



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Finance

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Ariane Burgess
Convenor, Local Government, Housing and
Planning Committee

Copy to
Kenny Gibson
Convenor, Finance and Public
Administration Committee

5 October 2023

Dear Ariane

Since the signing of the Verity House Agreement (the Agreement) on 30 June, Scottish Government and COSLA have worked at pace to progress the further steps for implementation of the Agreement. The timescales set out in the Agreement were ambitious which showed both sides commitment to make progress as quickly as possible.

Whilst we have set ambitious timescales to ensure we move at pace, we collectively agree that we need to get this right, therefore there is a balance between achieving specific deadlines and taking the time where needed to do further work if required.

We are grateful that the Committee requested to hear from us jointly at the New Deal evidence session on 5 September and again at the Local Government Workforce session on 26 September. This approach to joint evidence underscores the shared approach of spheres of government, and was a good opportunity to provide further background to the creation of the New Deal with Local Government and the work involved to progress the Agreement

The Agreement committed us to have progressed some of the strands of work by the end September and we therefore wanted to update the Committee on the progress to date ahead of the October recess.

By the end of September 2023:

Improved engagement on budgetary matters

- Pre-budget engagement, at both official and political level, is well underway, and will continue, in preparation for the Scottish Budget in December.

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A Fiscal Framework between local and national government, of which regular budget engagement will be a key part

- Constructive further discussions took place in July and August, with options for different approaches being considered by COSLA, including at the COSLA Convention on 29 September.
- Further work is expected up to the Scottish Budget with a view to reaching agreement as soon as possible.

A shared programme of activity underneath each of the three priorities

- This will focus on the period between now and the next Scottish Council Elections in 2027.
- Wide-ranging and constructive discussions have taken place between local and national government officials throughout August and are continuing to be taken forward in key areas by policy leads.
- Early conversations have taken place with Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission Scotland to explore their role in this work.
- Further work is expected over the coming months to deliver a robust shared programme with an outcomes and accountability framework as soon as possible.

We hope this information has been helpful and would be happy to speak with you on this at any opportunity, likewise at official level too.

We have copied this letter to Mr Gibson to reflect the interest shown in the subject by the Finance and Public Accounts Committee at the evidence session held on 03 October 2023.

SHONA ROBISON

COUNCILLOR SHONA MORRISON

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