



CWB Board 1.2

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COSLA COMMUNITY WELLBEING BOARD

10.30am Friday 19th February 2024

Verity House, Edinburgh, and via MS Teams

Present:

COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson	Cllr Maureen Chalmers
Aberdeen City Council	Cllr Miranda Radley
Aberdeenshire Council	Cllr Anne Simpson
Clackmannanshire Council	Cllr Scott Harrison
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Cllr Ian Blake
Dundee City Council	Cllr Mark Flynn
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Jim McMahon
East Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Ian Gallagher
East Lothian Council	Cllr Colin McGinn
Fife Council	Cllr Linda Erskine
Highland Council	Cllr Graham MacKenzie
Inverclyde Council	Cllr Natasha McGuire
Midlothian Council	Cllr Stuart McKenzie
Moray Council	Cllr Amber Dunbar
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Andrew Duffy-Lawson
Orkney Islands Council	Cllr David Dawson
Perth and Kinross Council	Cllr Tom McEwan
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Marie McGurk
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr Julie Pirone
Shetland Islands Council	Cllr Dennis Leask
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Brian McGinley
Stirling Council	Cllr Gerry McGarvey
West Dunbartonshire Council	Cllr Hazel Sorrell
East Lothian Council	Cllr Andrew Forrest
SLAED	Susie Donkin

Guests:

Scottish Government	Claire Renton
Scottish Government	Chris O'Hanlon
Scottish Government	Jeff Gibbons
Scottish Government	Emily McLean
Scottish Government	Shivani Kirpal

Apologies:

Angus Council
Argyll and Bute Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
East Renfrewshire Council
Falkirk Council
Glasgow City Council
North Ayrshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council

Cllr Kenny Braes
Cllr Kieron Green
Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan
Cllr Donald Chrichton
Cllr Danny Devlin
Cllr Stacey Devine
Cllr Anne McTaggart
Cllr Alan Hill
Cllr Davie McLachlan

West Lothian Council
ALACHO
CIPFA-Directors of Finance
Directors of Public Health
Public Health Scotland
Directors of Public Health
Directors of Public Health Deputy
SCSN
Social Work Scotland
Social Work Scotland
Social Work Scotland
SOLACE
SOLACE
VoCAL
TBC
Midlothian Council

Cllr Tom Conn
Sherina Peek
Martin Booth
Professor Josephine Pravinkumar
Pamela Smith
Professor Alison McCallum
Katie Dee
Lorraine Gillies
James Maybee
Lindsay Smith
Jane Martin
Katie Kelly
Malcolm Burr
Duncan Dornan
Jennifer Stoddart
Saty Kaur

1. Introduction

1.1. Welcome and Apologies

Councillor Chalmers welcomed Board Members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

1.2. Minute of Previous Meeting of 16th February 2024

The Minute was accepted as an accurate record.

2. Presentations, Board and COSLA wide items.

2.1. Update on Board workplan.

COSLA Officers provided Board Members with an update on various areas of the work plan. These included: Near Me in Prisons, Scottish Community Safety Network, New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, CLD Review and English for Speakers of Other Languages, Community Justice Strategy Delivery Plan, Sentencing and Penal Policy Review, Fireworks Licensing, Antisocial Behaviour, Violence Against Women and Girls, Universal Credit Managed Migration, 2024 COSLA Excellence Awards open for applications, and the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship.

The Board:

- i. Noted and commented on the update report.

2.2. Proposed Action Towards Implementation of Scotland's Strategic Approach to Challenging and Deterring Men's Demand for Prostitution and Supporting the Recovery and Sustainable Exit of Those Involved in Prostitution.

This paper updated Members on the development activity taken to date by the Scottish Government towards implementing its strategy to address men's demand for prostitution and support individuals involved in prostitution, as outlined in the February 2024 publication. Members were invited to review the Scottish Government's proposed approach, offer advice on any necessary enhancements to enhance local authorities' ability to participate in integrating policy principles into local policies and services, and to facilitate the development and embedding of provision of coordinated support pathways for women involved in forms of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) in and across local areas.

Members welcomed a presentation from Scottish Government colleagues Emily McLean and Jeff Gibbons on progress against the ambitions outlined in the Strategy since Member's consideration of the underpinning policy principles. The presentation presented the SG view on the implementation of the Strategy via the establishment of CSE Hubs and Referral pathways in local areas.

Members had several questions pertaining to the level of co-design to create the approach, queries on the source of evidence and LA's access to information on prevalence of CSE across Scotland and raised concerns of a lack of direct communication from the Scottish Government with key local stakeholders and Local Authorities, highlighting a gap between policy design nationally and SG expectations of local implementation in practice.

The Board:

- i. Welcomed the Scottish Government officials' presentation and the opportunity for discussion on the proposed pilot implementation of the model with Members on April 19 and with COSLA officers on April 30, 2024.
- i. Confirmed Members support for the model's strategic aims and principles, aligned with COSLA's commitment to address CSE, including prostitution as a form of violence against women.
- ii. Confirmed COSLA's membership in the Scottish Government's Multi-Agency Group on CSE, pending any requested changes to the appended Draft Terms of Reference
- iii. Directed officers to:
 - engage with Scottish Government officials to clarify expectations regarding the role and activities of local authorities, services, and strategic local partnerships in implementing and delivering the model's elements, including announced and imminent pilot activity and potential future rollout of activity.
 - identify any potential barriers to success requiring mitigation through consultation with local stakeholders including any additional resource and capacity implications for local authority systems, (e.g. Violence Against Women Partnerships in their role, as mandated by Equally Safe) and local services.

3. Equally Safe & Migration

3.1. COSLA Contribution to the Equally Safe Delivery Plan 2024

This paper updated Members on progress undertaken to scope a COSLA deliverable for inclusion in the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan and outlined a draft proposal for Members consideration to be included in the refreshed Equally Safe Delivery Plan, due to be published in May 2024.

Members queried if there will be inclusion of other factors such as menopause and discrimination within the policy development section on intersectional analysis for gender. COSLA Officers advised that they are connecting with the National Council for Women and Girls to consider previously set recommendations aimed at improving gendered decision making at policy level thereby preventing and reducing violence against women and girls. There is a further 2 years for the project to be taken forward in.

The Board:

- i. Considered and offered comments on the proposal outlined at paragraph 11 and potential actions offered.
- i. Satisfied with the top line deliverable proposed, agreed to refer this for Leader's approval if required, prior to its publication as part of the Equally Safe Refreshed Delivery Plan.
- ii. Agreed to consultation and engagement, in the first instance, with women in Elected Office on the actions required, included how progress might be measured and lines of accountability.
- iii. Directed officers to undertake any further work required to scope potential actions with officers across COSLA, from Councils and, where helpful for advisory purposes, expert stakeholders, potentially including the NACWG, ENGENDER and the National Strategic Network of Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs).

3.2. Migration, Population and Diversity Team Business Plan 2024/25

This paper set out the business plan for the work of the Migration, Population and Diversity (MPD) Team for 2024/25.

Members expressed concerns about the rise of human trafficking present within Local Authorities in Scotland. However, echoed their support towards the work being undertaken by the COSLA Migration, Population and Diversity Team despite financial pressures, consistent changes to policy, and acknowledged the continued efforts of COSLA Officers and the Spokesperson on lobbying the Scottish Government for funds to strengthen the Local Government position. Members queried if there would be an opportunity for quarterly meetings to support councils with more information. COSLA Officers advised that there are various Local Government forums, and individual schemes who meet on a regular basis. Further to this, Members were advised that COSLA will be hosting a session for Elected Members in August to discuss the complexities of Humanitarian work, and challenges to funding.

The Board:

- i. Noted and agreed the MPD Team business plan for 2024/25.

3.3. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

The paper updated the Board on various activities relating to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and the potential impacts on local authorities and their delivery of services to children.

Members shared various experiences of UASC across Scotland's local authorities, and expressed concerns that there are both underage and adult asylum seekers who are not being identified properly until much later. Members highlighted the impact this has on local services, especially after there has been instances of the discovery of several physically wounded, and traumatised child soldiers. COSLA Officers advised that assessments made on asylum seekers are done at port usually in Kent, Officers continue to challenge the Home Office on practice, and that children should be given the benefit of the doubt as they are underage and vulnerable. It was also highlighted that there has been work done by the Serious Crime Organisation Group who have found evidence of the exploitation, and possible trafficking of underage children.

The Board:

- i. Noted the UASC Short Life Working Group Scoping Report at Appendix A.
- ii. Agreed that COSLA officers engage with the various forums across children's services who are already considering the challenges facing Local Government

- and partners, to mainstream the conversations to work to resolve the challenges highlighted in the scoping report.
- iii. Noted the changes highlighted in relation to the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act and the National Age Assessment Board.

4. Justice and Community Safety

4.1. Joint COSLA-Scottish Government Response to NCS Justice Research Findings

This paper updated the Board on work being undertaken with Scottish Government to jointly consider the findings of the independent research into Justice Social Work (JSW) commissioned by Scottish Government and identified strategic areas of action to support JSW delivery within the current legislative model.

The Board:

- i. Provided comments on the draft document presented at Appendix A.
- ii. Agreed the proposed COSLA position.

4.2. National Social Work Agency

This report provided an update on discussions around the development of a National Social Work Agency and sought views from Board Members on the governance options being considered. Social Work services and the profession are under significant pressure over the high levels of demand, the increasing complexity of support people require, and challenges in relation to recruiting and retaining the workforce. The issues facing the profession are widely acknowledged and there is broad agreement on the need to ensure a competent, confident, and valued social work workforce. The National Social Work Agency provides an opportunity to take this forward.

The board:

- i. Noted the update in relation to the development of options for a future National Social Work Agency and COSLA's engagement in this to date.
- ii. Provided views on the options set out within the report, including risks and benefits.
- iii. Noted that COSLA Leaders will be asked to provide a mandate on these discussions and the preferred option at their May meeting.

4.3. Report on the Action Group on Marches and Processions.

The Short Life Working Group on Processions in Scotland was set up in 2022 following a pledge by the former First Minister in 2021 to consider if an approach similar to that taken in Northern Ireland to the facilitation of marches and parades should be adopted here. The Group's report, published in November 2022, recommended that a national parades' commission is not necessary in Scotland, as improvements could be best handled by local partners. The Group made 17 further recommendations for improvement. COSLA joined the Action Group on Processions set up by the Scottish Government to specifically work through the conclusions and recommendations of the Short Life Working Group's report and propose the actions that are needed to take key conclusions and recommendations forward.

Members welcomed Professor Dominic Bryan who provided an overview of the draft report and sought more information on the training of parade Stewards, and the recourse for challenges to public safety. Professor Bryan advised that based on research from Northern Ireland, and facilitation by a former serving Police Officer; training for Stewards will include upskilling to build trust between organisations and the Police and create understanding of when the police are needed.

The Board:

- i. Provided views on the report produced by the Action Group on Processions.
- ii. Endorsed, subject to any agreed amendments, the report's suggested actions.
- iii. Mandated COSLA officials to continue being engaged on this work and the delivery of relevant actions in the report.

4.4. XL Bully Dog Safeguards

This paper updated the Board on new legal safeguards on XL Bully dogs introduced by Scottish Government and COSLA engagement to date on this issue. It asked the Board to agree that COSLA continued to highlight the impact of the safeguards on local authorities to Scottish Government, working in partnership with Local Government professional associations.

Members expressed concerns to challenges of the risk assessment for Local Authorities who only have one Dog Warden, and who the ultimate responsibility for the identification of the Dogs lies with. COSLA Officers advised that they would write to the Minister to seek clarity on points and share the feedback from the board, as work is ongoing on a continuously changing landscape.

The Board:

- i. Noted the update on the new XL Bully Safeguards recently introduced by the Scottish Government.
- ii. Agreed the proposed COSLA position.

5. Cost of Living and Social Policy

5.1. Employability Strategic Plan 2024-27 update

This paper provided the Board with an update on the joint Employability Strategic Plan 2024-27, which is currently in development between Local and Scottish Government at officer level. The aim of the Strategic Plan was to set out the role of employability in relation to the wider policy landscape, taking account of changes (such as the ending of Fair Start Scotland referrals in March 2024) and progress on NOLB since 2018.

Members welcomed Scottish Government colleagues Claire Renton, Deputy Director of the Employability Division, and Chris O'Hanlon, Head of Employability Policy to the meeting. Members expressed their support for the proposed approach outlined for the Employability Strategic Plan, however concerns were raised about the ongoing delay to the grant offer letter from Scottish Government and the impact on services, as well uncertainty over the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Claire Renton advised that she understood the concerns from local authorities about funding thanked COSLA officers for their continued commitment to joint working in this area. Claire expressed that she would be very happy to have individual calls with members outwith the meeting to further discuss their concerns about the impact of funding delays. Claire assured the Board that the priority for the Employability Division is engaging with Ministers to ensure that funding is distributed, with the immediate focus on the first quarter funding reaching local authorities as soon as possible.

The Board:

- i. Provided comments on the high-level overview of the planned approach to the Strategic Plan 2024-27.

- ii. Provided a steer on the overarching priorities jointly identified by Local and Scottish Government: tackling child poverty, closing the disability employment gap; strengthening Local Employability Partnerships; and alignment with the wider Fair Work agenda.

5.2. Shut out Scammers.

The purpose of this paper was to provide Members with an overview of the 2024 Shut out Scammers campaign.

The Board:

- i. Noted the overview of the 2024 Shut out Scammers campaign.
- ii. Championed the campaign's emphasis on the importance of community.
- iii. Supported any preventative messaging, where possible, to prevent doorstep crime.

5.3. Strategic Housing Policy

This report provided the Community Wellbeing Board with an update on the Housing Bill, as well as on the Housing SIG, Housing to 2040 Strategic Advisory Board and the recently established Housing Investment Taskforce (HIT).

Members raised concerns surrounding expectations, and the limitation of implementations against an already present strain on public sector housing, impacted by a decline within the private sector. Members expressed the need for further knowledge on workloads, timescales and how the balance of controls can be recognised. COSLA Officers welcomed Members comments.

The Board:

- i. Noted the Housing Bill that was published last month.
- ii. Provided initial views and comments on the overall content of the Housing Bill.
- iii. Agreed COSLA's proposed activities on the Housing Bill.
- iv. Noted the updates on the Housing SIG, Housing Investment Taskforce and Housing to 2040 SAB.
- v. Provided any views and comments on strategic housing policy developments.

5.4. Good Food Nation

This report provided Members with a summary of the Scottish Government's current Consultation on Good Food Nation (GFN) and sought to highlight key issues regarding GFN and obtained views and comments to inform COSLA's response.

Members highlighted that there is already use of local indicators across Local Authorities in Scotland and shared experiences of what is being implemented, to attempt to provide a different culture towards food.

The Board:

- i. Noted the Scottish Government's current consultation on Good Food Nation (GFN).
- ii. Provided views and comments on the GFN consultation.
- iii. Noted COSLA's finalised response to the GFN consultation was to be agreed by correspondence later this month by the CWB Board.

6. AOCB

Members were advised of an upcoming Culture Summit to be held in May at Verity House, with more information to follow soon.

Next Meeting

Councillor Chalmers closed the meeting at 12:45pm and thanked Members for their attendance. It was noted that the next meeting scheduled for Friday 7th June 2024 would be held as a hybrid meeting.