

Local Government and Regeneration Committee
Scrutiny of Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014/15

SUBMISSION FROM SENSCOT

Looking back

1. Over the period of the 2011 Spending Review, to what extent have the resources provided to local government been sufficient to deliver on the joint priorities agreed between COSLA and the Scottish Government, and to deliver local government's statutory duties?

Senscot is a support network for social entrepreneurs and social enterprises in Scotland. In particular, we support approximately 16 locally based Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) – who, between them, are engaged with over 400 social enterprises. Our knowledge, therefore, is based very much within the context of the social enterprise community and wider third sector. In regard to this, our view is that there is a mixed picture. Some local authorities are more pro-active in engaging with their local social enterprise community than others. Good examples would be Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow and Moray. To some extent, this also mirrors how active the local social enterprise community is.

2. Overall, how have local authorities dealt with the “flat-cash” (i.e. real terms reduction) revenue settlement, and what has been the impact on the delivery of services?

As stated above, in the main, our understanding is that local authorities are seeking to maintain their support for the activities of the wider third sector.

3. Are there particular examples of good and bad practice across local authorities in dealing with the budget settlement? How is good practice shared and disseminated and how is bad practice addressed?

Again, our knowledge would refer to the four examples cited above.

4. What has been local government's contribution to the delivery of the Scottish Government's Purpose, and its 16 National Outcomes, and how is this captured and measured?

I don't think we have enough knowledge to answer with any authority.

Looking forward

5. Over the years of the new Spending Review, are the resources being provided to local government sufficient to deliver on currently agreed priorities, and other statutory duties?

I would say that the Council Tax freeze restricts the ability of Local Authorities to carry out agreed priorities and statutory duties.

6. What are the key challenges and pressures that local authorities face over the period of the new spending review, and what planning has been undertaken?

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Having stated the Council Tax Freeze limits Local Authorities ability to carry out the above duties, our experience suggests that the Community Planning Partnerships are not as effective as they could be. This could be down to a number of factors: the settling in period of the Third Sector Interfaces; people, both within local Govt and the third sector relying on historic relationships as opposed to embracing new processes; and, for many in the third sector, there engagement is directly with the Scottish Govt as opposed to local Govt.

7. What initiatives are being undertaken by local authorities to support the coherent delivery of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Not qualified to comment on this.

8. What further measures are required during the period of the new Spending Review to ensure the delivery of the equalities agenda and support the development of the most vulnerable sections of society?

The support for the work of the third sector has been very good – and appears to be continually reviewed and refined. One major issue for social enterprises/third sector organisations is to see this level of support consistently reflected across all Scotland's local authorities. That, currently, is not the case.

9. In what ways will the local government benchmarking framework be used in relation to the budget settlement?

Not qualified to answer this question

10. How will the wider public service reform agenda support local authorities' ability to deal with the consequences of the budget settlement?

The public service reform agenda will allow local authorities to engage far more fully with social enterprises/third sector orgs in their area in the delivery of vital services to local communities. Many of these organisations have considerable experience – delivering high quality services for many years. By tapping into this vein of experience and expertise, Local Authorities will be better able to address National Outcomes; and deliver on their agreed priorities and statutory duties