

SLAED EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE CALL

Tuesday 22nd March 2022

Attendance

Ishabel Bremner (Chair), Argyll & Bute Council (IB)
Rory Young (Vice Chair), Dundee City Council (RY)
Graham Smith, Glasgow City Council (GS)
Allan Conry, North Lanarkshire Council (AC)
Ruth Cooper, Renfrewshire Council (RC)
Malcolm Leitch, Glasgow City Council (ML)
Juliette Cooke, Dumfries & Galloway Council (JC)
Gary Hughes, Aberdeenshire Council (GH)
Tracey Martin, Falkirk Council (TM)
Sharon Thomson, Glasgow City Council (ST)
Calum Lindsay, COSLA (CL)
Robert Nicol, COSLA (RN)
Hugh Lightbody, COSLA (HL)
Miriam McKenna, Improvement Service (MM)
Hannah Young, Improvement Service (HY)

Apologies

Pamela Stevenson (Vice Chair), Fife Council

Action

1. Welcome and Introductions

IB welcomed members to the meeting and noted that this is RC's first meeting as the new Chair of the People Group. It was agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting should be included as a standing agenda item going forward.

HY

2. UKSPF Update

IB gave an overview of discussions around the UKSPF at the last Exec meeting and the actions that have been taken forward, and noted that this is moving at a fast pace. Previous plans for a SLAED workshop around this have been put on hold as Executive members want to take a more focused approach, allowing for more concise conversations and actions to be developed. IB and ML set up a meeting with Lauren Bruce and colleagues at UKG to discuss the content and publication of the prospectus. They raised the questions put forward by Executive members following the last meeting, and ML will circulate this.

ML

A number of actions are emerging around the three investment themes, and it was agreed that SLAED should try to influence the individual menu of actions within these to suit the Scottish context and delivery. There are concerns around the UK-wide methodology that will be used and it was agreed that Scottish local authorities

should try to influence this. There will also be a role in managing expectations of partner organisations seeking UKSPF funding for projects. Communications with UK Government colleagues will be ongoing following this initial meeting. It was noted that net zero and climate change are currently underrepresented in discussions and ML highlighted that this will need better recognition. The overall aim of the SLAED Executive is to ensure that the prospectus makes it as easy as possible for local government in Scotland to put together investment plans that are approved by the UK Government's appraisal system.

There is scope for a different allocation methodology for funding within Scotland, and this is being considered by a Settlement Distribution Group made up of Scottish Government and COSLA representatives. There are concerns around what methodology will be used and whether it will result in a fair allocation across the country. Current indications are that it may be a two-step approach in terms of Highlands & Islands and the rest of Scotland, but this is subject to change. Members agreed that it would be beneficial for the Directors of Finance Group to consider this, and to raise any issues with the allocation methodology prior to this being set in stone.

It was agreed that the Executive pulling together key questions has been beneficial in supporting important discussions with UK Government colleagues, and allowed for progress to be made. This has also been supported by effective collaborative working between SLAED and COSLA, ensuring that discussions are linked back to Scotland's policy agenda. ML will circulate an update on these discussions to the EU/UK Funding Group Members and will copy this to Executive members.

ML

3. Business Gateway Review

HL gave an update on the progress of the review and the recent BG Board meeting on 11th March at which Hellon's final report received excellent feedback. This brings the initial stage of the process to an end and sets out clear indications of activities to be taken forward. It is proposed that an internal communications plan should be put together with key messages for engaging with advisers, local authority colleagues etc to enhance understanding of the review journey. This will also seek to get enhanced buy-in. The process has received positive feedback from Business Support Partnership colleagues, and has also influenced them to initiate a programme of work around service design.

Clear projects are now emerging from the review and HL has drafted a budget for the BGNU to set out the resources required to develop and deliver workstreams. Some are 'low-hanging fruit' and will result in quick wins, whereas bigger system changes will need further scoping. The three main areas for potential activity are onboarding (how to get customers into the system), BG products (Digital Boost, Fund Finder etc), and enablers (adviser training, language, consistency etc).

This process will also be influenced by the new National Strategy for Economic Transformation and changes being driven by the government. Members agreed

that it would be useful to have a summary of the actions that will be taken forward allow economic development officers to advise BG colleagues on the future direction of travel.

4. Business Support Partnership

PSt was no longer able to attend this meeting, therefore it was agreed that this item should be deferred to the next meeting. HL noted that the workstreams are continuing and the next big step is the service design work that's being developed.

Following the meeting PSt provided some brief comments. She confirmed that the TOM model will be rolled out in Fife and North Lanarkshire from April. An update was given at the BSP Board on the product/service strategy approach, and BSP Service Design sessions will be taking place from next week. The BSP Board has been discussing the need to push Team Scotland with the Scottish Government, and work is being done on strategic communications for SLAED and local authorities.

5. SUII – Just Transition Call for Proposals

IB gave an overview of an invitation from Charlie Woods who is a member of the Scottish Universities Insight Institute. This is a joint venture of six of Scotland's universities to support researchers to join with policy makers and practitioners to exchange knowledge and insights to improve outcomes. The next themed call for proposals will focus on contributing to a just transition to net zero, and SUII is looking to put together an informal steering group to support this. The group will be made up of policy makers and practitioners who will offer applicants feedback on expressions of interest and offer advice to the Programme Committee in assessing proposals. It will also meet with successful project teams during the course of their work to help shape their projects.

Charlie asked IB to share this opportunity with local government colleagues and seek expressions of interest for participation in the steering group. IB will circulate Charlie's email with full details of the offer, and interested members are asked to get back to IB by Monday, 28th March.

TM queried whether this work will duplicate what is already being done by SE in assessing what all local authorities are doing in relation to the transition to net zero. TM will provide further information on this work after the next meeting of the Tourism Group, which Aileen Lamb at SE will be attending.

6. People Group Update

RC gave a brief overview of the current work of the People Group. She noted that a key focus is on how progressed the LEPs are in terms of delivery of employability in the next financial year. Local authorities do not yet have the grant offer letters for next year, but are told these are imminent. NOLB, YPG and PESF funding will be much more flexible going forward than they were in the previous financial year,

and set budgets can be moved around each programme. RC is working with SG on a proposal document, which will be separate from the individual delivery plans.

RC has been working with SG to push forward in getting a replacement in post for Pamela Smith's previous Employability Partnership Manager role. Recent discussions have indicated that a replacement should be in place in around six weeks' time.

7. AOB

The next SLAED newsletter is due to be issued this month. IB will give a brief Chairs' update, and HL will share the recent internal communications used for an update on the BG review. RC noted that an update on the role of the LEPs would also be useful to include, and will provide some text.

HL
RC

HL attended a recent STERG meeting and will provide an update to HY to circulate around the wider SLAED membership. IB suggested that this could also be included in the newsletter. All updates for the newsletter should be sent to HY by Friday, 25th March.

HL
ALL