

## **SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **WRITTEN SUBMISSION**

#### **Housing**

Over the years of the new Spending Review, starting with 2014/15, the Council feel that the resources being provided to local government are not sufficient to deliver on currently agreed priorities and other statutory duties.

The resources required to achieve our objective in relation to housing need are currently insufficient and are being further reduced due to the current and predicted impacts of Welfare Reform.

The key challenge is dealing with the impacts of Welfare Reform on our rental streams for temporary and permanent accommodation and the predicted rise in homelessness together with our increased responsibilities as a result of these changes. The Council has been reviewing / amending its business plans to take account of this but at present these plans still show significant funding gaps.

#### **Transport**

The continuation and what looks to be an increase of Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets budget is welcomed – it is assumed that this will lead to an increase in individual authority allocations.

It is noted that Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) grants go up from £15.3m to £22.5m in 2014/15 with a slight drop the following year – this may assist in progressing some of our own commitments in 2014/15 assuming the increase goes to the RTPs directly for projects.

In terms of the continuation of the concessionary travel schemes to provide free or discounted trips on public transport and continued support for partnership working to improve bus services and standards, this is welcomed. However, the sustainability of the scheme in the long term against the background of an aging population, is questioned.

It is noted that budget of £4.2 million has been transferred out of the Police Central Government budget from 2014-15 and into the Transport Scotland budget to cover expenditure on road safety cameras. In this regard we further note the imminent review of the Safety Camera Partnerships.

It is noted that the emphasis in the budget on transport infrastructure appears to be targeted at the central belt and Scottish Cities. From a South Lanarkshire perspective, the commitment to “dual” road links between Scotland’s cities is welcomed, however it must be remembered that there needs to be strong infrastructure in the surrounding areas.

Acknowledging that the health of city-regions is important to the well-being of Scotland as a whole, it is perhaps disappointing that there is not more support for local transport strategies, for example.

Finally, the Rail improvements / electrification proposals (e.g. EGIP and Rutherglen lines) are welcomed but the comment from last year is reiterated, that this should include efforts to make rail travel more accessible particularly in our rural area.

### **Digital Infrastructure and Broadband**

The Investment into rural high speed broadband and recent letting of the implementation contract is welcome as is the increase in funding of £6m within the 2014/15 financial year.

From our understanding the implementation will take place over 4.5 years ending in December 2017 and will be delivered in 15 phases. Fibre-based broadband is expected to reach 95% of premises across Scotland and 85% by the end of 2015. It will be important to ensure that gaps and anomalies within the coverage within both urban and rural areas are addressed. Anomalies such as properties being “too close” to an exchange, a housing development or an industrial estate not being initially economic to upgrade to high speed broadband, require to be prioritised within the implementation contract.

Individual local authorities will have varying degrees of coverage and some rural areas will remain out with the coverage of high speed broadband even by 2017. It is important that support for Community Broadband Scotland continues and new methods of ensuring maximum coverage are investigated and supported where appropriate.

### **Scottish Water**

The Council's links to Scottish Water relate solely to the recovery of Water Charges via Council Tax. There does not appear to be anything in this document which changes this arrangement.

### **Public Procurement**

We welcome collaborative opportunities, and will continue to support initiatives, and guidance on how we can continue to deliver the most from public procurement. Better access for SME's, and innovation can help contribute towards sustainable growth both at local and national levels. The final publication of the Procurement Reform Bill should help contribute to these shared aims.

**South Lanarkshire Council**  
**23 October 2013**