

## SLAED EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE CALL

Tuesday 13th February 2024

### Attendance

Ishabel Bremner, Argyll & Bute Council (CHAIR)  
 Rory Young, Dundee City Council (VICE CHAIR)  
 Allan Conry, North Lanarkshire Council  
 Andrew McKean, Renfrewshire Council  
 Kenny Lean, South Lanarkshire Council  
 Diane Milne, Dundee City Council  
 Ruth Cooper, Renfrewshire Council  
 Wilma Gordon, Angus Council (Standing in for David Boyle)  
 Lesley Walker, Angus Council  
 Robert Nicol, COSLA  
 Calum Lindsay, COSLA  
 Hugh Lightbody, COSLA  
 Miriam McKenna, Improvement Service

### Apologies

Pamela Stevenson, Fife Council  
 David Boyle, Glasgow City Council  
 Hannah Brown, Improvement Service

### Action

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

IB welcomed members to the meeting, particularly Lesley Walker as the new Treasurer, and Wilma Gordon, Vice Chair of the Performance Group, who was standing in for David Boyle.

#### 2. Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the previous meeting was agreed. Progress on actions was:

#	Action	Lead	Progress
1	Invite Ian at ONS to a future meeting of the Tourism Group.	AM	The next meeting of the Tourism Group is Thursday 15 Feb where they will discuss inviting ONS to the next meeting. There are a number of data discussions going on.
2	Circulate comments received from ONS on previous data asks	HB	Complete.
3	Follow up with Performance Group on SDS Benchmarking invite	HB	DB and HB meeting with SDS (TBC). WG said the Performance Group is due to meet soon and she will follow up.
4	Send group updates to IB for AGM Chair's Report by 18th January	ALL	Final update still to be received. Report to go out as a newsletter. This needs to go out ASAP.
5	Follow up on child poverty meeting request from Hanna McCulloch at Improvement Service	AC	HB made introductions between Hanna McCulloch and AC. AC will follow up this week.
6	Ask Business Group members to identify colleagues to fill gaps in Funding Group membership	AC	AC raised at Business Group meeting. HB to report whether any nominations have been received.

7	Let AM know of any points to feed into discussion with SG around Short Term Lets	ALL	Meeting taking place on Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb. Any final points to be fed into Andrew.
8	Share contact details for COSLA's Community Wellbeing Team	CL	Calum apologised for not sharing these previously. Mike Callaghan at COSLA leads on Housing, however the lead contact for Short Term Lets is Elisa Bevaqua ( <a href="mailto:elisa@cosla.gov.uk">elisa@cosla.gov.uk</a> ) who leads on licencing.

IB shared an update on her meeting with Aiden Grisewood, Director for Jobs and Wellbeing Economy and Lewis Hedge, Deputy Director Fair Work, Employability and Skills, to discuss the letter SLAED submitted regarding issues around Fair Work First. They are taking a 'test and learn' approach and IB pointed out if they had consulted with local authorities prior to launch then this would have been a better process. They are now carrying out Business and Regulatory impact assessments (BRIA) involving a questionnaire featuring 36 questions. It is felt that the level of detail is disproportionate and some of the questions quite onerous or not able to be answered right away. This has been sent to every local authority Chief Executive and Director of Finance.

At the meeting they asked about Employability and IB reflected that local authorities don't know what is happening regarding funding at moment. Aiden Grisewood took on board IB's points, including regarding the NSET refresh, being mindful that SLAED should be at the table for these discussions.

Regarding the refresh of NSET, HL spoke with Rhona at SE and it sounds like SG is moving to 4 pillars in the strategy with delivery as a cross cutting pillar. They will condense the 70+ actions, although it is not clear what criteria is for doing this. Local Government must be involved in the discussion and deliberation of what needs to be included or removed.

RC shared issues raised at the SLAED People Group and from a presentation from SG FWF officials. There was a lack of clarity on who Real Living Wage applies to in grant contexts, e.g. if you pass on a grant, does every person have to be paid RLW and above, or just the actual people employed by the grant funding. There are also posts within e.g. councils which are funded through grants from other bodies, which are funded by SG, so additional applications have to be made for exemptions for those posts too.

IB received an email on Friday 9th Feb, from Denise Grieve from SG re BRIA on managing FWF conditionality, including a link to the survey. Closing date for responses is 8<sup>th</sup> March. **Action: IB to share with MMcK to share with group.** She encouraged everyone to make sure their authority inputs into the process as much as possible.

**IB/MMcK**

### 3. SG New Deal for Business group - Implementation Plans

LW asked for this item on the agenda to gain some clarity on the implementation plan and the recommendations as these can't be found on the SG website. She is particularly interested in the 15 recommendations for the subgroup on Business.

HL said he could get the information and share this and shared a link to the published plan on SG website from October last year. <https://www.gov.scot/news/delivering-a-new-deal-for-business/>. In the plan on page 5, there is a link to the subgroup report with all the actions in there. He sits on NDBG subgroup and shared that there is nothing happening at present.

IB asked if there had been another meeting of the BSP. AC shared that he raised that they hadn't engaged with SLAED, and they committed to doing so, but this is too late. The engagement will be more about how they will work rather than how to shape the priorities.

IB suggested that the Executive could invite Ewan Mearns, Head of Strategy at SE to come along and do a presentation to this meeting. It was agreed that all three Enterprise Agencies be invited to a future meeting to discuss strategy and how they are taking different approaches to engagement with local government economic development.

**Action: Scottish Enterprise, Highland and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise to be invited to a future meeting of the Executive.**

IB/RY/PS/HB

RY has been engaging with local SE staff and suggested that it is helpful to do own local engagement to establish how to work together.

AC shared that the next year's financial strategy is on the SE website and only includes R&D grants and RSA. SG has removed energy transition funding from their budget and now SE seem to be picking that up.

AMcK shared that all 3 enterprise agencies are very different about Tourism funding and approaches. The disparity between SE and HIE has led to strong discussion. DMOs that had funding through HIE via SG have been getting letters to say the next year's budget will be £0 and other support will be offered. Will be interesting to hear about why they are pulling back from the sector.

RY said that feedback from local SE staff is that they are focusing more on contributing to the productivity challenge of the Scottish economy and driving productivity gains.

### 4. Events and Workshops: PHS and EDAS

IB, RY, PS and HB will meet with EDAS on 21<sup>st</sup> March to discuss whether SLAED and EDAS can have a joint conference or at least joint events e.g. webinars and workshops. They will feedback at a future Exec meeting.

IB/RY/PS/HB

Possible topics could include:

- the UK Funding agenda, particularly hard stops in funding
- Employability

PS is keen to have another event with PHS – to follow up with PS.

**Action: If there are any particular topics/issues for events then let HB and MMcK know.**

**ALL**

RC shared that the SLAED Employability conference will be 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May this year, in Stirling. The 1<sup>st</sup> day will include SG colleagues and the 2<sup>nd</sup> day only LG representation.

### **5. Group updates**

**Funding Group** – Have had the first meeting of the new SLAED Funding group. Have asked to add to remit collective voice when speaking to funders. The first area identified is UKSPF, and the group will go out with a short survey regarding concerns, and then draft paper to share with COSLA, DLUC and colleagues.

The Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) and Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) funding and budget cuts are an area of concern. This could impact on projects to be spent by end 2025 putting pressure on match funding or funding already secured. The group understands the difficulties, but the process and decision making are challenging.

RN said COSLA would be happy to see what is being said once the information is available. Politically they are meeting with regarding RCGF and PBIF. CL expanded that the latest understanding is that the investment panel for RCGF has been paused. SG are waiting for the minister to make decision. Distributed funding from PBIP seems secure, but the bid funds are not so sure.

There was discussion on when budget announcements might be made and whether or onto certain funds will be announced at that time. RC shared that she has made representation to say LAs need to know by June cut off stage.

**Employability** – there is less money in the budget next year for employability, even though Fair Start Scotland is closing. RC shared that the allocation methodology has been using the wrong statistics which has meant areas of deprivation have been significantly missing out on funding. There is nothing that can be done about it for funding this year but have raised the issue and it will be changed for next year.

RY shared that after work done on devolvement of funding to Local Economic Partnerships there is no transparency on this. He suggested that maybe the measure needs to be economic inactivity, which also has its own issues. On employment the preferred measure is model based from claimant count with survey data.

IB added that there needs to be a rurality element included in the mix (7%). A different mix of measures is needed to capture the true picture.

#### 6. EOP Data Refresh

MMcK explained the thinking behind seeking to refresh some of the data that was published as part of the Economic Outcomes programme.

Concern was expressed about some of the nuances behind the data, which could lead to misleading inferences from the data, especially if it was then used to create league tables. Some elements will not be controllable/influenceable at a local level and officers could be criticised unduly. It was agreed that IS will further explore what can be gathered without involving officers, particularly as this is a very busy time for officers. Once it is established what information can be gathered from existing sources then the pros and cons can be considered.

HL asked when the most recent SLAED indicators would be released. MMcK shared that this is imminent. HL asked for a draft to share with Cllr Heddle who had been looking for information.

**Action: MMcK to share draft SLAED Indicators report asking for this not to be shared more widely.** MMcK

IB mentioned the need to update the SLAED website, which MMcK and HB have been looking into. This will be updated shortly.

**Action: HB and MMcK to update SLAED website.** HB/MMcK

#### 7. Verity House Agreement

There had been discussion that the VHA was ignored when the First Minister announced the Council Tax freeze and concern that the VHA isn't very strong. RN said it is still an agreement in place between LG and SG, but it can be difficult. There have been some other issues e.g. on national care service and education. While imperfect COSLA is committed to it and are not walking away from it and will do its best to make sure it operates. It is meant to be illustrating the best practice that should exist, working with LG early and often, which will benefit national government.

#### 8. Climate Change & Economic Development Joint Work

CL, HB, MMcK and Judi Kilgallon at IS met to discuss links between climate change and economic development as there wasn't much mentioned about the Just Transition to Net Zero when Gregor Irwin spoke at AGM. A draft agenda was shared including comments from SSN who are keen to support an event. HL highlighted that transition will take place over the longer term which is not supported by annual funding decisions which limits long term planning. He also mentioned that the Audit Scotland Report on NSET is not very positive.

KL agreed that a joint event would be beneficial as locally he is trying to further develop cross working between sustainability and economic development teams,

promoting an understanding and networking. It could include supporting communities in a just transition for example in rural communities with wind farms who are not getting job opportunities from these.

IB welcomed an opportunity to have some joint working and discussion, referring to HL point about longer term and stating that even the structural funds are not over the longer term.

DM pointed out that the UKSPF is not even for 2 years because of when funding is agreed/notified. There is never a full year for spend, and rarely have notification of next year's funding which makes it less viable. IB pointed out that the constantly changing rules e.g. how you can carry funding over, don't help.

RY has engaged locally with the sustainability lead to attend a workshop from a business perspective, for the local energy plan. He has spoken with the sustainability lead about Just Transition to Net Zero, but Just Transition wasn't discussed at the workshop, even though SPEN and SGN were involved. Issues such as cost to business, fuel poverty agenda, etc need to be considered so this is a timely moment to raise this and make sure Just Transition doesn't get lost.

**Action: CL, MMcK, HB will take forward and event, looking at April to avoid the Easter holidays.** CL/MMcK/HB

### 9. AOB

IB ask the group for agenda items for the next meeting. She has caught up with Iseabail Mactaggart, Deputy Director for Department of Business and Trade Investment Team in Scotland who would like to come back, in March, to give update on advisors etc. IB welcomed that.

It was suggested that Employability and Fair Work and Business could be standing items.

Regarding a strategy session with the Enterprise Agencies IB, RY and PS will speak about this. To allow them to get time in diaries it can be possibly later in the year with a focus on improvement in collaboration. IB suggested some officers to approach i.e. Ewan Mearns, SE and Lorna Gregson-MacLeod, HIE

**IB/RY/PS**

**Actions**

#	Action	Lead	Progress
1	IB to share email on BRIA of FWF (attached) to be shared with group	IB/MMcK	Complete
2	MMcK to share document from HL on NDBG	MMcK	Complete
2	ALL to share topics/issues for events with HB and MMcK	ALL	
3	MMcK to share draft SLAED Indicators Report with HL for Cllr Heddle.	MMcK	Complete
4	IB/Ry/PS/HB to meet to discuss inviting SE, HIE, SOSE to a future meeting of the Executive.	IB/Ry/PS/HB	
5	HB and MMcK to review SLAED Website and update. ALL to highlight any other changes to be made.	HB, MMcK	
6	CL, HB, MMcK to take forward Climate Change & Economic Development Joint Event, with a date in April.	CL/HB/MMcK	
7	Submit agenda items for next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Department for Business and Trade- follow up discussion</li> <li>- Employability and Fair Work (to be standing item)</li> <li>- Business Group update (to be standing item)</li> </ul>	ALL	