

From COSLA President, Cllr Shona Morrison



14th December 2022

Daniel Johnson MSP
Deputy Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Via Email - FPA.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Mr Johnson,

Thank for your recent correspondence inviting COSLA to respond to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report *Ambitions into Action*. As co-signatory to the National Performance Framework, COSLA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the recommendations highlighted to us within the Committee's report. As requested, our response considers the recommendations in paragraphs 40, 43, 68, 150, 156 and 169, as well as the wider context of the recent work on the NPF undertaken by the Scottish Leaders Forum.

I would be happy to have a meeting to discuss our response to the Committee's report in more detail, as part of our ongoing joint focus on progressing delivery of the National Outcomes across Scotland. COSLA also notes that the review of the National Outcomes is due to start, with the lead Committee likely to be the FPA Committee and we look forward to further engagement with the Committee as part of this review.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Shona Morrison
COSLA President



COSLA response

The Finance and Public Administration Committee report *Ambitions into Action*

COSLA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's National Performance Framework (NPF) report *Ambitions into Action*. We note that the Committee has asked for COSLA's view on the recommendations in paragraphs 40, 43, 68, 150, 156 and 169 in particular.

COSLA's evidence to the Committee's NPF inquiry earlier this year outlined the need for councils to be adequately and flexibly funded to meet local priorities identified through Local Outcome Improvement Plans and that these local priorities should be recognised as a valid means of achieving National Outcomes. Furthermore, our response made clear that a highly directed and/or ring-fenced approach to funding does not support a National Outcomes-based approach due to the limitations it places on local flexibility.

This situation has not changed, and it remains COSLA's position that in order for greater progress to be made in delivering the National Outcomes, the issue of funding must not be overlooked, including the funding of work within COSLA to fulfil its role as NPF co-signatory. COSLA notes that the Committee's report recommends that funding should be used to incentivise collaborative working, however access to funding must be open to all relevant agencies and organisations to ensure a level playing field across Scotland as a whole.

COSLA's response to the Committee's NPF inquiry earlier this year set out a number of examples of joint working to achieve National Outcomes were provided including: with Scottish Government on adult social care; as joint sponsors of Public Health Scotland; and through the National Taskforce on Human Rights and subsequent work on the new Bill. One of COSLA's key concerns from the recent set of recommendations highlighted to us by the Committee, however, is the disproportionate onus placed on COSLA for driving progress on embedding National Outcomes within wider civic society, as many of the agencies or organisations required to contribute to the outcomes report to Scottish Government rather than to councils.

As co-signatory to the NPF and as an organisation which has integrated the National Outcomes across its policy work, COSLA understands its responsibilities, however the recommendations from the Committee's report do not provide sufficient detail on the action that Scottish Government will take to compel its agencies, and those agencies

and organisations who it funds, to make greater reference to National Outcomes in their policy development, translated then into actions.

COSLA supports the recommendation for a 'golden thread' approach to incorporating the NPF to be shared across the public sector, however we ask Scottish Government to ensure that this extends to its agencies and those organisations which report to directly to them. This golden thread approach should also include Community Planning Partnerships and their Local Outcome Improvement Plans to ensure that the embedding of the NPF has a direct impact on the lives of people in local communities. This will support the sharing of best practice across the public sector and wider civic society.

The Committee's report acknowledged the good practice examples of collaborative working as a result of the COVID pandemic, with a recommendation for COSLA and Scottish Government to commit to capturing these examples. Scottish Government's COVID Recovery Team has a wealth of evidence of good practice from Local Government on joint working throughout the pandemic – this evidence has already been presented to the joint COVID Recovery Board (co-ordinated by Simon Mair's team).

COSLA would also like to note the absence of explicit links to the Human Rights Bill within the Committee's report, and we urge the Committee to give greater regard to the links between the NPF and the new Human Rights Framework currently in development. Further to our earlier comments on the need for adequate funding, adopting a human rights budgeting approach would prove greatly beneficial in this regard. COSLA therefore encourages the Committee to consider how to incorporate this budgeting approach into ongoing efforts to align funding allocation with the delivery of National Outcomes, as recommended by the Scottish Leaders Forum (SLF).

The findings of the work undertaken by the SLF's Incentives and Accountability Action Group also highlight the importance of a strong accountability framework in delivering the National Outcomes, along with a clear articulation of what successful delivery looks like. As joint chair of the Scottish Leaders Forum, alongside Scottish Government, COSLA is committed to continued efforts to ensure that National Outcomes are actively used in decisions related to scrutiny and accountability, as well as guiding the commissioning of work and resource allocation across Scotland.