SPCB BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PLAN

Executive summary

1. The purpose of this note is to advise the SPCB of a statutory requirement to produce and publish, by October 2018, a BSL Plan in compliance with section 2(1) of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

2. A project team has been established to develop the SPCB’s BSL Plan and a public consultation process will be undertaken ahead of a draft Plan being presented to the SPCB for consideration and approval.

Background

3. The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill was introduced as a Member’s Bill by Mark Griffin MSP on 30 October 2014. The resulting British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 received Royal Assent on 22 October 2015.

4. The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 places a duty on the Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish a National six-year Plan in relation to British Sign Language (BSL). The Scottish Government published this plan on 24 October 2017, accompanied by a ministerial statement in the Chamber.

5. The Scottish Government’s BSL National Plan sets out 10 long term policy goals supported by 70 actions they will take by 2020 to fulfil its collective ambition for BSL in Scotland. These goals cover the following policy areas: Scottish Public Services; Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare; School Education; Post-School Education; Training, Work and Social Security; Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing; Transport; Culture and the Arts; Justice; Democracy.

6. The 2015 Act requires listed authorities, which includes the SPCB, to develop and publish their own BSL Authority Plans within one year of the National Plan’s publication, so by 24 October 2018. Section 2 of the 2015 Act provides more detail on the approach to be taken by listed authorities in preparing their Authority Plans and on the nature and content of these plans. In particular, listed authorities are required to have regard to:

“the extent to which the authority’s functions are exercisable using British Sign Language and to the potential for developing the use of British Sign Language in connection with the exercise of those functions”. (S2(3)(b))

7. For convenience, section 2 of the 2015 Act is reproduced in full at Annex 1 to this paper.
**Issues and options**

8. To develop the SPCB BSL Plan, a Project Team has been established comprising representatives from offices across the Parliament with responsibility for providing current BSL services or which have a direct interest in promoting diversity and inclusion and public engagement.

9. An expert external consultant, Professor Graham Turner, will act as an adviser to the Project Team. In addition, a number of external groups and organisations will be visited or invited to visit the Parliament. We also intend to appoint a member of the BSL user community to act as an adviser to the Project Team.

10. Public consultations will be an intrinsic part of this exercise both to inform the development stage and to provide views on the draft plan. An initial call for views will be issued in December in BSL as well as English and we will invite comments in any format, including BSL video. The call for views will be promoted during the consultation period through the Parliament’s website, the eBulletin and social media channels. Notice of the call for views will also be given directly to key external stakeholders. Consultation with the wider BSL community on the draft Plan will take place in May 2018. A timeline for the development of our Plan is attached at Annex 2.

11. During the consultation period, we will consult with Mark Griffin MSP to obtain his views. MSPs and their staff will be encouraged to publicise the call for views and to contribute views based on their own experiences and the experiences of their constituents from the BSL community.

12. Reflecting the broad, phased approach taken in the Scottish Government’s National BSL Plan, the SPCB BSL Plan is likely to include a mix of longer term aspirational goals and a number of more specific short to medium term objectives. It is likely, therefore, that the first phase of the BSL Plan will be implemented from October 2018 to the end of the current parliamentary session in March 2021. This phased approach will enable the Parliament to absorb lessons and recommendations which emerge from the Scottish Government’s progress report, scheduled for 2020. It is anticipated that phase 2 of the SPCB BSL Plan will be prepared and published early in the sixth parliamentary session.

**Service improvements**

13. Within the broad parameters set out by the 2015 Act, it will be for the Corporate Body to decide on the specific content of our BSL Plan. However, in keeping with the CSG principles, openness and accessibility will undoubtedly be key considerations. The BSL Plan will also be developed with reference to the priorities in the Parliament’s Strategic Plan.

14. We start from a good base of BSL service provision which include: interpreting of business in the Chamber and committee on request; events, private and open meetings interpreted on request; information videos on
various aspects of how the Parliament works available on our website and YouTube; BSL on multimedia handsets for tours and BSL content in the Parliament exhibition.

15. We anticipate that the SPCB BSL Plan will include enhancements to current BSL services as well as proposals that would improve provision. For illustrative purposes, these might include any or all of the following:

- BSL interpreting of parliamentary business;
- actions to enable BSL users to respond to all calls for evidence;
- increased and easier access to current translated BSL video information on our website;
- better and more accessible BSL signage in the Parliament;
- the ability to submit enquires to and to receive responses from the Parliament in BSL;
- increasing staff awareness of BSL communities and their needs, including training opportunities in BSL.

Resource Implications

16. It is likely that there will be resource implications in delivering the BSL Plan, though, of course, this will depend on what is included in the Plan. The Project Team will work closely with Finance colleagues to identify which proposals will be delivered with existing resources and which would require additional funding.

Governance issues

17. A draft BSL Plan will be presented to the SPCB for consideration in June 2018 with a final plan being presented for approval in September 2018 to enable the statutory deadline for publication by 24 October 2018 to be met. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

Publication Scheme

18. This paper can be published in line with the Parliament’s Publication Scheme.

Next steps

19. The next step is for the development of the draft BSL Plan and presentation to SPCB in June 2018.

Decision

20. The SPCB is invited to note the statutory requirement to develop a BSL Plan and to agree, subject to any changes, the approach set out in the paper.
2 Listed authorities’ British Sign Language plans

(1) Each listed authority (see section 6) is to prepare and publish plans in relation to British Sign Language in accordance with this section and section 3 (such a plan being in this Act referred to as an “Authority Plan”).

(2) An Authority Plan is—

(a) to set out measures to be taken by the listed authority in relation to the use of British Sign Language in connection with the exercise of the authority’s functions,

(b) to set out timescales by reference to which any such measures are to be taken,

(c) where the listed authority has previously published at least one Authority Plan, to state how, when and to what extent measures to be taken by the authority by virtue of the most recently published such plan were taken, and

(d) to contain such other information (if any) as the Scottish Ministers may by order require.

(3) A listed authority, in preparing an Authority Plan—

(a) is to try to achieve consistency between that plan and the most recently published National Plan, and

(b) is to have regard—

(i) to the extent to which the authority’s functions are exercisable using British Sign Language,

(ii) to the potential for developing the use of British Sign Language in connection with the exercise of those functions,

(iii) to any representations made to the authority in relation to using British Sign Language in that connection,

(iv) to the most recently published report under section 4, and

(v) to such guidance, relevant to the preparation (or revision) of Authority Plans, as may be issued by the Scottish Ministers.

(4) Subsection (3)(b)(iv) does not apply in relation to an Authority Plan prepared before the publication of the first report under section 4.
(5) In preparing an Authority Plan a listed authority is—

(a) to publish, and consult on, a draft of the plan, and

(b) to take into account any representations received by it by virtue of such consultation.

(6) The persons consulted under subsection (5)(a) are to be those who, the authority considers, are likely to be directly affected by the Authority Plan or otherwise to have an interest in that plan and in particular are to include—

(a) persons who use British Sign Language, and

(b) persons who represent users of British Sign Language.

(7) In determining the form and manner of consultation for the purpose of subsection (5)(a), a listed authority is to have regard to the need to make that consultation accessible to persons who use British Sign Language and who are deaf, or deafblind.

(8) A listed authority may revise its most recently published Authority Plan at any time.

(9) Subsection (3) applies in relation to the revision of an Authority Plan as that subsection applies in relation to the preparation of such a plan.

(10) An order under subsection (2)(d) is subject to the negative procedure.
## Annex 2

### Timeline

#### Developing a Scottish Parliament BSL Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Duration (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research and consultation with internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>26/10/2017</td>
<td>31/03/2018</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop draft Plan/options paper for discussion and presentation to Leadership Group</td>
<td>01/04/2018</td>
<td>30/04/2018</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with external stakeholders on draft plan</td>
<td>01/05/2018</td>
<td>31/05/2018</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse stakeholder feedback, develop and present SPCB paper</td>
<td>01/06/2018</td>
<td>30/06/2018</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate requested amends and apply for budget from contingency</td>
<td>30/08/2018</td>
<td>01/10/2018</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present reviewed and costed BSL Plan to SPCB</td>
<td>01/10/2018</td>
<td>24/10/2018</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of Plan (Stage 1)</td>
<td>25/10/2018</td>
<td>06/05/2021</td>
<td>924</td>
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</tbody>
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