

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 Susan Aitken
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 Russell Imrie (Substitute)
Midlothian Council	
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
North Lanarkshire Council	Gavin Barr (Substitute)
Orkney Islands Council	Councillor Steven Heddle
Orkney Islands Council	
COSLA Spokesperson	Councillor James Stockan
Orkney Islands Council	Karen Reid
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Peter Barrett
Perth and Kinross Council	Councillor Murray Lyle
Perth and Kinross Council	Sandra Black
Renfrewshire Council	Councillor Iain Nicolson
Renfrewshire Council	Michael Cook (Substitute)
Scottish Borders Council	Councillor Shona Haslam
Scottish Borders Council	Councillor Steven Coutts
Shetland Islands Council	Eileen Howat
South Ayrshire Council	Councillor Peter Henderson
South Ayrshire Council	Clealand Sneddon
South Lanarkshire Council	Councillor John Ross
South Lanarkshire Council	Carol Beattie
Stirling Council	Councillor Scott Farmer
Stirling Council	Joyce White
West Dunbartonshire Council	Councillor Jonathan McColl
West Dunbartonshire Council	Graham Hope
West Lothian Council	Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick
West Lothian Council	

Apologies

Aberdeen City Council
City of Edinburgh Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Dundee City Council
Dundee City Council
East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Midlothian Council
Orkney Islands Council
Scottish Borders Council
Shetland Islands Council

Angela Scott*
Councillor Mary Campbell*
Councillor Adam McVey*
Malcolm Burr*
David Martin*
Councillor John Alexander*
Councillor William Innes*
Lorraine McMillan*
Councillor Derek Milligan*
John Mundell*
Tracey Logan*
Maggie Sandison

**Denotes substitute provided*

Apologies were recorded where notified in advance or meeting invite not accepted

Public Session

1. Introduction

The President welcomed those present and provided guidance on how the meeting would be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams.

Before beginning the formal business, the President drew Leaders' attention to a series of animations which had been published by Public Health Scotland on the topic of mental health. These were aimed at anyone who was supporting children and young people, personally and professionally. Leaders' viewed one of these and were encouraged to share where possible.

2. Draft Minutes of Leaders' Meetings held on 26 June and 31 July 2020 (papers)

The draft Minutes of the COSLA Leaders' Meetings held on 26 June and 31 July 2020 were accepted as true records.

3. COVID-19 Recovery and Prioritisation of Business (paper)

The report asked Leaders to agree that, with the resumption of key services across the country, COSLA officers should begin to resume "normal" duties on behalf of member councils and communities.

Leaders:

- (i) noted that on 14 August 2020, the Leadership Sounding Board supported the view that COSLA should recommence its "normal" areas of business to maximise Local Government's influence with other spheres of government and other agencies; and
- (ii) agreed that the areas set out in bullet form in paragraph 5 were the priority areas for the organisation and COSLA membership, noting that a significant re-emergence of the virus would require COSLA to revert back to COVID 19 only business at short notice.

4. New Item – Face Coverings in Schools and on School Transport (paper)

At this point in the proceedings, Leaders were advised that an additional item and associated paper had been issued as part of a revised Agenda. This provided Leaders with an update in relation to a change to the reopening schools guidance and the use of face coverings by pupils in schools and on school transport. The updated guidance had been agreed by COSLA Group Leaders.

In response to Leaders' questions, COSLA officers confirmed they would continue to work with colleagues to monitor costs and to explore alternative procurement options. Leaders were encouraged to share with officers any specific local concerns.

Leaders noted the:

- (i) updated guidance and that it was informed by contributions from across Local Government; and
- (ii) decision by Group Leaders to approve the updated guidance.

Private Session

5. Local Government Finance Update (paper)

Dealing with COVID-19 was presenting significant financial challenges for Local Government during 2020/21 and was likely to impact on budgets for years to come. The paper provided

Leaders with an update on the current position in relation to consequentials and on UK announcements, including the design of a loss of income scheme for Scotland. Leaders were asked for their views in relation to work on the forthcoming spending review.

COSLA officers addressed a number of points and advised that they continued to press the Scottish Government for certain financial decisions to be taken as a matter of priority to allow key services to be maintained e.g. business grants, loss of income scheme. COSLA had ensured that the Scottish Government had been provided with sufficient data to guarantee there was a clear understanding of the pressures Local Government was experiencing. The need for fiscal flexibilities had also been emphasised.

Cllr Gail Macgregor commented that COSLA would be giving evidence to the next Scottish Parliament Finance and Constitution Committee meeting and points raised by Leaders would be reflected.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

6. Social Care Sustainability Payments (paper)

The paper provided an update and sought Leaders' agreement on transitional arrangements for the national principles to support social care sustainability. The plan would be kept under review to support the social care sector throughout remobilisation.

A discussion followed on resources for care homes and care in the community and the need to progress those agendas.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

7. National Digital Strategy (paper)

The report provided Leaders with an update on work progressed in relation to digital transformation and sought agreement that COSLA work jointly with the Scottish Government to refresh the Digital Strategy for Scotland. It also set out a proposal for COSLA to work with the Scottish Government to undertake a joint consultation process with stakeholders, including the wider public, to inform the development of this strategy.

COSLA officers clarified a number of points raised by Leaders and acknowledged that there were areas around access to educational tools that needed to be addressed. COVID-19 had highlighted differences in national digital offering and technical abilities. The inequalities in access to digital services needed to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

8. Blueprint for Local Government (paper)

COSLA had developed a Blueprint for Local Government. It had been developed through the work for the Recovery Special Interest Group set up in response to COVID-19 and through engagement with key stakeholders. It outlined a cohesive vision for Local Government, including identifying the themes and priorities that would shape medium to longer term recovery work.

Leaders acknowledged that further work would be needed as it progressed and were encouraged to share local examples of activities (e.g. volunteer work in communities) and any additional thoughts with COSLA officers.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

9. UK-EU Negotiations (paper)

The paper provided Leaders with an update on a range of issues emerging from the UK-EU negotiations and highlighted some of the impacts anticipated for Local Government. A typing error was identified in paragraph 11, line 5 – replace 'Exit Duty' with 'Excise Duty'. COSLA

would continue to promote Leaders' agreed positions throughout the negotiations and reinforce the need for urgency on these matters.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

10. European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Members' Bill (paper)

The paper presented the draft COSLA response to the Scottish Parliament consultation on the European Charter of Local Self-Government: Members' Bill and outlined the progress being made by the Bill as well as ongoing lobbying activity being carried out by COSLA to ensure a successful outcome.

Leaders agreed the draft consultation response.

11. Lone Working Guidance (paper)

Leaders were reminded that in January 2020, following recommendations from the Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group, they had agreed to a programme of work to prevent and challenge the intimidation and abuse of Councillors. The guidance presented in the paper outlined a number of principles on Lone Working for Councils to consider as they developed support for their Councillors.

Leaders agreed the Lone Working Guidance, endorsing appropriate spend on lone working, and for it to be circulated to member councils for consideration on a voluntary basis.

12. Community Mental Health Support for Children and Young People (paper)

Leaders were reminded that they had agreed in June 2020 the distribution of £15m funding for 2020/21 for the delivery of Community Mental Health Support for Children and Young People (CYP). The COSLA CYP Board had met on 21 August 2020 and had been updated on the response from the Minister for Mental Health which set out a change in approach to what had previously been agreed. The COSLA President had written to the First Minister setting out the disappointment and concern at this change in approach. A response had not yet been received.

Leaders unanimously supported an amendment proposed by Cllr Aileen Morton and seconded by Cllr Vaughan Moody, and therefore agreed as follows:

- (i) noted the response from the Minister for Mental Health to the letter from COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson;
- (ii) noted the letter from the COSLA President to the First Minister; and
- (iii) agreed that there is a very real need for increased support for children and young people, particularly in light of the pandemic and the substantial impact this has had on the mental health of many.

Further agree that there is a clear need to respond timeously to the mental health needs of children and young people, putting in place services that can ensure the right support being provided at the right time.

Principles for delivery of this support were agreed between COSLA Leaders and Scottish Government in November 2019. It is not possible to deliver on these principles without access to the promised additional funds.

To allow services to respond without delay it is agreed that Scottish Government should be asked to revert to the original funding agreement and distribute monies for 2020/21.

This should be without plans being submitted in advance as the scrutiny of and response to plans would add undue delay to the implementation of interventions at the important time of recovery from the pandemic.

Leaders agree that there should be 6 monthly reporting on progress and outcomes.

13. Distribution (paper)

The paper provided Leaders with recommendations from the Settlement and Distribution Group (SDG) on the distribution of five specific funding streams.

COSLA officers took on board comments and noted in particular the concerns raised in relation to funding for trained staff to support the Inspection of Scottish Fishing Vessel Fleet and the associated logistical difficulties for some areas.

Leaders agreed the recommendations in the paper.

14. Any Other Competent Business

Several individuals expressed technical issues with joining the meeting through Microsoft Teams. To try and resolve this for future meetings, and ensure everyone could join successfully, it was agreed that invites would be reviewed and reissued if necessary.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held at 1100hrs on Friday, 25 September 2020 via Microsoft Teams.

Close

The President closed the meeting at 1300hrs by thanking Members for their attendance.