SUBMISSION FROM COSLA

1. Thank you for the invitation to respond to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee’s call for views on the scrutiny of the Scottish Government Draft Budget 2013-14.

2. As the Scottish Government’s draft budget highlights Scotland is facing increasing economic challenges in light of the downturn in the global economy, and is therefore facing dramatic reductions in public spending. Clearly with such significant economic challenges the approach to economic development and regeneration policy and funding is of crucial importance.

3. At the same time as reductions in public spending, increasing numbers of citizens wish to or need to access a range of services and opportunities provided by the public sector or within their local communities. Increased investment in broadband across Scotland can help improve access to services and opportunities which can contribute to regeneration of communities across the country.

4. COSLA feels that regeneration should be considered a holistic concept encompassing social, economic, and environmental aspects. Therefore attempts to regenerate a specific area or an overarching regeneration policy should provide social, economic, and environmental benefits. These three aspects are inter-related and are crucial to improving the lives of communities across Scotland.

5. Regeneration is a key issue for local government in Scotland and COSLA welcomes the funding streams to support regeneration. COSLA is currently in on-going dialogue with Scottish Government in relation to various streams of funding referred to in the Scottish Government’s Regeneration Strategy, in order that regeneration funding has the biggest impact possible on local areas and local communities. COSLA have also requested that Scottish Government undertake a mapping exercise of regeneration funding streams in order that all those involved are clear on the funds available, who can access them, and the opportunities for match funding. Such an exercise would present a clear picture to those who would like to access funding, and would highlight possible alternative means of funding if an initial bid is unsuccessful.

6. A holistic approach to regeneration encompassing the economic, social, and environmental can contribute to the recommendations of the Christie Commission and to the delivery of the equality agenda in Scotland. For instance a regeneration intervention which creates employment opportunities, and provides community and environmental benefits could target those susceptible to unemployment or poverty, or those from a specific equality group, therefore preventing the need for costly reactionary measures at a later date. This could benefit the most vulnerable sections of society and equality groups by intervening at the earliest opportunity.

7. Additionally the environmental aspect of regeneration should not be overlooked. For instance if employment opportunities were created in the sustainability, waste, and renewable sectors this would also help contribute to the delivery of climate change targets. Furthermore, regenerating an area can improve community safety, therefore encouraging greater use of sustainable modes of transport, and in turn contributing to carbon reduction targets. Therefore the environmental aspect to regeneration can prove crucial to improving outcomes for communities.
8. Regeneration is vitally important to local government in Scotland, and a holistic approach to regeneration incorporating social, economic, and environmental benefits can significantly improve the lives and outcomes of communities across Scotland.

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