Executive summary

1. This note advises Leadership Group of a statutory requirement on the SPCB to produce and publish, by October 2018, a BSL Plan in compliance with the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

2. A project team has been established and a consultation process will be undertaken, ahead of a draft Plan being presented to Leadership Group, and then SPCB, for consideration and approval.

3. Following the LG meeting, a paper will be submitted to SPCB seeking agreement to the proposed approach to the development of the BSL Plan.

Background

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. The Scottish Government’s BSL National Plan has 10 long term goals which represent 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.

7. 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, namely 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))

For convenience, section 2 of the 2015 Act is reproduced in full at Annex 1 to this paper.
8. A Project Team has been established to develop the SPCB BSL Plan. Members have been recruited from across the Parliament from those offices responsible for providing the current service offering (full membership details are at Annex 2). A series of monthly meetings (from November 2017 to May 2018) has been established to manage the project. All staff will have opportunities to feed into consultations.

9. An expert external consultant, Professor Graham Turner, will act as an adviser to the Project team. Professor Turner was seconded to the Futures Forum and produced a scoping paper on improving BSL involvement. Professor Turner has excellent links with the BSL community in Scotland and is responsible for a number of initiatives to increase the number of BSL interpreters in Scotland.

10. In addition, a number of external groups and organisations will be visited or invited to visit the Parliament. A member of the BSL user community will also be approached to act as an adviser to the Project Team.

11. A public consultation will be part of our information gathering from December 2017 to early February 2018. A call for views will be issued in BSL as well as English and we will invite comments in any format, including BSL video. The call for views will be promoted regularly 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.

12. The 2015 Act requires us to undertake a consultation with the wider BSL community on the draft Plan – this is currently planned for May 2018.

13. A timeline for the development of the Plan is attached at Annex 3. Reflecting the phased approach taken by the Scottish Government, it is likely that our Plan will be a mixture of short to medium term specific objectives and longer term goals that are, at this stage, more aspirational in nature. As such, the working assumption is that the first phase of the SPCB BSL Plan will be from October 2018 to the end of the current parliamentary session in March 2021. This will enable any lessons or recommendations from the Scottish Government’s progress report, scheduled for 2020, to be taken into account. It is anticipated that phase 2 of the SPCB BSL Plan will be published early in the sixth parliamentary session.

Service improvements

14. Within the broad parameters set out by the 2015 Act, it will be for the Corporate Body to decide on the content of the SPCB BSL Plan. However, in keeping with
the CSG principles, openness and accessibility will be key considerations in developing the Plan. The BSL Plan will be developed with reference to the Strategic Plan and our strategic priorities.

15. We start from a good base of BSL services which include: interpreting of business in the Chamber and committee on request; numerous 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. At the first meeting of the Project Team, a number of further improvements were discussed.

16. 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:

- regular provision of BSL interpreting of parliamentary business;
- actions to enable BSL users to respond to all calls for evidence;
- increased provision 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 the provision of training opportunities in BSL.

Resource Implications
17. There are likely to be resource implications. The Project Team will identify which actions can be delivered through existing resources and what actions would require additional funding. Proposals will be submitted to the Strategic Resources Board (SRB) prior to consideration by Leadership Group.

Governance issues
18. These are set out above. In addition, the Diversity and Inclusion Board and the Public Engagement Group will have the opportunity to input to the draft BSL Plan which will be presented to Leadership Group and then SPCB in May/June 2018 to enable further refinement of the plan and a more detailed discussion on budget.

19. A final plan will be presented to SPCB for approval in September 2018 to enable the deadline of October 2018 to be met. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

Publication Scheme
20. This paper can be published in line with the Parliament’s Publication Scheme.
Next steps

21. The next step in the BSL Plan Project is for the SPCB to consider and agree this approach to the development of the BSL Plan.

Decision

22. Leadership Group is invited to note the statutory requirement on the SPCB to develop a BSL Plan and to agree, subject to any changes, the approach set out in the paper.

Denis Oag
SRO
8 November 2017
Annex 1: Extract from British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015

2 Listened authorities’ British Sign Language plans

(1) Each listened 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 listened 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 listened 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 listened 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: Members of the BSL Plan Project Team

SRO: Denis Oag
Project Manager: Linda Orton (PIR)
Emma Armstrong (WSM)
Ruth Connelly (Broadcasting)
Roy Devon (E&E)
Alasdair MacCaluim (OS)
Suzi Macpherson (SPICe)
Aneela McKenna (Equalities/HR)
Elizabeth Cantlie (PIR)
Lewis McNaughton (Chamber Office)
Gordon Stewart (VS)
Becky Thomson (Security)
Jane Williams (Committee Office)
TBC: (Finance)

Adviser(s)
Professor Graham Turner
TBC: Member of BSL deaf community
Annex 3: Timeline

**Developing a Scottish Parliament BSL Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Duration (days)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research and consultation with internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>26/10/2017</td>
<td>31/03/2018</td>
<td>156</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Consult with external stakeholders on draft plan</td>
<td>01/05/2018</td>
<td>31/05/2018</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyse stakeholder feedback, develop and present SPCB paper</td>
<td>01/06/2018</td>
<td>30/06/2018</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate requested amends and apply for budget from contingency</td>
<td>30/06/2018</td>
<td>01/10/2018</td>
<td>93</td>
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<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>
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