



Local Government and Regeneration Committee: Call for Evidence on the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill

1. COSLA would like to offer the following observations in response to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee's call for evidence on the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill.
2. The Bill was considered by the Community Well-Being Executive Group which generally welcomed the intent and content. Several aspects of the Bill are discussed in detail below.

COSLA Vision

3. The single focus of COSLA and local authorities is to improve outcomes for [communities](#). Local government is at the heart of the government's focus on prevention, service integration and "place", effective reform and strong local services are more important now than ever. National governance should enhance the ability of local government to achieve this as effectively as possible and deliver those benefits to communities through:
 - Empowering local democracy
 - Integration not centralisation led by community planning
 - Focus on outcomes not inputs
 - Local democracy needs to be at the heart of improvement and accountability

Civic Licensing

Sexual Entertainment Venues

4. Licensing and regulation is an important work stream in COSLA's anti-human trafficking work and we welcome the creation of a separate licensing framework for sexual entertainment venues. This new framework gives local authorities proper powers to effectively regulate lap dancing clubs, tackle forced prostitution and minimise the potential for trafficking in human beings.
5. COSLA welcomes the ability of local authorities to determine the number of sexual entertainment venues permitted in their local area, including the power to set the number to zero. We view this as a major advantage in the regulation of such premises and for local decision-making and accountability in Scotland more widely.
6. By giving local licensing authorities capacity to consider local conditions and manage the total number of permitted venues, councils will be able to act on community preference and develop a position that reflects local attitudes. COSLA supports this flexibility which gives autonomy to local councils and supports local democracy.
7. Additionally having oversight of sexual entertainment venues will allow local authorities to regulate more effectively and promote standards that help protect the safety of those working in these establishments. It will also give strength to local authorities' response to human trafficking with better opportunity to identify exploitative practices.

Submission Number: 133

8. However, COSLA is concerned that the exemption for venues that host sexual entertainment three occasions or less per year will create a loophole and allow organisers to evade licensing by using multiple venues. Trafficking is transitory in nature, often with victims moved from place to place for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This exemption would allow for this occur, unchallenged and is unhelpful in Scotland's strategic response to human trafficking. COSLA would therefore request that this concession be removed or that local authorities are able to set a lower number of occasions that trigger the requirement for a license if they chose.