

Minister Public Finance
Ivan McKee MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Convener,
Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

30 July 2024

Dear Ariane,

Thank you for your letter dated 28 June 2024 requesting an update on the Local Governance Review and the review of the Community Empowerment Act. I have set out my response to each of the points raised below. The Local Governance Review is a joint review between Scottish Government and COSLA, as such, the response to this section has been discussed and shared with COSLA.

Local Governance Review

The Democracy Matters engagement process concluded earlier this year and we will publish an analysis of responses after recess, following consideration by the Scottish Government and COSLA. At this point, we will also set out a joint statement from the Scottish Government and COSLA which will outline next steps for Democracy Matters and will provide an update on progress to develop place specific single authority models. I look forward to sharing the rich and diverse findings from Democracy Matters with the Committee and working closely with you as we take forward the next steps of the Local Governance Review.

With regard to Community Councils, officials worked closely with the Improvement Service to promote Democracy Matters to community council liaison officers and Community Councils themselves with over a hundred Community Councillors registering to attend two Democracy Matters webinar sessions. I am pleased to say that 26 Community Councils responded to the process, and many Community Councillors also took part in wider community conversations. Community Councils will continue to be a key part of the policy development process and we will continue work with them to strengthen local decision making.

Community Empowerment

The review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is nearing completion, and a findings report will be published later in 2024. I will be happy to update the Committee once a publication date is confirmed and to provide further details on next steps. The review has taken into consideration existing data and findings including the Committee's post-legislative scrutiny of Community Planning. Considerable work has also been undertaken to gather new information and evidence specifically as part of the review.

Your letter specifically highlights the Committee's report on community planning as part of the Verity House Agreement. The Scottish Government and COSLA recognised Community Planning Partnerships as a critical mechanism for the alignment of resource locally, focussed on prevention and early intervention, and delivering on our shared priorities.

My officials are continuing to work collaboratively with partners to develop a programme of work to strengthen community planning in response to the Committee's helpful findings. This includes, for example, working closely with the Community Planning Improvement Board on the four national priorities they identified in response to the Committee report (the fragmentation of the climate funding landscape, sustainable funding for the third sector, flexible and multi-year funding and reducing reporting requirements). In addition, we have funded the Improvement Service to work with the Community Planning Network to support its use as a forum to develop and embed a shared vision for partnership working and to share best practice.

I look forward to providing further updates to the Committee on these important areas of work which are key to achieving our public service reform ambitions and empowering communities across Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Ivan McKee
Minister for Public Finance