

SLAED EXECUTIVE MEETING

MS Teams

Tuesday 7th May 2024

Attendance

Ishabel Bremner, Argyll & Bute Council (CHAIR)
Rory Young, Dundee City Council (VICE CHAIR)
Pamela Stevenson, Fife Council (VICE CHAIR)
Allan Conry, North Lanarkshire Council
David Boyle, Glasgow City Region
Kenny Lean, South Lanarkshire Council
Sharon Douglas, North Lanarkshire Council
Lesley Walker, Angus Council
Robert Nicol, COSLA
Hannah Brown, Improvement Service
Miriam McKenna, Improvement Service

Apologies

Ruth Cooper, Renfrewshire Council
Andrew McKean, Renfrewshire Council
Diane Milne, Dundee City Council
Calum Lindsay, COSLA
Hugh Lightbody, COSLA

Action

1. Welcome and Introductions

IB welcomed members to the meeting and noted there are no external speakers.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

Members agreed this was an accurate record of discussions at the previous meeting.

IB gave an overview of her involvement in the Housing Special Interest Group led by COSLA and will share papers and feedback with Executive members. PS noted pressure from Planners in Fife and an ongoing audit of employment land. North Lanarkshire Council is also mapping constraints that restrict land coming forward for development. It was agreed it would be worthwhile to have a more detailed discussion around this.

IB gave an update on a recent discussion with RY and HB around inviting representatives from the enterprise agencies to the September Executive meeting to discuss collaboration and highlight SLAED as a useful tool for enhancing engagement with local authorities. HB will draft an email to key contacts at each agency with an invite to the meeting, highlighting the opportunity to share priorities and enhance collaboration, and consider where local authorities can contribute and interface. It was noted that SE's new strategy and mission communications have gone out to BG advisors, but this was not

HB

shared with SLAED, which has been raised as an issue previously. It is important that SLAED is seen as the key method for engagement with all councils at the national level.

IB and RY recently met with Monica Patterson but there was no update on the NSET refresh. It was noted there has been no further engagement with SLAED through any of the groups despite raising this with Gregor Irwin at the AGM in January. AC raised this at the recent BSP pre-Board meeting and was advised the review has not fully started yet. The timeline is summer into autumn for publication, and he was assured that SLAED will be consulted. It was agreed to keep an invitation for an SG rep to attend a future Executive meeting on the agenda. IB noted she is meeting with Iseabail MacTaggart at DBT on 8th May and will reiterate the offer to attend an Executive meeting. The Scottish Cities Alliance also has a Performance Group, and it is important to ensure this is aligned as not all councils are involved but should be included in communications and sharing of best practice.

SLAED Executive members previously agreed to provide a response to the Tax Strategy Consultation, but this will depend on timescales and ability to gather input from members.

3. EDAS Events Update

IB noted she receives detailed lists of EDAS events happening throughout 2024/25, including podcasts, in her role as EDAS Director. The most recent version will be circulated with the minute of this meeting. It was suggested that SLAED could put forward a topic for a future podcast that might be useful for the wider economic development community to know about. It was agreed it would be useful to add information on EDAS to the SLAED website to demonstrate collaboration, as well as enhancing understanding of what the differences between the two networks are.

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The next meeting of the Policy and Practice Group is on 10th May and IB will circulate the note. No additional Executive Group members have put themselves forward to sit on this group with IB, but it would be useful to have a second representative to ensure continuity when IB steps down as Chair of SLAED in March. It was agreed that this does not need to be an Executive member, although it should be someone with an overview at the national level and across SLAED groups. It was suggested that MM or HB could cover this role in the meantime. IB reiterated that meetings are held once per quarter for an hour. IB will share the meeting schedule for the year ahead with MM and HB.

IB

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4. Economic Development / Climate Change

MM gave an update on the Climate Resilient Economic Development event held on 30th April in collaboration with IS, SG, COSLA, SSN and Adaptation Scotland. This workshop brought climate change and economic development networks together to discuss Just Transition to Net Zero and the economic development element of the SNAP3 consultation. It was noted that several people attended to receive information rather than engaging in discussions which highlighted a need for more awareness raising across the networks. Members agreed there would be benefit in holding more events around key topics in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation in relation to economic

development. It was suggested this could be done jointly with EDAS to bring in key players across the networks. Climate change leads are not necessarily involved in economic development but need to be engaged in these discussions to develop joint solutions and build relationships within councils.

Many people across councils are involved in addressing climate change but efforts are not always joined up and strategies are often in isolation. There is a need to identify the parts of adaptation that are relevant and a priority for economic development and how to engage with this. Guidance is needed on where and how to focus locally and nationally, avoiding the danger of retrofitting to previously set targets which has recently been proven not to work.

COSLA is happy to be involved in further discussions on this and has been raising similar points with SG for a long time. There needs to be open discussion around challenges and setting attainable targets, as well as resources and the need to make hard political choices with demonstrable economic and environmental benefits. Discussions can be broken down into manageable chunks to limit the potential of this becoming overwhelming.

5. Funding Group Update

SD gave an update on letters sent to Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt, and Alister Jack setting out the SLAED position in relation to UKSPF and detail on the impacts of programmes ending. Funding Group members discussed impacts on spend and outcomes if there is no confirmation of future funding and that the closer it gets to the cliff edge, the bigger the impacts on outcomes will be. There is a need for a time extension at minimum, but preferably a funding extension. It was agreed that officers need to know by the end of June to enable extension of staff contracts and forward planning. There is not a lot of evidence around UKSPF as there has only been one full year of operations to learn from.

There are lots of pilot activities taking place and there is a need to share and learn from these. DLUHC has asked what the impact on non-statutory services will be and it was noted that most councils are using UKSPF to deliver non-statutory services so almost all the impact will be in these areas. There is particular interest in numbers of jobs involved and potential redundancies. Real-life examples are being collected to encourage Ministers to make decisions. It is often only the negative aspects that are shared, and the value of what has been achieved through UKSPF has not been fully captured. It is hoped SG will come to the next Funding Group meeting to discuss this further.

The group has been going through a learning process around Subsidy Control, using learning from State Aid, and working with SG for advice and guidance. Most councils are replicating State Aid, but more is covered by Subsidy Control, so the group is trying to get messages out and embed these in thinking. The key message is for councils to assess for Subsidy Control even if just to rule it out. IB noted the work of the Highlands Economic Partnership's Subsidy Control working group. A template has been developed for testing whether subsidy control is needed and IB can share this with the Funding Group.

IB

Lots of SG funding has been paused with no certainty for the future. The Funding Group is trying to keep everyone informed and make sure all councils receive updates. There is no clarity around when CLLD funding will be announced or how much it will be. The Rural Group is meeting on 9th May and will discuss this in more detail. It is important that SG understands the impact short funding windows have on ability to deliver projects, and that each week lost is crucial. Decision making is likely to be further delayed due to the change in First Minister.

6. Business Group Update

AC gave an update and noted Yvonne McBride is now attending the Business Group on a quarterly basis to provide updates from SELAG. Neil McInroy attended the last meeting to discuss inclusive business models and the session was well received. Inclusive business models are typically seen as a fringe topic, but the aim is to mainstream these as a form of business model, supported by BG and SE, and a report is being published in June. It was noted that often people are not aware of these as options for business models and awareness raising is needed, as well as training for advisers. It was also stressed that these should be integrated into existing structures with no need to create anything new.

7. Master Customer Record

AC gave an update and noted there are still lots of unanswered questions, particularly around data protection and GDPR, as well as who will own the system, and governance issues need to be looked at in much more detail. Business Group members have been encouraged to cascade the demo to wider contacts and note this can be integrated with other maps and systems. AC will share the demo with Executive members.

AC

The BSP Board has asked councils to commit to funding the next phase of the project but there is no clarity around what ongoing costs are likely to be after that. The collective ask is for £85k and a method of fairly splitting this between councils needs to be determined. All other BSP partners except one have committed to this but their costs are lower due to in-kind contributions. AC is coordinating council responses, but it takes time for this to go through due process in individual councils, particularly given the lack of clarity on ongoing costs. It would be useful to map contributions against any costs that the MCR could potentially remove the need for to calculate overall value for money. Potential for economies of scale and a national subscription could also be explored.

Jacqui MacDougall at BSP will record the MCR demo to make it quicker and easier to disseminate the information and get it out to wider audiences. All councils are encouraged to attend demo sessions and ask questions. AC queried whether MCR is the right solution, particularly given BizAccount provides a similar service and is already being used by some councils. Members queried what will happen if all councils don't sign up to MCR but this is currently unclear.

8. People Group Update

IB gave an update and noted that NOLB grant offer letters have been received but only for 25% of the allocation. Councils have been asked to compile annual investment plans but there is a feeling that trust has been broken with SG, and councils are not willing to

spend at risk. Recent discussions have focused on multi-annual funding but the 25% funding is a step in the opposite direction. A lack of communication between SG departments makes this more challenging and SLAED needs to try to influence money coming through and seek clarity. There are lots of good case studies to demonstrate success in delivery and councils are coming up with innovative ways to get money out within allocated timeframes.

9. AOB

The 4th June meeting will now revert to Teams as it was not possible to coordinate a venue in Glasgow. The in-person meeting will now be on 27th August in Glasgow. It was agreed that both meetings in July should be cancelled to account for the holiday period.

HB/DB
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Actions

| # | Action | Lead |
|----|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Draft Exec meeting invite email to key contacts at each agency | Hannah Brown |
| 2. | Circulate most recent EDAS events schedule | Ishabel Bremner |
| 3. | Consider updates to website to include EDAS information | Hannah Brown |
| 4. | Circulate minute of 10 th May EDAS Policy and Practice meeting | Ishabel Bremner |
| 5. | Share EDAS Policy & Practice meeting schedule with MM & HB | Ishabel Bremner |
| 6. | Share Highland Economic Partnership subsidy control template with Funding Group | Ishabel Bremner |
| 7. | Share MCR demo with Executive members | Allan Conry |
| 8. | Book a meeting room in Glasgow for 17 th August meeting | Hannah Brown / David Boyle |
| 9. | Cancel both Executive meetings in July | Hannah Brown |