British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill - Finance Committee questionnaire on Financial Memorandum

Please find response from Learning and Leisure Services, North Lanarkshire Council in relation to the above.

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

   A response was made by North Lanarkshire Council to the proposal for the Bill.

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?

   N/A

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

   N/A

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.

   Only for developing a Local Authority Plan.

5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?

   The estimated costs for the Local Authority to develop, write and publish the Local Authority Plan seem reasonable. The estimate would include staff time to prepare, consult on and prepare and publish the plan.

6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

   The Bill does not describe any minimum level of activity beyond the production of a Local Authority Plan. There will be potential additional costs for implementation of the Local Authority Plan as NLC would seek to implement what was agreed in the Local Authority Plan, which would undoubtedly incur additional financial costs.
There has been no recognition of this in the FM. NLC would require a Council wide approach to implementation of the BSL Act and this would incur costs for a range of Council Services, as currently only Social Work Services has a dedicated budget to support BSL access. This would mean prioritisation and realignment of budgets in an already difficult funding climate. Potential additional costs would be incurred if the decision was made by the Council to, for example, further develop ‘easy read’ materials, introduce BSL Video clips onto NLC website, develop a text messaging service, work with Deaf Connections to create a dedicated NLC area on Deaf Connections website with NLC materials on their U-Tube site, set up Focus groups to identify what is required by the deaf community, develop a service to facilitate face to face communication. In relation to education the training costs for training of teaching staff and teaching resources has not been calculated at this time as the impact of the Bill has not been fully explored within the educational context.

Dedicated funding from the Scottish Government to implement Local Plans would be essential.

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

The financial costs for the development of the Local Authority Plan would be at the higher end of the estimate as there are a number of areas of development required.

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

It states in the FM that “the FM does not attempt to quantify the potential additional costs that may arise if bodies were to expand on the provision of services, staff training etc……. Figures cannot be put on any additional costs arising in this way because it is not possible to estimate how much additional activity will be generated from the local plans”.

It is undeniable that additional costs will be incurred by the Local Council. The FM does not capture all the costs as NLC has not yet developed the Local Authority Plan, and is therefore not in a position to say with any accuracy what those costs would be. (For example to provide 24 hours cover 7 days a week for interpreter service would cost the Council over £250,000 per year)

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

When the bill becomes enacted, there could be additional costs if there are aspects of the Bill which then become legislated for – unable to quantify as unknown.

Yours sincerely

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