

SLAED EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE CALL

Tuesday 29th August 2023

Attendance

Ishabel Bremner, Argyll & Bute Council (CHAIR)
Pamela Stevenson, Fife Council (VICE CHAIR)
Rory Young, Dundee City Council (VICE CHAIR)
Allan Conry, North Lanarkshire Council
Ruth Cooper, Renfrewshire Council
David Boyle, Glasgow City Council
Andrew McKean, Renfrewshire Council
Robert Nicol, COSLA
Calum Lindsay, COSLA
Hugh Lightbody, COSLA
Hannah Brown, Improvement Service

Apologies

Gary Hughes, Aberdeenshire Council
Kenny Lean, South Lanarkshire Council
Miriam McKenna, Improvement Service

Action

1. Welcome and Introductions

IB welcomed members to the meeting and noted that David Boyle is the Vice Chair of the Performance Group and is attending in place of Gary Hughes.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

Members agreed that this was an accurate record of previous discussions. AC noted that there has been no further engagement with SELAG and he will follow-up on this. HB noted that there also hasn't been any update on the CWB Practitioners Network, but an update will be given at the next meeting.

MM

HB noted that, following Malcolm Leitch's retirement in June, there is currently no Funding Group representative on the Executive. The UK Funding element of the group is taking a Co-Chairing approach led by Diane Milne (Dundee City), Sharon Douglas (North Lanarkshire) and Louise Kirk (North Ayrshire). It was agreed that the Chairs should be contacted to identify who will represent the group on the Executive going forward. Members agreed that more information is needed around round 3 of UKSPF funding and SLAED should push for greater clarity.

HB

AC confirmed there has been no change to the update on the Fair Work First requirements shared at the previous meeting. Work is ongoing to develop a paper for COSLA Leaders, but there are no timescales for this. Anecdotal feedback suggests different approaches are being taken across Scotland. AC will send out a

AC

survey to the Business Group to determine how different local authorities are implementing this. CL noted that the Policy Manager post at COSLA has recently been filled and the officer will be looking to engage with SLAED to share information.

HB will set a date in January 2024 for the next SLAED AGM.

HB

It was noted that Alan Webster at Highland Council has been appointed as the SLAED Rep on the RCGF Investment Panel and it is important for updates to be fed back to the SLAED Executive.

HB

3. SLAED Indicators Update

DB gave an update on a recent review of the indicators in line with SG's evolving definition of economic development. The 'Inclusive Growth' section needs to be refreshed to account for the wider definition of a wellbeing economy. Any updates will not require additional input from local authorities but will provide a more up to date picture of local economic development.

DB gave an update on a recent workshop on the development of ONS Local Scotland. This is a new approach to socio-economic data for regions and local areas and will be supported by an ONS Local Scotland Team. It was agreed that it would be useful to share details of who the contacts are, what the relationship with local authorities will be, and what it will be possible to ask for through the SLAED network. It would also be helpful to join up good practice instead of councils making multiple requests for the same thing. DB confirmed that the intention is for ONS Local to be very transparent and interactive. Further information will be shared in due course.

DB/GH

HB gave an overview of the status of returns for 2022/23 and some key challenges around the funding, employment land, and vacancy rate indicators. There are contrasting views on whether UKSPF should be included in the funding indicator as it is an allocated fund rather than being bid for. Several employability funds are now also allocations and therefore wouldn't be included under the current definition. Members highlighted that UKSPF is of specific interest to SG and an important element of local authority economic development budgets. It was also noted that town and city centres are a strategic priority, and it is important to find a way to monitor these more effectively.

Members noted that the SLAED Business Support sectors are not comparable with the SIC codes used by Scottish Government, and it was confirmed that the SLAED Indicators sectors are aligned with those used by Business Gateway. Members discussed the challenges in aligning SIC codes with the Indicators Framework and it was agreed that DB will look at how the guidance could be improved to make this simpler for local authorities.

DB/GH

4. CLLD Learning Workshop Report

IB gave an overview of previous communications from Social Value Engine around their work with SG to evaluate the social impact of 300 projects delivered through Local Action Groups. Three learning sessions have been run, from which an interim report was produced and shared. A workshop for SLAED members was offered and members agreed that more detail would be needed around the purpose of this.

AM noted that tourism has not been adequately factored into this, but it is a strong element of many rural areas and goes hand in hand with Community Wealth Building. It was agreed that SLAED should look at the synergies between the Tourism and Rural agendas and bring this back to the Executive for further consideration.

AM/KL

5. SLAED Response: Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill Consultation

IB noted her involvement in writing a response for the Highlands and Islands Economic Partnership. The next meeting is on 8th September and IB will share a paper setting out the key issues for inclusion in the response.

Members discussed whether a pan-Scotland response will be possible due to the number of local nuances, particularly in relation to island communities. CL confirmed that a COSLA response is being worked up along with Directors of Finance, local authority officers and SOLACE. It was agreed that it is important for SLAED to respond to this consultation to ensure that SG sees that SLAED has a voice in this matter, even if it is a holding response noting the variation across Scotland. The response should focus on where efficiencies can be delivered and burdens reduced, posing key questions such as:

- Is there potential for this to be used fraudulently?
- Will the administrative burden make this more costly to administer than the funds received?
- Can geographies be ringfenced to exempt smaller accommodations?
- Who covers the cost for businesses to purchase additional equipment to record these funds?
- How will the funds be distributed?
- What counts as tourism infrastructure?

IB will share a draft of the Highlands and Islands response for adaptation and comments. It was agreed that the SLAED position should be that this should be an option but not enforced.

IB/HB

6. Business Gateway Roadshow

HL gave an update on the upcoming roadshow workshops and noted that this is part of the commitment to providing the network with regular updates and ensuring that people remain engaged in the programme. HB will share the programme of events throughout the SLAED network.

HB

HL gave an update on a National Service Specification paper that will be taken to the BG Board on 8th September. The key message is that the service should not be changed much as it is really valued and effective. Some enhancements could be made e.g. digitisation of some administrative tasks and seamless sign-up.

It was noted that SG committed to capturing discussions and sharing a vision paper setting out recommendations following a BSP workshop at the end of June, but this has not yet been received. Members discussed whether SLAED should write to Colin Cook for clarity around the key issues and HL confirmed that he is in the process of contacting SG to follow up on the proposed vision paper. He will feedback to the Executive as soon as possible. PS noted that it is important to continue to push this from a SLAED perspective, with a focus on wider Economic Development and not just Business Gateway.

HL

RY highlighted the possibilities of linking this with the publication of the 2022/23 SLAED Indicators Report and using this to demonstrate the impact of local economic development. It is important to ensure this information is being shared with the right people to influence the future direction of economic development and showcase what councils are doing.

7. SE HV Manufacturing Project

PS noted that she was asked by SE to attend a High Value Manufacturing short life working group on behalf of SLAED. The group has met twice with discussions around supporting the growth ambitions of Scotland's high value manufacturing sectors. An emerging priority is the need to ensure an adequate supply of employment land, and this needs to be unlocked and accelerated as much as possible. PS noted the next meeting is in September where the Terms of Reference will be agreed. The group is looking for more officers to come on board and it will be important to engage Planning colleagues to accelerate collaborative working with the ambition of fast-tracking consents to take developments forward.

8. AOB

IB noted an invitation from COSLA for a SLAED representative to attend a round table discussion on the recently signed Verity House Agreement and what it means for local government. This will be held in Edinburgh on 7th September, and it was agreed that AC will attend to represent SLAED. HB will contact COSLA to confirm and ask for papers to be sent to AC directly.

HB

IB highlighted that representatives from the Department for Business and Trade will be attending the next meeting as they are building up a team in Scotland and want to engage with local government. This will be the first item on the agenda.

HB

Members noted the very sad recent news of the death of Richard Sweetnam, Chief Officer for City Growth at Aberdeen City Council and previous SLAED Executive member. Richard was a valued member of the Scottish economic development community through his work with SLAED, particularly when he was seconded to

the Improvement Service. Sincere condolences are sent to his family and friends, and the SLAED secretariat arranged a card and flowers from the SLAED community for Richard's wife.

Actions

#	Action	Lead
1.	Give an update on the CWB Practitioners Network	Miriam McKenna
2.	Contact UK Funding Group Chairs to identify Executive rep	Hannah Brown
3.	Survey Business Group on how they are implementing FWF	Alan Conry
4.	Set date for SLAED AGM 2024	Hannah Brown
5.	Get update from Alan Webster on RCGF Investment Panel	Hannah Brown
6.	Share further details and contact information for ONS Local	David Boyle/ Gary Hughes
7.	Consider whether SIC codes can be aligned with SLAED BS sectors	David Boyle/ Gary Hughes
8.	Look at synergies between Tourism and Rural agendas	Andrew McKean / Kenny Lean
9.	Share draft of the H&I response to Visitor Levy Consultation	Ishabel Bremner / Hannah Brown
10.	Share programme of BG Roadshow events to SLAED network	Hannah Brown
11.	Feedback on contact with Colin Cook re vision paper	Hugh Lightbody
12.	Ask COSLA to send round table discussion papers to AC	Hannah Brown
13.	Put Department for Business and Trade first on October agenda	Hannah Brown