



Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Shona Robison,
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and
Local Government
Scottish Government

Dear Shona,

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee – Tracker report

Each year the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee publishes a tracker report highlighting progress on issues it has considered throughout the year and throughout the session.

I am writing to seek an update from the Scottish Government on various issues. I am aware not all of these fall within your portfolio and would appreciate a coordinated response from you and your colleagues.

Local Government issues

New deal for local government

We noted our disappointment in the 2023-24 tracker report at the pace of progress in publishing a fiscal framework and an outcomes and accountability framework document.

In evidence to the Committee on the Scottish Government's budget in January 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, told the Committee she was optimistic the fiscal framework would be published the following month.

Contact: Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email: localgov.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

When giving evidence alongside COSLA in February on council tax reform, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“The principles of the fiscal framework have underpinned the process and are being put into practice. I am keen to publish a version of the fiscal framework jointly with COSLA, but we need agreement on that. The discussions are on-going and we are keen to move forward on that.”

Councillor Katie Hagmann of COSLA said:

“There is a level of complexity in taking forward the fiscal framework that nobody fully understood, but we are absolutely committed to it and will continue to have dialogue on it. I cannot give a commitment that we will have something to present next week, as such, because it is a significant piece of work. We also need to put a lot of capacity into the process.”

The Committee has agreed to consider the fiscal framework and outcomes and accountability statement once published.

The Committee notes that the budget negotiations were based on “principles of the fiscal framework” and seeks a copy of these principles. It also seeks an update on when the Scottish Government and COSLA intend to publish the substantive fiscal framework and the outcomes and accountability framework. In addition, we also request an update on the reasons for delay of publication of these documents and what actions are being taken to overcome these.

General Power of Competence

The Scottish Government has recently consulted on a general power of competence for local authorities.

The Committee seeks details of the Scottish Government’s intended timescales for its formal response to the consultation.

Local Governance Review

Last year, the Committee was informed of the establishment of the Democracy Matters Steering Group. We note this was due to meet every 6 weeks since its establishment in December 2024 and will report in Spring 2025 on “...models in principle and how to progress these through to the next stage of Democracy Matters, focusing on feasibility and testing.”

Last year we heard that the role of community councils would also be discussed as part of the Democracy Matters agenda.

The Committee requests an update on the minutes of meetings since December 2024 and when the group will conclude the first part of its work and whether there will be published output from that.

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In the report, the Committee expressed its hope that progress would be made on a single authority model, as promised in the Joint Statement published by COSLA and the Scottish Government on the Local Governance Review.

The Committee requests an update on progress towards the development of a single authority model.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – post-legislative scrutiny

Our predecessor Committee considered the operation of Parts 3 and 5 of the Act. On 31 March, the Scottish Government published two reports on the outcomes of reviews of these two parts of the legislation.

On 31 March, the Minister for Public Finance wrote to the Committee on the publication of reports following review of parts of the Act. He referred to the work of the Local Governance Review and the Democracy Matters Steering Group in taking these forward. He also said the findings from the review would be taken forward in collaboration with stakeholders.

The Committee requests specific details of how each of the findings of the two reviews will be progressed and the timescales for doing so.

The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee has also focused on two additional parts of the Act:

- Part 2 – community planning
- Part 9 – allotments

Part 9 allotments

Last year, the Committee sought views from stakeholders on progress made in allowing access to allotments and food growing spaces. This followed a recognition from the then Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning the previous year that work in this area had slowed in favour of progressing the Good Food Nation work.

Last year we heard concerns from stakeholders on the lack of progress and the Scottish Government made no specific comment on progress in relation to Part 9 in correspondence seeking an update on the implementation of the Act. The response did highlight an upcoming review.

The Committee seeks an update from the Scottish Government on how Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has been implemented including—

- **Analysis of whether this has improved access to allotments and community food growing spaces;**

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- **How the development of the Good Food Nation strategy is intended to support this; and**
- **Whether it is intended that this part of the Act will be subject to a detailed review and if so the timescales for this work.**

We noted the Scottish Community Development Centre had called for the principles for participation across the Act to be refreshed in light of the review of the legislation.

The Committee seeks an update from the Scottish Government on whether there are plans to refresh the participation principles across the Act.

Non-domestic rates

The Committee has stated it will continue to track the progress of the new appeals process on Non-Domestic Rates. In its Stage 1 report on the Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Bill in 2022, the Committee requested six-monthly updates on the number of “material change of circumstances” appeals assessors have disposed of.

The Committee seeks details of the number of appeals which have taken place under the new system and the efficacy of their execution when compared with the previous system. We also seek an update on the number of MCC appeals assessors have disposed of.

Housing issues

The Scottish Government’s short term let implementation update 2024, published last August, included a commitment to “providing an update on the implementation of short-term let licensing in 2025, insight collected through the above information streams.”

The Committee seeks details from the Scottish Government on how the implementation of short term lets regulations has progressed, the impact of this and discussions it has had with stakeholders on how they work in practice. The Committee requests details of when the implementation report mentioned in the update last August will be published.

On behalf of the Committee, I request a response by **30 May 2025**.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess MSP

Convener, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

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