the recent UK Budget and the implications for Scotland's councils, including the UK Government's investment programmes that were announced alongside the Budget. It also updated Leaders on Stages 2 and 3 of the Scottish Budget and the final implications for the Local Government Settlement for 2201/22. Further, the report updated Leaders on the current situation in relation to the service concessions' flexibility and in relation to funding for the ongoing provision of Free School Meals during the current remote learning period.

Members were invited to raise any questions in respect of the points identified and officers provided clarification around concessions which would be further explained using a prepared slide deck that would be issued in due course.

### **Amendment**

An amendment to the recommendations was proposed by Cllr Norman Hampshire and seconded by Cllr Stephen McCabe which was unanimously agreed and detailed below:

Leaders:

- i. expressed their deep disappointment with the final Local Government settlement and noted that, with the increase in public pay sector policy with no additional funding for Local Government and the reprofiling of capital funding for town centres and bridge maintenance over two years, instead of the total being available in 2021-22, the financial position of Local Government had effectively worsened compared with the publication of the initial draft Budget;
- ii. noted that councils still faced significant financial difficulties trying to address current and future COVID challenges going forward, and these would impact even more as we moved into the recovery phase;

- iii. therefore continued to have significant concerns regarding the proposed treatment of service concession flexibilities and any removal of statutory mitigation, and the impact these would have on Council finances;
- iv. in light of these concerns, resolved to invite Kate Forbes MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, to attend a special meeting of COSLA Leaders to discuss the continuing financial pressures on local authorities and in particular the treatment of service concessions, any removal of statutory mitigation, and the impact of public sector pay policy on Local Government and capital funding; and
- v. mandated the COSLA Spokesperson and officers to continue to pursue COSLA's position regarding the Local Government Settlement and flexibilities, and agreed to continue discussions with the Scottish Government about the affordability of the public sector pay policy for Local Government.

### **3. Pay Claims Update** (paper **LD/21/55** refers)

The report provided Leaders with an update on pay claims and requested a steer in relation to negotiations and the offer to be made to all bargaining groups. COSLA officers provided clarification on several points and noted comments in support of the amendment to the recommendations.

#### Amendment

An amendment to the recommendations proposed by Cllr Stephen McCabe and seconded by Cllr Joe Cullinane, was unanimously agreed as shown below:

Leaders mandated the COSLA Spokesperson for Resources to make a pay offer that aligned with the Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy as a basis for negotiations with the trade unions, which would yet again focus an uplift to the lowest paid in our workforce and therefore impact the largest proportion of our employees, in line with paragraph 9c of the report and with the principles set out in paragraph 6 and 7, and agreed to continue discussions with the Scottish Government about the affordability of the public sector pay policy for Local Government.

### **4. Tackling Poverty – Low Income Pandemic Payments (LIPP)** (paper **LD/21/56** refers)

Leaders were reminded that, on 16 February 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance had announced £100m of tackling poverty funding as part of the Scottish Budget. Since then, discussions had resulted in an ask from Scottish Government that councils make payments to low income households. The detail on this was set out in the paper. Following discussion on the capacity of local authorities to deliver the £130 LIPP, as asked for by the Scottish Government, Leaders agreed the following amendment, proposed by Cllr Joe Cullinane and seconded by Cllr Norman Hampshire.

#### Amendment

Replace recommendation (i) as follows:

Leaders agree that local authorities should be given the option of delivering the £130 LIPP through a Council Tax credit noting that they lack the capacity to deliver this payment in other ways or in the proposed timescale.

Accordingly, Leaders:

- i. agreed that local authorities should be given the option of delivering the £130 LIPP through a Council Tax credit, noting that they lacked the capacity to deliver this payment in other ways or in the proposed timescale; and
- ii. agreed to make the two payments of £100 per eligible school age child to families in receipt of Free School Meals due to low income, one in July/August and the second in December 2021.

#### **5. Elections and COVID-19 (paper LD/21/57 refers)**

Leaders were reminded that several concerns had been expressed at the last meeting regarding the possible safety of individuals in the upcoming Scottish Parliamentary Election. The paper presented a list of measures being taken by election delivery partners, significantly the Electoral Management Board Scotland, to mitigate those concerns. COSLA officers noted some further specific questions raised by local authorities in relation to the practical considerations to be put in place for running the elections.

Leaders noted the responses to the issues raised to date as detailed in Appendix I of the paper.

#### **6. Funding Follows the Child (paper LD/21/58 refers)**

The report advised that, in 2018, Leaders had agreed joint guidance on Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), which set out the provider-neutral approach to the 1140 hours expansion. Last August interim guidance had been agreed in light of the pandemic. Ahead of the new deadline of July 2021 for the rollout of 1140 hours, a further review was required.

Leaders:

- i. noted the process to review the interim guidance on Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for ELC; and
- ii. delegated authority for final sign off of the revised guidance to the Children and Young People Spokesperson, in consultation with SOLACE and ADES.

#### **7. Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers: Capital Fund for Accommodation (paper LD/21/59 refers)**

The report advised that the national action plan on improving the lives of Gypsy and Traveller communities had been due to be delivered by the end of March 2021. However, the pandemic had delayed progress. The Community Wellbeing Board had therefore agreed to extend delivery of the plan with the Scottish Government until October 2022, subject to the continuation of resources. A new £20m capital fund for investment in new or improved culturally appropriate provision was being proposed. The proposal at present was that the fund would initially operate for five years, from 2021/22, alongside the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. The Community Wellbeing Board had acknowledged that further work was needed to shape this fund and that specific local authority needs would need to be taken into account.

Leaders:

- (i) supported the creation of a new capital fund for the supply of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation; and

- (ii) remitted COSLA officers to work with local authorities and Scottish Government officials to develop the criteria for the new fund.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 1100hrs on Friday, 30 April 2021 via Microsoft Teams

**Close**

The President closed the meeting at 1235hrs by thanking Members for their attendance.