

Elected Members Briefing



30 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

High Street shops reopened on Monday (June 29) as part of Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's route map out of lockdown.

The Scottish Government has announced that **care home residents will be able to receive visitors outside** from Friday (July 3).

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Finance

COSLA continues to track the costs of Local Government of dealing with COVID-19.

Given that the planning assumptions around Education and Early Learning & Childcare changed significantly over the course of last week, the exercise will be repeated in July to capture the financial impact of a return to 100% face to face provision from August.

COSLA Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Gail Macgregor, will write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance this week to set out Local Government's "asks" in relation to fiscal flexibilities, including changes to Council Tax legislation and additional borrowing powers, as agreed by Leaders.

If agreed by UK Treasury, councils would have a range of options that could be used to address this year's financial pressures.

Leaders agreed to distribute additional funding totalling £27.6m for the provision of food over the summer - a specific grant of £12.6m will allow councils to continue to provide free school meals over the summer; a specific grant of £15m will allow the continuation of support for vulnerable people in communities up to end September.

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Education Recovery Group

The Education Recovery Group (ERG) met on Thursday (June 25) to progress plans for reopening schools full-time for all pupils in August provided scientific and clinical evidence supports that position.

The ERG will work together over the summer to ensure that plans are developed collaboratively for a smooth and safe transition back to school for all children and young people.

The regular three-weekly reviews of the coronavirus (COVID-19) regulations – attended by COSLA’s Children and Young People Spokesperson, Councillor Stephen McCabe – include specific consideration of the evidence and data relating to transmission within schools and amongst young people.

To provide clarity to staff, parents and pupils, the group agreed to provide advice that enables a decision to be made as soon as possible, and no later than July 30, on whether it is safe for pupils to return to schools on a full-time basis.

In addition, it was agreed at last week’s Leaders meeting that guidance will be approved through COSLA’s governance structures.

A Day in the Life of Scotland's Councils

The hard work and dedication of Council staff all over Scotland has being recognised in a new video by COSLA.

The short four-minute video, produced in collaboration with Local Authorities up and down the country, was released on Friday (June 26) to highlight the tremendous effort made by Councils and their workforces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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It shows a variety of Council colleagues – including call handlers, caterers, staff in schools and refuse collectors – carrying out a range of tasks in their communities.

It is beautifully set to a performance of *Lean on Me* by The Perth and Kinross Council ‘Everyone Can Sing’ staff choir and rounded off with a sincere word of thanks to Local Authorities and their staff by COSLA President, Councillor Alison Evison.

Speaking as she launched the video, Councillor Evison said: “The video offers an invaluable insight into the fantastic work carried out by Local Authorities and their staff throughout the country.

“Time and time again throughout the pandemic, we have witnessed Councils and their staff going above and beyond to deliver essential support to their communities and help keep people safe.

“I have also been humbled by Local Government employees who have volunteered within their towns and cities, carrying out much-needed duties such as delivering prescriptions to those who were shielding and helping at local foodbanks.”

She added: “We may be slowly emerging from lockdown, but the hard work of Scotland’s Local Authorities is far from over as we move towards the recovery phase and our workforce deserve a tremendous amount of credit for their work.

“The commitment to serving their communities has been heroic and I have no doubt this will continue in the weeks and months ahead.”

The video can be viewed on [**COSLA’s YouTube channel**](#)

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Framework to support the Gypsy / Traveller community during COVID-19

COSLA and the Scottish Government have **updated a joint framework** to reflect the changes in lockdown restrictions during the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of supporting Local Authorities in their continued support to the Gypsy / Traveller community.

The joint COSLA and Scottish Government Gypsy / Traveller Framework, developed in April with input from COSLA'S Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, Councillor Elena Whitham, has proved to be a useful resource in shaping informed service delivery, with Local Authorities taking steps to minimise the impacts and risks of COVID-19 on the Gypsy / Traveller community.

To date councils have provided essential services such as temporary stopping places, access to sanitation and emergency food provision for Gypsy / Travellers who live roadside or on public sector sites and are especially vulnerable during the crisis.

In recognising that the Gypsy / Traveller community are facing additional risks and vulnerabilities during the crisis, including being more likely to have pre-existing health conditions and being at increased risk of poverty, the updated framework aims to recognise the forthcoming changes in lockdown restrictions and to support Local Authorities to continue to make sure people remain safe and have access to culturally appropriate places to live, access to essential services and accessible public health information.

If you would like further information please contact dominique@cosla.gov.uk or eloise@cosla.gov.uk in COSLA'S Migration, Population and Diversity Team.

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Social Care Support Fund

The Scottish Government Social Care Staff Support Fund went live on June 25 as part of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020.

The fund, which can be backdated to March 23, will prevent social care workers from experiencing financial hardship where they are, or have been, off work ill or isolating due to coronavirus and lost income where they are only paid statutory sick pay or another amount less than their expected income.

This means that social care staff should not worry about financial hardship during the pandemic should they be off work due to illness or self-isolating related to coronavirus.

COSLA Leaders agreed that the payment mechanism for employers to be reimbursed for these costs are through Local Government.

More information on the fund, including eligible groups and circumstances, **[is available here.](#)**

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Business Gateway

Business Gateway hosted the second of its live webinar panel discussions last week.

Hugh Lightbody, Chief Officer at Business Gateway, was joined by Riddell Graham, Director of Industry and Destination Development, VisitScotland; Anna Miller, Head of Tourism, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and Jemma Reid, Project Manager, Midlothian and Borders Tourism Action Group, for a discussion on 'Getting Back to Business: Restarting the tourism sector'.

The panel was joined by 500 attendees to discuss the latest Scottish Government guidance and advice around safe reopening.

They also answered questions from businesses covering everything from best practice for cleaning self-catering properties, what happens if a guest becomes sick during their stay and diversifying approach to secure business with new as well as existing customers.

The webinar is **[available to watch again here.](#)**

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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 doorstep scams, a tax rebate scam and suspicious emails to be wary of while working from home.

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

171,000

shielding individuals
in contact with their
council



Business Grants

92,000

Business Grant
applications made
to date



£

£870M

of Business Grants
awarded by Councils
in total

Free School Meals

157,000

free school meals
provided for children



around 140%
of those
eligible

Adult Protection

1,206

Wellbeing referrals
made over the last
week



566

Risk referrals made
over the last week

Child Protection

2,397

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



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